

# MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Volume 1

Spring 2003

Nos. 1 & 2

## CONTENTS

Editorial: Meet the Faculty		2
Articles:		
A Theology for the Church	David S. Dockery	10
To the Jew First—Christian Mission to Abraham’s Children: How Are the Gentiles Doing?	R. Philip Roberts	21
Whose Jesus? Which Revelation?	Malcolm B. Yarnell III	33
Southern Baptists and the Sanctity of Human Life: The Pro-Life Stance of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000	J. Alan Branch	54
A Call to Endure Persecution Patiently: A Fresh Look at James 5:7-20 in Context	Terry L. Wilder	64
He Being Dead Yet Speaketh	Michael McMullen	71
Biblical Foundations for the Teaching Ministry of the Church	Walter Norvell	84
Book Reviews		94
Book Review Index		110
List of Publishers		110

## **Editorial: Meet the Faculty**

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary biblically educates God-called men and women to be and to make disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Started in 1957, the seminary is strategically located in Kansas City, Missouri, to carry out its mission.

The volume you hold in your hands is the inaugural issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*, the formation of which is a historical first for the seminary. The journal seeks to honor Christ, help advance the kingdom of God, and serve the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, Midwestern students, alumni, and others.

This first issue features a “Meet the Faculty” theme. Midwestern has a strong faculty, several of which have written articles for this volume. Professors are passionate about their respective disciplines and long to see students equipped to be stewards of the gospel throughout the world. The faculty is well qualified academically, having gone through the rigors of advanced study at a diversity of educational institutions like: Aberdeen University, Cambridge University, Dropsie College, Free University of Amsterdam, Hebrew Union College, New Orleans Seminary, Oxford University, Southeastern Seminary, Southern Seminary, Southwestern Seminary, and others. Midwestern’s faculty also includes experienced churchmen. You will find no one perched in “ivory towers” here. Professors do not divorce scholarship from participation in the local church. Indeed, Christ’s church is their *raison d’être*.

My colleagues and I often hear that Midwestern Seminary is the “best-kept secret” in the Southern Baptist Convention. However, we no longer want this institution and her professors to be enjoyed only by a select few—we invite you to get to know us. This journal issue is an attempt to help you do just that. You will find below a selection of articles and book reviews written by professors who teach at Midwestern. Because of space limitations not every faculty member was able to write papers for this volume. Thus, not only will this extended editorial introduce you to this issue’s contributors, but also to all of my faculty colleagues.<sup>1</sup> They are exceptional and on fire for Christ. They not only teach, they also inspire. As you read about these professors, please keep in mind that they would not just want you to get to know them, they also want to get to know you.

---

<sup>1</sup> The information below was taken largely from Midwestern’s “Meet the Faculty” brochure and the seminary’s website: [www.mbts.edu](http://www.mbts.edu).

The first paper in this inaugural issue is titled, “A Theology for the Church,” and was originally presented by Dr. David S. Dockery as the seminary’s academic convocation address on August 20, 2002. He has graciously allowed us to publish his manuscript. Dr. Dockery is the president of Union University, a Southern Baptist university located in Jackson, Tennessee.

Dr. R. Philip Roberts contributes to this issue the second article, “To the Jew First—Christian Mission to Abraham’s Children: How are the Gentiles Doing?” He assesses denominational positions on Jewish evangelism. Dr. Roberts is the fourth president of Midwestern Seminary. Previously, he was a vice-president for the Strategic Cities Strategies Group for the North American Mission Board. He also was the Director of the Interfaith Witness Department for the NAMB. He has been a professor of missions and evangelism at Southeastern Seminary and a co-director of the Lewis Adison Drummond Center for Great Commission Studies. He also taught evangelism for Southern Seminary. Dr. Roberts has been a pastor in England, Germany and Belgium. He has taught evangelism for the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Belgium, and has been a dean of theology for the Institute of Biblical Studies in Oradea, Romania, where he currently serves as a trustee. He also has been a dean of theology at the International Academy of Modern Knowledge in Russia and a dean of the Young Itinerant Evangelist’s Institute as part of Leighton Ford Ministries in Russia and Romania. Dr. Roberts has a Ph.D. from the Free University of Amsterdam, an M.Div. from Southern Seminary, and a B.A. from Georgetown College. He conducted post-graduate research at Oxford University. He is the author of several books, including *Mormonism Unmasked* and *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*. He and his wife, Anna, have two children.

Dr. Malcolm B. Yarnell III is Dean of the Faculty and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. He contributes to this issue the third paper, “Whose Jesus? Whose Revelation?” His article discusses the importance of Carl F. H. Henry for evangelical theology, especially for Baptists. Dr. Yarnell oversees Midwestern’s faculty and provides direction to the seminary’s doctoral, masters and diploma programs. He serves also as Associate Professor of Historical Theology, with expertise in systematic theology, Reformation theology, and Baptist theology. Before coming to Midwestern, he taught systematic and historical theology at Southwestern Seminary in Texas and was a tutor at Oxford University in England. He has also been a pastor in North Carolina, Louisiana and Texas. He has served with a number of short-term mission projects and is a member of the continuing committee of the Baptist World Alliance-Anglican Communion International Theological Conversations. Dr. Yarnell has a B.S. in Finance from Louisiana State University, an

M.Div.BL from Southwestern Seminary, a Th.M. from Duke Divinity School, and a D.Phil. from Oxford University. Oxford University Press will soon publish his doctoral dissertation, *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation*. LifeWay Press published his expository commentary on 1 Corinthians in 2002. His wife, Karen, oversees the seminary's WISDOM program, which includes the Diploma for the Ministering Wife. She has an M.Div. from Southeastern Seminary and has done graduate studies at Oxford University.

Dr. J. Alan Branch serves as the seminary's Vice-President for Student Development and as Appointed Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics. He contributes to this volume the fourth article, "Southern Baptists and the Sanctity of Human Life," which examines the pro-life stance of the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. A native of Georgia, Branch earned his M.Div and Ph.D. at Southeastern Seminary. He has a special interest in medical ethics and titled his dissertation, "The Challenge Posed by Autonomy in Medical Ethics." Prior to joining the Midwestern staff in 2001, he was a pastor for eight years in North Carolina.

Dr. Terry Wilder is Associate Professor of New Testament and Greek, Assistant Director of Doctoral Studies (D.Min.), and Editor of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. He contributes to this issue the fifth article, "A Call to Endure Persecution Patiently," which takes a fresh look at James 5:7-20 in its context. Wilder earned his Ph.D. from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. His previous studies resulted in an M.Div.BL from Southwestern Seminary and an M.A. in Biblical Studies from Dallas Baptist University. Before coming to Midwestern, Wilder taught as an adjunct at Southwestern Seminary, Dallas Baptist University, and Criswell College. A profile contributor of papers to theological conferences, he has also written for *Biblical Illustrator*, the revised *Holman Bible Dictionary* and the *Tyndale Bulletin*. He is currently working on four books, including a revision of his doctoral dissertation, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception* (University Press of America) and *The General Letters and Revelation* (Broadman & Holman). He frequently preaches in churches, leads mission trips and speaks on ethical issues.

Dr. Michael McMullen is Associate Professor of Church History. He contributes to this issue the sixth paper, "He Being Dead Yet Speaketh," which includes a sermon by Jonathan Edwards never before seen in publication. A native of England, McMullen won a major British government scholarship for his doctoral work on Edwards. He did the work at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and at Yale University. He has been a pastor in Scotland and a part-time lecturer at Aberdeen University. He has also been a distance tutor at St. John's College and

the Open Theological College, both in England. He has authored several books, including *Hearts Aflame* (Triangle/SPCK), *Clouds of Heaven* (Triangle/SPCK), *The Passionate Preacher* (Christian Focus), *The Prayers and Meditations of Susanna Wesley* (MPH, London), *God's Polished Arrow* (Christian Focus), and *The Unpublished Sermons of M'Cheyne* (Banner of Truth). He is also Associate Editor (Church History) for Oxford University's *New Dictionary of National Biography*.

Dr. Walter Norvell serves as Assistant Professor of Christian Education and Assistant Director of Doctoral Studies (D.Ed.Min.). He contributes to this volume the seventh paper, "Biblical Foundations for the Teaching Ministry of the Church." Norvell comes to Midwestern with 20 years experience in Christian education at the church level, having served churches in educational ministry, children's ministry and youth ministry. He has taught at Dallas Baptist University. He also has extensive curriculum writing experience with LifeWay Christian Resources, the North American Mission Board and other publishers. He holds a B.A. from Union University, an M.S. from the University of Memphis, and an M.A.R.E. and Ph.D. from Southwestern Seminary.

Dr. Stephen J. Andrews is Professor of Old Testament and Archaeology and Book Review Editor of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. With an M.Div. from Eastern Seminary, a Th.M. from Southeastern Seminary, and an M.Phil. and a Ph.D. from Hebrew Union College, Andrews taught Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Seminary for seven years. At Midwestern, he also directs the Morton-Seats Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, drawing on his experience on digs in Israel and Jordan. He has provided articles to the *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, and the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*. He has served as the pastor of churches in Maryland and Ohio.

Dr. Ben Awbrey is Associate Professor of Preaching. He earned an M.Div. at Southwestern Seminary and a Th.D. at New Orleans Seminary before going to California to serve both as pastor and adjunct professor of preaching at The Master's Seminary. His dissertation on the expository preaching of John MacArthur suited him admirably for his work at Midwestern, where he teaches expository preaching. Awbrey also has been the pastor of churches in Oklahoma and Louisiana.

Dr. Albert Bean is Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew. In 1984, he became the first Midwestern alumnus to return to the seminary as a full-time faculty member. He has served as pastor to churches in Missouri, Kentucky, and Colorado. He also has taught at the University of Missouri-Columbia, Southern Seminary, and Simmons University. He received a B.A. from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, an M.Div. from Midwestern Seminary, and a Ph.D. from Southern Seminary. Bean

has been a linguistics editor for *Hebrew Studies* (1977-79) and an editorial assistant for *Hebrew Abstracts*. He was named Midwestern's Professor of the Year for 2001-02.

Dr. Pete Butler serves as Senior Professor of Church Music. Before coming to Midwestern in 1983, Butler was a minister of music in Kentucky and Oklahoma. He has written the tunes for several familiar hymns, including "Redeemed" and "Stir Your Church, O God Our Father." He also completed a commissioned work, "O, Bethlehem," for the millennial anniversary of the nativity. He earned an M.S.M. at Southern Seminary and was honored with the D.C.M. by Southwest Baptist University. His wife, Jo Ann, also was a popular teacher in music at Midwestern.

Dr. Paul Carlisle is Professor of Pastoral Care. He earned a B.A. in Biblical Studies at East Texas Baptist, and an M.S. in Counseling and an Ed.D. at East Texas State. Carlisle came to Midwestern with teaching experience at both Criswell College and Southeastern Seminary. He frequently leads in marriage retreats and other family conferences. He has done mission work in Kenya, Thailand, Mexico, El Salvador and Brazil. He has written "Strength for the Journey: A Biblical Perspective on Discouragement and Depression" and "With All Your Heart: God's Design for Emotional Wellness," both published by LifeWay.

Dr. Mark DeVine is Associate Professor of Theology. He returned to Midwestern in 2001 after serving with the International Mission Board in Thailand since 1998. He taught theology from 1994 to 1998. DeVine received his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from Clemson University, and both an M.Div. and Ph.D. from Southern Seminary. He has been the pastor of churches in Indiana, South Carolina and Kentucky. He has written extensively for several theological journals and contributed to the *Disciple's Study Bible*.

Recently retired but still serving as an adjunct professor, Mr. Carrol Fowler is Instructor of Domestic Church Planting. The North American Mission Board provided him to Midwestern under the Nehemiah Project for domestic church planting. He came to this position from a rich background in home missions, including planting churches in Michigan and serving as Director of Missions for the Indiana Baptist Convention. He is a 1973 Midwestern Seminary graduate. The Language Missions and Black Church Extension divisions of the North American Mission Board have given him their Kaleidoscope and Denominational Servant awards. Fowler was named Midwestern Alumnus of the Year for 1997.

Dr. Radu Gheorghita is Appointed Scholar in Residence. He came to Midwestern from Emmanuel Bible Institute in Oradea, Romania. His degrees include a B.S. from the University of Cluj, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and a

Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Cambridge, England. The author of numerous scholarly papers, Gheorghita has a working knowledge of several languages.

Dr. Lee Hinson is Assistant Professor of Church Music. Before coming to Midwestern, Hinson was the Associational and Small Church Consultant at LifeWay Christian Resources. In addition to his 25 years of experience as a minister of music, he has also taught music at the public school and collegiate levels. He writes the lead article for the *Glory Songs* and *You Can!* kits published quarterly by LifeWay. He has earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from New Orleans Seminary with a specialization in conducting. He also holds an M.M. in Music Education from East Texas State University and an M.A. in Religious Education from Southwestern Seminary. Dr. Hinson directs the church music program at Midwestern.

Dr. Thomas Johnston is Assistant Professor of Evangelism. He emphasizes the practice of evangelism by leading the Midwestern Evangelistic Team, a weekly street evangelism and local church partnership effort that he founded during his first year at Midwestern. Johnston has taught evangelism in Minnesota, Canada, the Netherlands and Russia, and he has eight years of pastoral experience. He has a B.A. from Wheaton College, an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and a Ph.D. from Southern Seminary. Johnston's dissertation explores the theology and methodology of Billy Graham.

Mr. Craig Kubic is the Librarian at Midwestern. He also is Executive Secretary/Treasurer of the Southern Baptist Library Association. Kubic came to Midwestern in 1989, having served as an acting library director for Golden Gate Seminary. He has an M.L.S. from Louisiana State and an M.Div. from Golden Gate. He is at work on a D.Ed.Min. from Midwestern Seminary.

Dr. Thor Madsen is Assistant Professor of New Testament, Ethics and Philosophy. His rich academic background prepares him for this uniquely varied faculty position. He was first a philosophy major at Wheaton College. He went on to earn an M.A. in philosophy at Western Kentucky University and to spend a year in the doctoral program in philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He also has an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Madsen's dissertation explores the relationship between the fact of the new life in Christ and the obligation of Christians to rise to that reality.

Dr. Tony Preston is Associate Dean and Assistant Professor of Pastoral Leadership. He directs doctoral studies, extensions, and the collegiate ministry programs. Preston is a veteran pastor, having served for 22 years in churches in four states. He earned a B.S. at William Carey

College, an M.Div. at Southwestern Seminary and a D.Min. at Reformed Seminary. He was Professor of Evangelism at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri and served as a trustee of the Christian Life Commission of the SBC.

Mr. David Richards is the Registrar at Midwestern. After 14 years as registrar at Calvary Bible College, Richards now directs the process of registering students and maintaining academic records at Midwestern. He is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, and completed his M.A. at Wheaton College. Richards is enrolled in the doctoral program of the University of Missouri at Columbia, and is a candidate for the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis.

Dr. Ron Rogers is Associate Professor of Missions. He was a missionary in Brazil for six years, teaching at the seminary in Goias. Previously, he was a pastor of churches in Tennessee, Arkansas, and South Carolina. A native of Alabama, he earned a B.A. from Carson-Newman and a Th.M. and Th.D. from Mid-America Baptist Seminary. He regularly leads students and faculty on mission trips. Rogers was named Midwestern's Professor of the Year for 1997-98. He has contributed an essay to *Missiology*, a book offering a Southern Baptist perspective on missions.

Dr. Gary Smith is Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew. This seasoned professor came to Midwestern from teaching positions in Winnipeg Theological Seminary and Bethel Theological Seminary. He had also taught at Jerusalem University College while on sabbatical. He has a B.A. from Wheaton, an M.A. from Trinity and a Ph.D. from Dropsie. He has authored *Amos: A Commentary* (Christian Focus). He has served on the translation teams for the *New Century Version* of the Bible and the *New Living Bible*.

Mrs. Cherry Stucky is Appointed Instructor of Childhood Education. She has nearly 20 years of teaching experience in Christian schools. She came to Midwestern from Calvary Bible College where she was an assistant professor in the education department. Stucky received her undergraduate degree from Calvary Bible College, and an M.S.E. in Library Science from Central Missouri State University. She completed doctoral studies at Pensacola Christian College and is a candidate for the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Dr. Alan Tomlinson serves as Assistant Professor of New Testament and Greek. His rich background includes work as an industrial engineer for the Tennessee Valley Authority, an office manager for a certified public accountant, a dean of men at a Bible college, and a pastor for churches in Colorado and Texas. Tomlinson has a Th.M. from Dallas Seminary and a Ph.D. from Southern Seminary. His research interests

include the study of first-century Greek inscriptions, some largely untapped primary sources that shed light on the New Testament. Tomlinson often speaks at conferences and was named Midwestern's Professor of the Year for 2000-01.

Dr. Don Whitney serves as Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation. He was a pastor in the Chicago area for 14 years. While there, he earned a D.Min. at Trinity, having already earned an M.Div. at Southwestern Seminary. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association distributed 150,000 copies of his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (NavPress). Whitney has also authored *How Can I Be Sure I'm a Christian?* (NavPress), *Spiritual Disciplines in the Church* (Moody), and *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (NavPress). He is a popular conference speaker and was named Midwestern's Professor of the Year for 1999-2000.

Dr. Michael Wilson serves as Midwestern's Vice-President for Institutional Advancement and is also Assistant Professor of Practical Theology and Educational Leadership. He spent five years as a consultant/specialist in evangelism, partnership missions and prayer ministry for the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware. He has served on two state Baptist convention staffs and on the staff of the International Mission Board. He has a B.S. from Hardin-Simmons University, an M.Div. from Southwestern Seminary and an Ed.D. from Southern Seminary.

I am pleased to introduce to you the faculty of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. If God has called you into his service please consider allowing us the privilege of preparing you for a lifetime of ministry.

Terry L. Wilder  
Editor, *Midwestern Journal of Theology*

**A Theology for the Church**  
Convocation Address  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
August 20, 2002

David S. Dockery  
*President, Union University*  
*Jackson, TN 38305*

**Ephesians 4:11-16**

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (NASB).

At the heart of a theological seminary is the study of theology.<sup>1</sup> The term “theology” scares people. It sounds formidable, esoteric, abstract, and

---

<sup>1</sup> This essay borrows ideas significantly from and is dependent on the following sources: Paul Basden and David S. Dockery, eds. *People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1991); Robert Bellah, et al. *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979); David S. Dockery, ed. *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985); James Leo Garrett, Jr. *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970); Stanley G. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994); John Hannah, *Our Legacy* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint 1977); George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint 1963); C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Collier Books, MacMillan, 1946); Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960); Leon Morris,

technical. Many people are suspicious of the word theology—thinking it is irrelevant to our life with God, or even worse, a sort of human presumption. People ask, “Are we taking the living word of God and stuffing it into an arid intellectual system?” In my years of involvement with Christian ministry, going back to my university student days almost 30 years ago, I have been warned about theology. I don’t think my experience has been atypical for I have continued to find the suspicion of theology to be problematic among many church people. The suspicions are right at least partly because theology often has been studied in the wrong way which has led to mis-thinking or even hurtful thinking at many places.

Theology is not just an attempt to articulate our feelings about our dependence on God, as the influential German theologian Friederich Schleiermacher said. On the other hand, it is not merely an attempt to state the objective truth, or to put the truth in proper order, as the great orthodox theologian Charles Hodge suggested when he attempted to articulate theology in 19th century scientific terms. It seems best to me to think of theology in a twofold way: (1) as developing a mind for truth so that we can indeed “articulate the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” and (2) as developing a heart for God so that our lives are built up in the faith. Ultimately, a theology that has the church as its focus is to build up the believers so that the body may grow up into the Head, which is Christ himself, in order to bring about maturity in thought and in life (Eph 4:13-16).

For too many people, however, the province of theology is not the church, but is limited to the realm of specialists in the academic world. Let me say that I believe that Christian theology should engage the academic world, society at-large. I do believe there is a rightful place for a public theology. Ultimately, however, I believe theology is for the church. While this does not mean that all Christians are to be theologians in the sense of being uniquely summoned to the task of leading in theological thought, nevertheless all believers have a responsibility before God to be theologians, that is, to think lofty thoughts about God

---

*Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1917); Robert Saucy, “Doing Theology for the Church,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 16 (1973); *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972); Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* ([1799] San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1958); David Smith, *All God’s People: A Theology of the Church* (Wheaton: Bridgepoint, 1996); John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979); Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); *Practicing Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

and to live accordingly, that is to live according to God's word in Holy Scripture. To abdicate the theological domain to specialists alone either because of a lack of interest or because of the technicalities involved is not only harmful to the church, but I believe also that it is unpleasing to God. The truth is that every believer is in some sense a theologian, for all believers who know God have the responsibility to see and understand the revelation of God for their foundational beliefs, while integrating these beliefs into their life and practice.

### **Theology and the Church**

Theology is certainly *not* the whole of church life, but there must be a place for the true intellectual love of God, for Jesus has told us to love God with our heart, soul, strength, *and mind* and love our neighbor as well. This should not lead to some cold, intellectual approach to the faith unaccompanied by affection. For too many, theology is a kind of intellectual aloofness or uncommitted intellectual curiosity. But before we can discuss the role of the church in doing theology, I would suggest that we think about the relationship of theology *to* the church.

I believe theology renders service to the church in many ways. It satisfies the mind so that we can know God, so that we can know the living Christ. Theology is necessary for the church's teaching and apologetic tasks (1 Pet 3:15). Theology is important as a touchstone for understanding what the church believes and for recognizing the principles by which the allegiance of its members will be judged. Such beliefs and practices come from serious theological reflection. Theology also points to ethics. Certainly it is possible to act one way and think another, but it is not logically possible for one to do so for long, for even the biblical writer has admonished us "as a person thinks in his heart, so he is." If the church is to live in the world with a lifestyle that issues in glory to God, it must think—and think deeply—not only of personal ethics but of the implications of the biblical faith for social, economic, and political ethics as well. Such necessities touch the heart of the church's life and mission; they are not just matters on the periphery or options from which we can pick and choose.

One of the main problems the church faces in this new century is a failure to recognize one of the primary purposes of the church, which is stated clearly for us in Ephesians 3:10. God's intent is that through the church the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known. The term "manifold" means multicolored or multifaceted like a beautiful jewel. The history of the Christian church and the unfolding drama of redemption is a graduate school for the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm.

The church is central to God's working in history. John Stott says that the church is not only central to history, but to the gospel and Christian living as well.

Thus theology is more than God's words for me as an individual—theology is God's words for us—the church—the community of faith. It is important that we understand theology not merely in individualistic terms. We need to move toward a corporate and community understanding. If the church is central to God's plan then we cannot push to the edge what is central for God. This implies that we need a framework for understanding a theology *of* the church before we can talk about doing theology *for* the church.

### **A Theology of the Church**

In Ephesians Paul seems to advance the understanding of the church beyond that of a local body of believers to include the people of God on earth at any one time, plus all believers in heaven and on earth. This is the true, invisible, universal church.

At Pentecost God inaugurated the church as his new society (Acts 2). He founded it on Christ's finished work (Acts 2:22-24) and the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). The church is a mystery (Eph 3:1-6) that Christ prophesied (Matt 16:18) and was revealed at the Spirit's coming at Pentecost. The church has apostles and prophets as its foundation and Christ as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20-21).

Thus in origin and in purpose the church is God's church. We do not create the church by our efforts, but receive it as God's gift. It is constituted by him and for him. Membership is by divine initiative. God creates a fellowship of people indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament presents the church as the household of faith (Gal 6:10), the fellowship of the Spirit (Phil 2:1), the family of God, the pillar of truth (1 Tim 3:15), the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7), the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23), the new creation (Eph 2:15), and the temple of the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:21). The church is thus more than a human organization; it is a visible and tangible expression of the people who are reconciled to Christ and to one another.

Joining with the church's confession throughout the ages we can maintain that the church is one, holy, universal, and apostolic. The church then must seek to remain in continuity with the past, primarily the apostolic doctrine and practice made known to us in Holy Scripture (see Eph 2:20; 3:2-13). It is for this reason that theology is important for the church. The church must take seriously the work of doing theology as part of its purpose and mission.

### **Doing Theology for the Church**

Carrying out the image of the pillar of the truth, theologians must see their first calling as the equipping or building up of the church (Eph 4:13-16). Equipping involves moving believers toward: (1) the unity of faith and (2) a maturity of the faith that involves the full knowledge of God's Son.

When the church is equipped, the people of God will evidence stability in precept and practice. The church will demonstrate and model transparent relationships where people can "speak the truth in love" to one another—or as the text literally says—can model "truthing in love" where the church will grow up in every way into Christ, with each member supporting the other, fitted together in harmony and built up in love.

The people of God are to have a childlike faith, demonstrating honesty and humility in all things. However, we are not to be childish, which implies a lack of discernment. The church is not to be characterized as unstable, always caught up in the latest movement, trend, or fads, always seeking that which is novel based on the newest teaching at the most recent conference.

The kind of maturity described in Ephesians 4 needs a carefully articulated theological foundation that will lead the church away from instability and gullibility. Believers are to be trusting, but also discerning. We must not presume that everything bearing or using God's name is true. The church must always beware of deceptions and counterfeits to the truth.

### **Theology vs. Practice: A False Dichotomy**

Likewise the building up of the people of God results in the advancement of the gospel mission. In actualizing that mission, the church is called to be faithful, to discern, to interpret, and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as the transforming power for the world. Granted, the church also needs to be effective; i.e. to structure and manage its work in such a way that efficient stewardship of all available resources is practical.

Faithfulness and effectiveness, however, do not have equal status. The way in which the church manages itself, that makes and implements decisions regarding planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, and evaluating, is determined by faith commitments concerning the nature and calling of the church. The theological understanding of the church and its calling then must serve as the primary criteria by which the discoveries of the human or social sciences are critically analyzed. Thus effectiveness must be in service to faithfulness and indeed, when effectiveness is considered in isolation, may lead to unfaithfulness. The

inter-relationship with faithfulness and effectiveness can be adequately carried out only within a comprehensive ecclesiology that includes both theological foundations and practical manifestations in a mutually constructive relationship.

Unfortunately, the contemporary separation in which we find ourselves often results in mutual suspicion and hostility of the theological enterprise. The church does not encourage, and in fact at times seemingly discourages, the needed creative and collaborative expertise of theologians. The flip side of the coin is no better. Within the academy the practical issues of church are often considered too soft—sometimes mere fluff—to be intellectually stimulating and worthy of disciplined attention. And not surprisingly those practitioners of the life and work of the church often consider academic theologians to be overly abstract and too theoretical, thus irrelevant for the real life of the church. Even professional associations and journals have emerged that cater to the various special interest groups within both the academy and the church. Unfortunately there is seldom if ever any cross-fertilization. These groups read different books, listen to different experts, identify different problems, consider different issues, contribute to different journals, and congregate in different groupings as they pursue diverse and sometimes competing agendas.

My concerns today are not to be another sour voice on the contemporary scene. There are too many people today looking at the church and seeing the glass half empty. What we need is a renewed eschatological vision for the people of God with a recognition of the importance of the church in God's overall plan and a fresh appreciation of the significance of a theological foundation for the church. Granted that the lack of theological acumen on the part of many church members is due to many factors beyond the control of professional theologians; today it is important that we recognize the relationship between being a faithful theologian and a faithful churchman. In fact, Michael Green has shown that early theologians not only were faithful churchmen, but also evangelists, which points out that it was the vital intrinsic connection between theology and the church in its earliest days that contributed to its strength.

Despite the fact that academic theology has produced vast amounts of materials requiring technical specialization as in other areas of knowledge, theology cannot afford to become some sort of esoteric endeavor done only for the initiated few. It is germane and important to have theological societies and serious theological debate, but unless theology operates consciously as the servant of the church little long-term value is forthcoming. One is reminded somewhat facetiously of the fat ghost of the cultured voice as C. S. Lewis describes him in his work,

*The Great Divorce*. Upon refusing to repent of his snobbish spirit of open-ended intellectual inquiry in order to enter the heavenly city, the ghost cuts off conversation with his hosts to return to the gray city by saying, "Bless my soul; I'd nearly forgotten; of course I can't come with you; I have to be back next Friday to read a paper. We have a little theological society down here."

The responsibility of making theology applicable to the church rests both with the theologian and the church. Theology must be understandable to the church. Too often what theologians write is unintelligible for many church members. As someone has observed, our best minds are siphoned off to seminaries and graduate schools where they are expected to write indigestible monographs for the dozen other people in the world who can understand what they are talking about. Lest anyone misunderstand, I think that should continue but that can't be the end of the theological enterprise. In the past, theologians of the church wrote so that literate people could understand and it must be acknowledged that Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley are much easier to read than many contemporary theologians. Today we need theologians who can write in ways that are sharp, powerful and right on target. John Calvin himself frequently commended the biblical writers for their clarity, simplicity, and brevity, and sought to emulate them in his own writings.

If theology is to impact the church, theologians must learn to communicate in understandable ways. As someone has humorously said, "It may be scientific to say: 'Scintillate, scintillate, globule divific, fain would I fathom thy nature specific, loftily poised in the ether capacious, strongly resembling a gem carbonaceous.' But it is much more understandable to say, 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are, up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky.'"

### **Theology and Practice in Concert**

Likewise, theology must be relevant and applicable to the church. Yale theologian, Miroslav Wolf, in his new work, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in the Christian Life*, has encouraged us to think of theology as "a way" in the manner that the early church thought of the Christian faith as the way of life. This is not in any way to downplay or denigrate the importance of serious Christian scholarship. We certainly recognize that the various disciplines of theology are indeed indispensable to an accurate understanding of truth. Without the scholarship of experts in philology, philosophy, archaeology, history, languages, and other related fields—theological study would be seriously impoverished. Yet, if these specializations are pursued in of themselves as an end in themselves and not molded into a unified view of truth they

can get lost in the satisfaction of scholarly achievement alone. I hope that no one would ever suggest that my track record has been to subvert the validity and importance of these scholarly disciplines. But as Abraham Kuyper correctly pointed out a century ago, these studies do not finally touch the higher function of theology unless they set before the church and the world a system of truth that depends upon the regenerated mind and exposes the radical difference between Christianity and the philosophies of the world.

Certainly what engineers, surgeons, and other specialists think and do has significant consequence in this life. But our beliefs about God have significant consequences not only for this life but also for all eternity. Christian theology then forms the foundation of the church's beliefs, proclamation and ministry. It not only involves believing revealed truth but articulating it in such a way that calls the church to purity and ethical holiness. If Christian theology is the study of God and all his works, then it cannot be merely an exercise done in the ivory tower by specialists. Theology is the responsibility of the church seeking to communicate what the church believes, practices, and proclaims primarily for the good of believers, but also for a watching world.

We often hear voices suggest that theology is too divisive and therefore we should de-emphasize its importance. But theology is the backbone of the church. Without good theology the church cannot and will not mature in the faith and will be prone to be tossed back and forth by waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching (Eph 4:14). Healthy theology that matures the heart and head not only enables believers to move toward maturity, but also results in the praise and exaltation of God. Good theology should always lead to doxology. The Apostle Paul, after expounding the doctrines of sin, justification, sanctification, and the future of Israel in the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans, concludes that section by saying, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen." (Rom 11:33-36).

We must admit that some theologians unduly complicate the Christian faith or distract us from aspects of Christian living. We should not, however, conclude that theology in itself is distracting or divisive. Theology must be as much a part of the life of the church as evangelism and worship. Evangelism based on unsound theology will itself be unsound and even dangerous. Worship that does not see God as he is and as he has revealed himself will not rightly glorify God. Theology can help us better understand the faith we desire to share in our evangelistic

efforts and moreover can help us lead to an awareness of the grandeur, the greatness, and goodness of the one, true, and wise God that we worship.

Theology can also enable God's people to recover a true understanding of human life. In this sense God's people can once again gain a sense of the greatness of the soul. Theology can help us recover the awareness that God is more important than we are, that the future life is more important than this one, and that a right view of God gives genuine significance and security to our lives. We will understand that happiness is the promise of heaven and that holiness is the priority here in this world.

The church then can better understand what we believe and why we believe it. We can appreciate our heritage and enliven our future hope. When the church carries out this theological task and when theologians do theology for the church, the truth content of the faith can be preserved. For it is the express task of theology to expound the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:7).

When this takes place, the church can be strengthened. The gospel and its fullness can be proclaimed. Without the foundation of solid theology there can be no effective long term preaching, evangelism, or missionary outreach. Those who would suggest that what you don't know can't hurt you could find themselves in great difficulty if this approach is taken toward ultimate matters like heaven and hell. On the other hand, sound, reliable theology, based squarely on God's word, offers reassurance and hope.

As you begin this new academic year, as many of you even for the first time begin your pilgrimage as theological students, let me encourage you to do so with the commitment to inspired Scripture as the primary source of all theology. Thus our fundamental assumption is that there is truth available to us and it is found in the Bible and in the church's study of the Bible. The Bible is the word of God written. Christ is the Word of God revealed in it and the Holy Spirit is the voice of God in it revealing Christ to the church.

While we unhesitatingly affirm these truths, a warning needs to be voiced. No single church or denomination, however orthodox or evangelical, strictly follows the Bible. While the church has sought to be always faithful to Scripture, the depth of meaning in the biblical texts is rarely fully understood at any one moment in history. Theology in any tradition is often the art of establishing central and classic texts, which may mean that other texts unfortunately are ignored or not given sufficient weight. No single theologian, church, or denomination has escaped nor can escape human frailty, though there is certainly

continuity throughout the centuries, particularly in the teachings concerning the person and work of Christ.

Thus understanding theology in the context of the history of the church provides insight for today and guidance for the future. In this way theology helps preserve the church from wrong-headed fads. Knowledge of the past keeps the church from confusing what is merely a contemporary expression from that which is enduringly relevant. Theology helps present to the church a valuable accumulation of enduring insights along with numerous lessons and warnings—both positive and negative. Thus theology done for the church will always have one eye on the church's historical paths.

Such an awareness of the church's history provides a bulwark against the pride and arrogance that would suggest that "we" are the only group or tradition that carries on the orthodoxy of the apostles. Knowledge of such continuities and discontinuities in the past will help us focus on those areas of truth that are truly timeless and enduring, while encouraging authenticity and humility, as well as a dependency on God's Spirit. Hopefully this awareness will cause us not just to accept things in accordance with our tradition or do things in accordance with our own "comfort zones" but will again and again drive us back to the New Testament with fresh eyes and receptive hearts—and then rest our case there.

Finally, we believe that a theologically informed and equipped church will be better prepared for times of duress and trial—whether through means of persecution, in the face of faithless scholarship, or in the midst of the church's internal bickering and divisions. With hope the church can focus on the triumphal work of God in Jesus Christ, living in expectation of the glorious reign of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Indeed Samuel Stone has said it so well in his great hymn about the church:

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
 She is His new creation, By Spirit and the Word:  
 From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride,  
 With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation, Yet one o'er all the earth,  
 Her charter of salvation, One Lord, one faith, one birth;  
 One holy name she blesses, Partakes one holy food,  
 And to one hope she presses with every grace endued.

Mid toil and tribulation, And tumult of her war,  
 She waits the consummation of peace for evermore;  
 Till with the vision glorious Her longing eyes are blest,  
 And the great Church victorious Shall be the Church at rest.

And then with the Apostle Paul we shall all gladly proclaim, “Now to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen.”

## **To the Jew First—Christian Mission to Abraham’s Children: How Are the Gentiles Doing?**

R. Philip Roberts

*President*

*Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*

*Kansas City, MO 64118*

The purpose of this project is to bring some sense of analysis to the question of Christian denominations’ attitudes towards the task of Jewish evangelism.<sup>1</sup> The last 50 years of the history of Christian missions in this category has seen a quantum sea change that should be noted. This shift in priorities and rationale for taking or not taking the gospel to the children of Abraham also serves, it appears, as a bellwether for the various theological influences afoot in representative Christian confessional bodies. Attitudes towards this assignment likely will and do mirror particular denominations towards evangelism of all types of religious groupings. What is possibly at stake here is the very essence of Christian evangelism itself and the continued witness of the gospel of Christ.

Three genres of Christian denominations will be reviewed and then some attempt at analysis will be undertaken. The groupings to be surveyed briefly are: (1) mainline Protestant denominations (i.e. affiliates of the World Council of Churches); (2) The Roman Catholic Church; (3) representative groups of evangelicals.

First, mainline Protestant denominations will be considered. A. H. Baumann in his very able article, “Recent Statements on Jewish Evangelism,” published by the Lausanne Conference on Jewish Evangelism in 1991, chronicled developments in the WCC from 1948 until the end of the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Amsterdam in 1948 reported on “The Christian Approach to the Jews.” It

---

<sup>1</sup> Much of this original article was published in the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism offprint for its sixth international conference (104-112). The paper in its present form was presented at the Evangelical Theological Society’s 2002 meeting in Toronto, Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Lausanne Council on Jewish Evangelism, 4th International Conference (Zeist, Holland, August 8-9, 1991).

acknowledged the recent horrors of the holocaust but went on to state that “the fulfillment of the commission,” i.e. Matthew 28:19-20, “requires that we include the Jewish people in our evangelistic task.”<sup>3</sup> The report continued,

In spite of the universality of our Lord’s commission and of the fact that the first mission of the church was to the Jewish people, our churches have with rare exceptions failed to maintain that mission. Owing to this failure our churches must consider the responsibility for missions to the Jews as a normal part of parish work, especially in those countries where Jews are members of the general community . . . we recommend: that they seek to recover the universality of our Lord’s commission by including the Jewish people in their evangelistic work.<sup>4</sup>

In 1954 the Second Assembly commented, “To expect Jesus Christ means to hope for the conversion of the Jewish people, and to love Him means to love the people of God’s promise.”<sup>5</sup>

Such explicit calls for the evangelization of Israel and compassionate appeals for the need of Jewish people for faith in Christ are not expressed quite so clearly again in WCC literature. Tenuousness and temerity begin to mark many statements regarding Jewish evangelism. Within a generation the communication of the gospel was diluted. By 1967 the WCC Commission on Faith and Order noted: “Perhaps even the only way in which Christians today can testify to the Jewish people about their faith in Christ may be not so much in explicit words but by service.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1982 the term “evangelism” was dropped from WCC publications related to Jewish ministry. That concept was replaced by “witness” which was interpreted as being both “word and deed.”<sup>7</sup> Other WCC-related churches ventured further from the biblical concept of evangelism. “The phrase ‘mission to the Jews’ puts Jews on a par with heathens and undervalues the specific position of the Jewish people among the nations,” stated the Central Board of the Swiss Protestant Church Federation (1977), while paradoxically at the same time maintaining that “Christians have to bear witness of their faith in Christ also to the Jews.”<sup>8</sup> Dialogue was increasingly affirmed as the principle

---

<sup>3</sup> First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948, 7; cited in A. Brockway and P. van Buren, et. al, *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. Originally found in The Commission on Faith and Order, from a report of its committee on the Church and the Jewish People, August 1967.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

means of “relating” to Jewish people. The Texas Conference of Churches in 1982 declared the “avoidance of any conversionary intent or proselytism in the relationship.”<sup>9</sup>

Questioning of the legitimacy of Jewish evangelism continued into the 1980s. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church stated in 1987 that Christians and Jews are in a covenant relationship with God and that the “implications of this reality for evangelism should be explored.”<sup>10</sup> It goes on to maintain that “difficulty arises when we acknowledge that the same Scripture which proclaims that (i.e. Jesus’) atonement and which Christians claim as God’s word clearly states that Jews are already in a covenant relationship with God . . .”<sup>11</sup>

Brockway and van Buren noted in their commentary on these documents: “In the last decades a clear shift is visible in the documents of both the WCC and its member churches away from the missionary approach to the Jews towards a dialogical relationship between the church and the Jewish people.”<sup>12</sup> In 1982 the WCC was straightforward enough to acknowledge “that a mission to the Jews is not part of an authentic Christian witness”;<sup>13</sup> and argued that “it is possible to regard the church and the Jewish people together as forming the one people of God, separated from one another for the time being, yet with the promise that they will ultimately become one.”<sup>14</sup>

Since 1988 the trend away from Jewish evangelism in WCC-related churches is more marked. A sampling of official statements demonstrates this fact. They include the WCC statement of November 1988 entitled, “The Churches and the Jewish People.” Here the WCC affirms “the uniqueness of Christ and the truth of the Christian faith,” but denounces “coercive proselytism directed toward Jews” as “incompatible with Christian faith.” No mention of biblically-based evangelism is made.

“Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations” by the Episcopal Church (1988) renounces “coercive proselytism” while embracing dialogue which is described as witness “of one’s faith conviction without the intention of proselytizing.”<sup>15</sup>

“A Statement on Relations Between Jews and Christians” produced by the Disciples of Christ in 1993 urges that “Christians today have an

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 97. The statement went on to note “this does not exclude Jews and Christians from affirming to each other their respective beliefs and values.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 173.

urgent responsibility to converse and cooperate with, and to affirm Jewish people as the special kindred of Christians.”<sup>16</sup>

The United Methodist Church’s declaration, “Building New Bridges in Hope” (October 1996), notes that while

we as Christians respond faithfully to the call to proclaim the gospel in all places, we can never presume to know the full extent of God’s work in the world and we recognize the reality of God’s activity outside the Christian church. . . . We know that judgment as to the ultimate salvation of persons from any faith community, including Christianity and Judaism, belongs to God alone.<sup>17</sup>

“Guidelines for Lutheran-Jewish Relations,” issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, demonstrate a concern to be sensitive to “most Jews” view that sees “‘Jews for Jesus’ or ‘Messianic Jews’ . . . as having forsaken Judaism, and consider efforts to maintain otherwise to be deceptive”; it encourages all “to understand and respect” Jewish concern that “intermarriage and conversion” threatens their survival. None of the aforementioned documents express any commitment or concern for Jewish evangelism.

The Society of Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Hamburg, Germany in February 1995 went so far as to produce a document entitled “Renunciation of Mission to the Jews” which claimed that Matthew 28:18-20 was directed only “to the gentile nations” and that it “is not for the Jews.” In conclusion the piece encourages churches to “an intense process” to “induce a consensus about the renunciation of mission to the Jews.”

An obvious devolution in the biblical mandate for Jewish evangelism is traceable in the positions reflected by these WCC-aligned groups. First, beginning with the 1948 WCC statement, it is clear that there was a solid commitment to take the gospel to Jewish people. This stance was followed within a generation by an endorsement of dialogue and action being of equal value and apparently of the same nature as the spoken witness or gospel. Then, follows thirdly, an advocating of dialogical encounter without “the intention of proselytizing.” The fourth stage is that reflected most clearly by the Hamburg Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation which encourages “an intense process” for the “renunciation of mission to the Jews.”

It may well be argued that a final pattern of open opposition to not only Jewish evangelism but also the task of gospel proclamation generally has emerged. In November of 1999 the Chicago Council of

---

<sup>16</sup> First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948, 7.

<sup>17</sup> “Building New Bridges,” 4.

Inter-religious leaders openly voiced opposition to Southern Baptist efforts to do church planting and evangelism in that city. The stated rationale for the council's concern, led in part by Jewish participants, was that such efforts would "foment hate crimes."

Clearly the post-modernizing of Christian evangelism so as to interpret such efforts as hate-filled and bigoted claims to possess the truth and insensitively to force it down the throats of unsuspecting converts has begun.

Secondly, we review broadly the Roman Catholic position. The Roman Catholic position on Jews' faith and Jewish evangelism reveals the same trend towards non-evangelism. *Nostra Aetate*, issued by Vatican II, is the trend-setting document for clarifying the Roman Catholic position toward non-Christian religions.<sup>18</sup> It states:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts, and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6). In him (2 Cor. 5:18-19), men find the fulness (sic) of their religious life.<sup>19</sup>

The latter half of the above statement seems to preserve the centrality of Christian evangelism in the Roman Catholic sense and implies that Christ provides the "fulness" of religious life however that may be interpreted. One searches in vain for an exhortation to share the gospel with members of other faiths, including Jews. Instead the following proviso is included:

The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians . . .<sup>20</sup>

A missiological and theological tension has emerged within the Roman Catholic Church. On the one hand, emphasis may be found on affirming the uniqueness of the Roman Catholic faith while arguing for salvific exceptions for those who are not members of it. For instance, the

---

<sup>18</sup> "Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," Vatican II, October 28, 1965.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: the concilian and post concilian documents* (Northport, New York, 1975), 739.

Roman Catholic Church in *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964) excuses ignorance of the necessity of the church for salvation:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – these too may achieve eternal salvation.<sup>21</sup>

The document continues,

Nor shall divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life.<sup>22</sup>

The following statement relative to the Jews should be read in light of the above:

As holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize God's movement when it came (cf. Lk. 19:42). Jews for the most part did not accept the Gospel; on the contrary, many opposed the spreading of it. (cf. Rom. 11:28). Even so, the apostle Paul maintains that the Jews remain very dear to God, for the sake of the patriarchs, since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made.<sup>23</sup>

It is necessary to conclude that the Catholic Church teaches that if Jewish people strive to lead a good moral life, follow the dictates of their conscience—albeit without explicit faith in Christ—salvation for them is achievable. They also may be excused from faith in Christ given possible barriers to belief. Missions to them would therefore, in many cases, be redundant and unnecessary.

It is understandable therefore why Roman Catholic bishops would agree with Lutheran and Anglican colleagues that there is no conflict between “a dialogue based on mutual respect for the sacredness of the other and the Christian mission to preach the Gospel.” They explained, however, “An aggressive direct effort to convert the Jewish people would break the bond of trust.”<sup>24</sup> Vigorous and passionate evangelism to the Jews is not part of the bishops' agenda.

In the summer of 2002 a bishop's committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops established an even firmer stance against

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 367-8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 741.

<sup>24</sup> “Statement on Christian - Jewish Dialogue,” June 25, 1996.

Jewish evangelism—stating quite boldly that it was unnecessary and counterproductive to the growth of Christ’s kingdom. The committee, meeting together with representatives of various Jewish groups, including representatives from the National Council of Synagogues, stated:

Neither faith group believes that we should missionize among the other in order to save souls via conversion. Quite the contrary: we believe both faith groups are beloved of God and assured of His grace.<sup>25</sup>

The Catholic committee opens the door to a very broad inclusivism by noting, “Though the Catholic Church respects all religious traditions and through dialogue with them can discern the workings of the Holy Spirit, and though we believe God’s infinite grace is surely available to believers of other faiths,” it more specifically states—“it is only about Israel’s covenant that the Church can speak with the certainty of the biblical witness.”<sup>26</sup> While the church apparently endorses the concept that God’s covenant with Israel includes the guarantee of personal salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ, the committee states that converts from Judaism “will be welcomed and accepted.”<sup>27</sup> The Jewish “witness to the kingdom . . . must not be curtailed by seeking the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity.”<sup>28</sup> A stronger but nonetheless more duplicitous statement could hardly be penned.

While the Catholic position vis-à-vis Christian mission to the Jews mirrors that of the WCC-based groups, it is possible that the work of Vatican II was the primary theological impetus behind changes in both confessional groupings. At least it is obvious that the Roman Catholic Church has given itself to far more serious theological reflection, although convoluted from the biblical perspective, than has mainline Protestantism.

It is clear that serious slippage in Jewish evangelism has occurred both within the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Their documents have emphasized dialogue over against evangelism. In the case of the Roman Catholicism, a highly refined, but

---

<sup>25</sup> Rabbi Gilbert Rosenthal, Executive Director of the National Council of Synagogues, commenting upon the committee’s public release of the text, “Reflections on Covenant and Mission” (August 12, 2002). This document was drawn up by the Consultation of the National Council of Synagogues and the Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (NCS/BCEIA). This information was originally found on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at <http://www.usccb.org>. Accessed: August 2002.

<sup>26</sup> “Reflections on Covenant and Mission,” 5.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

obvious inclusivism has become its official position. One should not expect, therefore, much if any emphasis to be put on Jewish evangelism among these denominations. And it may be that more outspoken opposition to Jewish evangelism will be forthcoming in the years ahead.

Third, it is only when attention is given to the evangelical wing of Christianity that any serious involvement in the sharing of the gospel to Jewish people can be discovered. Two or three examples will suffice to demonstrate that this is the case. First, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) in 1973, 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1989 issued resolutions on Jewish evangelism. The one for 1983 reads:

Resolved, that the LCMS affirm its belief that the Messiah, Jesus, is the only way for all people to be reconciled with God and affirm its desire that Jewish people be included in the proclamation of this truth.

More recently in 1989 the Synod encouraged,

That we . . . continue to pray for a mission concern for Jewish people throughout the world and encourage congregations and districts with larger concentrations of Jewish people to reach out to them with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup>

The LCMS published a handbook titled *Witnessing to Jewish People* (authored by Bruce J. Lieske), conducted training for Jewish evangelism, supported missionaries to the Jewish people, and appointed a staff person for Jewish evangelism as a part of their action in 1989.

The Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) is another clear illustration of a denomination that has maintained a heart for taking the gospel to Jewish friends and neighbors. At their 20th General Assembly (1992), an overture regarding Jewish evangelism was passed. In part, it read:

. . . the 20th General Assembly of the PCA reaffirms that . . . “salvation is found in no one else (i.e. Jesus Christ) and that it is our duty, as Messiah’s people, to take the gospel to all the peoples of the earth, including the Jewish people. We call the Jewish people, . . . to join us in faith in their own Messiah . . . and in the proclamation of His gospel to all peoples.

In that same assembly the PCA matched its words with action by recognizing CHAIM—an evangelistic ministry to the Jewish people and expressing its willingness to support it.

---

<sup>29</sup> Found in Bruce J. Lieske, *Witnessing to the Jewish People* (Orlando, FL: Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism, 1995), 19.

Likewise the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) passed a similar resolution (in fact, partly based on the PCA overture) in 1996. It read, in part:

Whereas, our evangelistic efforts have largely neglected the Jewish people, both at home and abroad;

Whereas, there has been an organized effort on the part of some to deny that Jewish people need to come to their Messiah . . .

Be it resolved, that we commit ourselves to prayer, especially for the salvation of the Jewish people . . . and . . . that we direct our energies and resources toward the proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people.

This action, along with the decision of the denomination's national mission board to appoint a national consultant, or missionary, to the Jewish people, created a firestorm of media attention. A major article in the *New York Times* announced the action and that was followed by national television, evening news attention, talk radio programs dedicated to the issue, news clips on NPR radio, guest editorials in various newspapers and journals as well as mentions in the *World Book* and *Encyclopedia Britannica* yearbooks. Additionally, various ecumenical and Jewish gatherings expressed their disdain for the action.<sup>30</sup>

Why was there such an enormous response, largely negative, at the SBC's decision? Possibly some of it was due to the size of the SBC which was possibly perceived to be more of an influence for Jewish evangelism. Simultaneously there was disappointment expressed that suddenly Southern Baptists had stepped away from ecumenical and non-evangelistic dialogue. Dialogue should, in Southern Baptist understanding, involve participation by elements of the Hebrew Christian community. Apparently it was thought by the liberal ecumenical wing of the Jewish movement that much ground had suddenly been lost to the SBC and that it once again would be an aggressive force for Jewish evangelism.

Southern Baptists have published materials encouraging Jewish evangelism, have held numerous training events for the laity, pastors and seminarians, and have spoken forthrightly in several significant contexts about the need to continue to share the truths of Christ with the Hebrew people.

Notably the two splinter elements within the context of the SBC have taken different positions on Jewish evangelism. The most liberal group, the Alliance of Baptists, called for dialogue as the only appropriate

---

<sup>30</sup> The writer enjoyed the privilege of representing Southern Baptists at several of these, including the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the national meeting of the Anti-Defamation League.

response to relating to Jewish people, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, while calling for the evangelization of all people, has not articulated any specific position regarding Jewish evangelism.

Finally, in regards to evangelism, the Lausanne movement solidified and clarified its position regarding Jewish evangelism and the need of Jewish people for the gospel in its Manila Manifesto of 1989. Section three of its commentary on the whole gospel is entitled, "The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ." Regarding Jews and the gospel it reads:

It is sometimes held that in virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ, to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to 'the Jew first.' We, therefore, reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary.<sup>31</sup>

This statement is thorough in its rejection of dual covenantism and is forthright in stating the primacy of Jewish evangelism. Given the variety of international denominational and parachurch leaders who signed and affirmed this statement, its impact is significant and strategic.

### **Conclusion**

There are several conclusions that emerge from this limited overview of denominational attitudes towards Jewish evangelism and the need of Jews for the gospel. The first is that dilution of commitment away from Jewish evangelism on the part of mainline Protestant denominations has occurred both in American and European churches. This trend is also clearly evident within the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, it may be said that Roman Catholicism has articulated more thoroughly their position that many Jews may not need the gospel.

Secondly, several evangelical denominations have maintained a consistently biblical position and in some instances have strengthened it. Dual covenantism has been rejected in the cases cited while the need for a clear commitment to taking the gospel to Jewish people has been expressed. The LCMS and the PCA passed forthright resolutions related to sharing the gospel with Jewish people, but have also continued significant support for Jewish evangelism. As well, the Lausanne Movement since Manila has been a particularly clear voice maintaining the uniqueness of Christ, his atonement and the need for Jewish faith and belief in the historical Jesus of the Bible. Notably, Southern Baptists

---

<sup>31</sup> Lausanne Committee Staff, *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1990), 29.

have revived dramatically their commitment to Jewish evangelism. There has been as well a noted surprise and even outrage expressed at this renewed commitment.<sup>32</sup> This type of opposition is reflective of the trend within professedly Christian denominations towards a more postmodern and relativistic attitude regarding Christian truth.

Lastly let us consider some issues that need to be addressed within evangelicalism. The above facts demonstrate the need for every denomination to revisit their commitment to Jewish evangelism from time to time and publicly re-express it. It should not be taken for granted that this is an issue that all Christians understand and to which they are committed. It is therefore vital that there be a regular public expression of support for the Jewish ministry that would call Christians to rally around the cause of Jewish evangelism. Such statements and resolutions as issued by the LCMS, the PCA and the SBC serve as a prophetic voice within our culture for the uniqueness of the gospel and its particular relevance for the Jewish people.

Secondly, new generations of pastors and evangelistic leaders need to be trained and sensitized for Jewish evangelism. Within Southern Baptist ranks we are seeing seminary courses on Jewish evangelism being offered for the first time in our history. Knowing the particular problems and challenges of sharing the gospel with the sons and daughters of Abraham and the need to educate students on the theological basis for Jewish evangelism, it is critical that seminary training be emphasized.

Thirdly, Jewish believers need to be led to understand their unique and vital role as evangelists and missionaries, not only to their own people, but also to the world at large. Some mission organizations are discovering and realizing the particular fruitfulness of using Jewish evangelists. It is true that many Jewish believers have a particularly unique ability to express the gospel and their appreciation for it is often deep rooted. Also, the general public is often greatly interested in the message of *Yeshua* (Jesus) shared from a Jewish heart. Hence, Jewish manpower and resources ought to be utilized to the furthest possible degree.

Fourthly, the biblical role of the place of Israel in God's stated purpose needs to be re-expressed, not only to denominations and churches, but also to the general public. This trend will be vital for two reasons. (1) It is essential as an apologetic for biblical truth. The survival and indeed the calling of Israel to Christ in these days is clearly an apologetic that affirms once again the truthfulness of the word of God. It demonstrates that God's covenant is without revocation but not to the exclusion of the demands and promises of the gospel. (2) It would also

---

<sup>32</sup> See "Group asks SBC to retract resolution on Jews," an Associated Baptist Press release published in *Word and Way*, January 23, 1997.

serve to fight the horrible plight of anti-Semitism that rears its ugly head too often within the cultures of the world. David Gushee demonstrates in his important book, *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*, that a clear understanding of Israel's biblical role and its place in God's purpose in history is the best antidote to anti-Semitism. It is vital that in our evangelizing we are also forthright in our call to renounce the hatred and animosity often expressed to the children of Abraham and to show how Israel is still a part of the biblical plan of history.<sup>33</sup> In this way we can best express our love to them along with the sublime task of pointing them to the one who is the Messiah and Savior.

---

<sup>33</sup> Along with the resolution on Jewish evangelism passed by the SBC in 1996 was a resolution against anti-Semitism passed in 1972 and 1981. Both serve as clear expressions of love for the Jewish people as well as a sense of their biblical call and place in history.

## Whose Jesus? Which Revelation?

Malcolm B. Yarnell, III  
*Academic Dean and Vice-President*  
*Associate Professor of Historical Theology*  
*Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*  
*Kansas City, MO 64118*

### Introduction

*Alasdair MacIntyre and Carl F. H. Henry*

The title of this article is reminiscent of Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*<sup>1</sup> which is relevant to a discussion on Carl Henry for a number of reasons.<sup>2</sup> First, MacIntyre has offered a major section of the Roman Catholic intellectual community a new lease on life. Carl Henry has offered a major section of the Protestant intellectual community something similar. Without Henry's contributions to the formation of the new evangelicalism, fundamentalist Protestant Christianity may well have headed off into temporal, and finally eternal, irrelevance.<sup>3</sup> A recent admirer of Henry says,

One of his major achievements has been the reestablishment of theology as a vital concern of the Christian community. His theological vigor and force have often laid bare the latent antitheological attitudes among some evangelicals and have reasserted the vital role of theology as a servant of the church.<sup>4</sup>

This is high praise, indeed! A second reason MacIntyre's work sheds light on our subject is that his thesis put a nail in the coffin of Enlightenment liberalism, at least from the philosopho-ethical perspective. Similarly, Carl Henry put a nail in the coffin of liberalism, from a philosopho-theological point of view. Moreover, he has identified significant weaknesses in that other Protestant reaction against

---

<sup>1</sup> (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> This paper was originally read at a symposium on Carl F. H. Henry at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, which took place on March 7-9, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Bob E. Patterson, *Carl F.H. Henry, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 38-45.

<sup>4</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Carl F.H. Henry," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. by Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 291.

liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, which he called neo-Protestantism. A third reason MacIntyre's work helps us understand Henry's contribution is that MacIntyre showed the impossibility of separating reason from authority and tradition. As MacIntyre notes, rationalities are dependent upon some tradition of justice and when those rationalities, specifically post-Enlightenment liberal ones, deny such dependence, they are self-contradicting and ultimately self-defeating.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Henry has enabled evangelicals to see that our conceptions of Jesus are intimately related to our doctrine of revelation. Despite their mutual intolerance of liberalism, the constructive proposals put forward by MacIntyre and Henry differ markedly. Where MacIntyre proposes a Thomistic synthesis of Aristotle and Augustine as the answer to liberalism, Henry believes the best answer to liberalism is to reassert the dependence of fallen humanity upon the manifestation of a transcendent God in the person of Jesus Christ who is brought into conceptual focus by the Bible.

### *Henry's Augustinian and Aristotelean Roots*

Although we note the difference between the purposes of MacIntyre and Henry, one must also recognize a certain dependence of Henry upon Aristotelean logic and Augustinian theology, a dependence fostered by Henry's acknowledged intellectual debt to Reformed thinkers such as Gordon Clark. For instance, Henry's Augustinianism can be seen in his philosophical historiography, which has a three-fold classification—ancient, medieval and modern.<sup>6</sup> Henry prefers the medieval outlook to the classical and corrects modern errors by reference to the medieval. In Henry's historiography, the medieval approach is rather broad: it began with the coming of Jesus Christ, embraced the Apostles' Creed, promoted the transcendence of God and failed only when it indirectly hastened the autonomy of man and nature. Although Henry places the Protestant Reformation in the modern period, he believes Luther and Calvin corrected medieval errors without succumbing to the modern antipathy toward metaphysics.<sup>7</sup> The Reformers are also important because they continued the Augustinian-like synthesis of revelation and reason.<sup>8</sup>

Henry's Aristotelean tendencies are evident in his relating of the

---

<sup>5</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 3-10.

<sup>6</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976-1983; new edn, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999) [hereinafter, *GR&A*], I, 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> According to Henry, Tertullian was keenly aware that philosophy is not benign; Augustine saw philosophy as a servant of theology; and, Aquinas made theology dependent upon philosophy. Launching from the medieval scholastic theologians, modernists went on to reject theology in favor of philosophy (*GR&A*, I, 182-88).

divine *Logos* to human logic and his dependence upon Clark's critique of Karl Barth. According to Henry, the light that lightens every man of John 1:9, the eternal *Logos*, is the source of logic within humanity.<sup>9</sup> Barth's non-propositional view of revelation is therefore declared unbiblical. Clark is approvingly quoted:

Christianity, . . . if the Bible is authoritative, as Barth often says it is, should develop its epistemology and theory of language from the information contained in the Scriptures. Aside from imperative sentences and a few exclamations in the Psalms, the Bible is composed of propositions. These give information about God and his dealings with men. No hint is given that they are pointers to something else. They are given to us as true, as truths, as the objects of knowledge. Let linguistics, epistemology, and theology conform.<sup>10</sup>

This is immediately followed by Henry's critical appropriation of Aristotle's logical program, and a call to "preserve the existing laws of logic to escape pleading the cause of illogical nonsense." "We are therefore back to the emphasis that the laws of logic belong to the *imago Dei*, and have ontological import."<sup>11</sup> Thus, although Henry is concerned to vindicate Scripture, he readily employs Augustinian theology and Aristotelean rationality to bolster his argument.

## Two Questions

### *Henry's Theological Method*

Two questions are before us: "Whose Jesus? Which revelation?" Answering these two questions in reverse order will be helpful: first, we will consider the epistemological issue, and second, the ontological. Henry approached the theological enterprise in this manner,<sup>12</sup> apparently for two reasons. First, history demanded it. Protestant orthodoxy has long treated revelation as prolegomena to systematic theology proper. In the nineteenth century, liberalism focused attention on epistemology by denying the authority of the premier conduit of Christian authority, the Bible. In the twentieth century, neo-orthodoxy sought to revivify Protestant Christianity by reclaiming revelation, but, unfortunately, reoriented our knowledge of the divine revelation away from the written text and toward internal encounter. The second reason Henry approached epistemology first is because, although God is ontologically prior to

<sup>9</sup> *GR&A*, III, 209, 215.

<sup>10</sup> Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1963), 150; quoted in *GR&A*, III, 228.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>12</sup> Mohler, "Carl F. H. Henry," 286-87.

revelation, knowledge of God must first be established. Answering the epistemological question helps provide the answer to the ontological question.

In his later work, *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, Henry began by identifying the numerous views of who Jesus really is. Some of these views are opposed to Christianity, such as the doctrines of Judaism or Islam; others are perversions of Christianity, such as the teachings of Rudolf Bultmann or the early church heretics.<sup>13</sup> These radically different views of Jesus can be distinguished by reference to their radically different views of revelation. As Henry says at the beginning of his explication of the fifteen theses in the first part of *God, Revelation and Authority*:

Few concepts have in fact encountered and endured such radical revision throughout the long history of ideas as has the concept of divine revelation. Especially within the last two centuries divine revelation has been stretched into everything, stripped into nothing, or modeled into innumerable compromises of such outrageous extremes.<sup>14</sup>

When Henry's *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth* is read alongside *God, Revelation and Authority*, it is apparent that the doctrine of revelation is formative for how modern people see Jesus. In both works, revelation is treated prior to Christology. Henry spends much of his time in *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth* refuting errors concerning revelation in order to construct a biblically viable Christology.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Current Crisis in Authority*<sup>16</sup>

Before moving to the questions, let us note the current crisis of authority plaguing Protestant Christians that gives Henry's theology a renewed relevance. In June 2000, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a revised *Baptist Faith & Message*. Article one of that document was significantly altered to exclude the idea of the suprahistoric Christ as a source of special revelation set over against the special revelation of Scripture. The 1963 *Baptist Faith & Message* stated, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." Concerned with neo-orthodox interpretations of this statement, the revision committee assembled by Paige Patterson altered the sentence to read, "All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation." This idea has parallels in the epistemology of evangelicals such as

<sup>13</sup> (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 9-22.

<sup>14</sup> *GR&A*, II, 7.

<sup>15</sup> *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 23-54.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *GR&A*, IV, 7-23.

Henry, who speaks of Christ, the incarnate Word, as the “center” or “focus” of the Bible, the inscripturated word.<sup>17</sup> Some Southern Baptists accused the revision committee of engaging in bibliolatry, of worshiping the Bible in place of Christ. Of course, this was denied by conservatives, who countered that moderates were robbing Scripture of its full authority by opposing Christ to Scripture.<sup>18</sup> We might push the discussion further and inquire whether the Christ moderate Southern Baptists oppose to Scripture is the same Christ conservative Southern Baptists worship.

### Which Revelation?

#### *Jesus' View of Revelation*

One of the most enlightening essays contained in Henry's magisterial *God, Revelation and Authority* concerns the doctrine of revelation which Jesus affirmed. It is best to construct our doctrine of revelation upon that which our Lord expressed. In this way, the doctrine of revelation established by Jesus will serve as the foundation for our subsequent doctrine of Jesus. An ontological presupposition—Jesus is Lord—will establish epistemological boundaries, which will, in turn, define the ontological Jesus. Does such obviously circular reasoning bother you? If so, join company with James Barr, who dismissed the evangelical worldview for being a self-contained circle. Henry did not disagree but cleverly responded, “He seems to forget that the same characteristic applies also to modernist, neoorthodox and existentialist alternatives.” Every worldview is circular in reasoning. Such circularity, however, need not descend into subjectivity and absurdity. On the contrary, “Historic Christian theism . . . insists that its circle of faith be completely answerable to transcendent revelation and logical consistency, and in no way considers logical inconsistency an ideal to secure support for spiritual commitment.”<sup>19</sup> With the presuppositionalist position established and defended on a transcendently-qualified *tu quoque* basis,<sup>20</sup> let us consider the doctrine of revelation.

What was Jesus' doctrine of revelation? The first-century Hebrew

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 78, 98, 208; IV, 189. Cf. Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 2 vols (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), II, 273-74.

<sup>18</sup> Russell D. Moore, “Mohler is right, CBF members say on question of Biblical authority,” Baptist Press, 30 June 2000; *idem*, “For the Bible tells me so: Have Baptists replaced Jesus with a book?” *The Southern Seminary Magazine*, November 2000, 6-9; Kenneth S. Hemphill, “Is the 2000 Confession Guilty of Bibliolatry?” (Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty paper, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> *GR&A*, IV, 71. Cf. IV, 76-77.

<sup>20</sup> For an analysis of the *tu quoque* argument, see Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 38ff.

view was “that Scripture is sacred, authoritative and normative and that it has, in view of its divine inspiration, a permanent and impregnable validity.”<sup>21</sup> Henry says Jesus appropriated the Hebrew view but modified it in five ways. First, Jesus warned against sinful hermeneutics which distort the meaning of Scripture. In Mark 7:9, he castigated the Pharisees: “Disregarding the commandment of God, you teach the doctrine of men” (Holman Christian Standard Bible). In Matthew 5, rather than limiting the moral law to external issues alone, he deepened the meaning of the moral code by addressing internal motivations.<sup>22</sup> Second, Jesus of Nazareth pointed to the Old Testament witnesses of the promise which is personally fulfilled in himself. In John 5:39-47, he rebuked the Jews: “You pore over the Scriptures . . . yet they testify about me. . . . For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me.” In Luke 24:25-27, on the way to Emmaus, he exhorted the unwitting disciples, “O how unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken. . . . Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” In John 5:46-47, he correlated the writings (*gramma*) of Moses with his own spoken words (*r(h)=ma*).<sup>23</sup>

Third, Jesus altered the prophetic introduction from the third-person singular, “Thus saith the Lord,” to the first-person singular, “I say unto you.” He thus authenticated the divine origin of Scripture while making himself its source and authoritative interpreter. Jesus never criticized the Old Testament, although he did criticize certain interpretations of it. Rather, he subtly identified the Bible as God’s very words.<sup>24</sup> Fourth, Jesus enabled human beings to fulfill the requirements of the written law by promising the internal dwelling of the Holy Spirit. He was establishing a new covenant which would transcend the old. In John 4:14, he promised the Spirit as a well of water springing to eternal life. In Luke 4:18-21, he assured the disciples the Spirit would permanently abide in them as a continuation of his own earthly ministry.<sup>25</sup>

Fifth, Jesus saw his apostles completing Scripture by interpreting the salvific nature of his own life and work. This would entail the “enlargement and completion” of the canon with apostolic pronouncements concerning propositions about His person. Henry reminds us the gospel of John uses *pisteu/cin*, the verb “to believe,” in

---

<sup>21</sup> *GR&A*, III, 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-33, 37.

<sup>24</sup> The statement which Jesus attributes to God in Matthew 19:5 is actually the biblical narrator’s account of creation in Genesis 2:24. Behind the human author, the narrator of Genesis is God. *Ibid.*, 38-41.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-44.

four ways: believing facts, believing people or Scripture, believing in or into Christ, and simply believing. Christian faith apparently has both propositional and personal characteristics. In John 14:11, Jesus demanded his disciples believe not only in him but also certain facts about him: *pisteu/etc/ moi o3ti*—“believe me *that* I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (italics mine). With those who stress personal truth apart from propositional truth, Jesus apart from Scripture,<sup>26</sup> Jesus himself obviously disagrees.

Parenthetically, this raises a number of questions relevant to our topic, each of which deserves a positive response. Does the Jesus who is available to us through the instrumental mediation of the Bible affirm the correlation of personal and propositional truth? Henry says, “Yes.” Does the Jesus of neo-orthodoxy or postmodernism or neo-Baptist thought denigrate propositional truth in favor of personal truth? The answer is undoubtedly, “Yes.” Does this, therefore, present the possibility that the Jesus of the Bible may be different from the Jesus defined through extra-biblical personal experience? Again, the answer must be, “Yes.”

The fifth modification of the Hebrew view of Scripture by Jesus, the enlargement of the canon, is found in a number of places. In Matthew 16:16, Jesus said Peter’s confession was the result of divine revelation. In Matthew 13:52, he entrusted to the apostles the storeroom of truth. In Matthew 28:20, he ordained the apostles to teach all his commandments. In Revelation 1:1, the Apostle John’s Apocalypse is identified as “the revelation of Jesus Christ.” In John 14:25-26, Jesus promises that he will communicate with the apostles through the ministry of the Holy Spirit: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.” Jesus promised the Spirit would guide the apostles in the enlargement of the canon.<sup>27</sup> Thus, Henry concludes that Jesus “committed his apostles to the enlargement and completion of the Old Testament canon through their proclamation of the Spirit-given interpretation of his life and work.”<sup>28</sup>

### *Mediation, Anti-mediation and Instrumentality*

Two risks were taken in the last few paragraphs. First, we have coined a new term, “neo-Baptist.” By neo-Baptist, I mean the re-orientation of the

<sup>26</sup> Frank Louis Mauldin, *The Classic Baptist Heritage of Personal Truth: The Truth as It Is in Jesus* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> The apostles themselves recognized that their words were God’s words. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul praised God, “because when you [Thessalonians] received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the message of God.”

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-47.

Baptist identity away from the biblical regenerate church toward the experimental anthropocentric individual. I have developed this line of thought elsewhere and point you to that essay for clarification.<sup>29</sup> Second, we have taken the unusual risk of mentioning the word “mediation” which, ever since E. Y. Mullins’ broad-brush association of all mediation with the Roman Catholic types, has been considered anathema among Southern Baptists. This is unfortunate, for it forced him to hold an ambiguous doctrine of revelation.

On the one hand, Mullins affirmed the necessity of Scripture for our knowledge of God; on the other, he elevated the concept of “direct access to God.”<sup>30</sup> This view emerges clearly in Mullins’ systematic theology, where he identified two channels of revelation: “It is the union of the two forms of knowledge which completes our view of Christ. Our construction of Christian doctrines rests on a fact basis entirely: first and primarily, the facts of the New Testament records, and secondly, our direct and immediate experience of Christ as redeeming Lord.”<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, although he gave lip-service to the primacy of scriptural authority, he practically elevated experience. Later in life, Mullins tried to reconcile direct access with the mediation of Scripture philosophically, but unresolved contradictions in his system remained.<sup>32</sup> These contradictions ultimately divided Southern Baptists: one group followed the idea of unmediated access to its ultimate conclusion; the other honored the instrumental sufficient and authoritative mediation of Scripture.

Henry knew the work of Mullins generally and the work of A.H. Strong intimately, having written a doctoral dissertation on Strong’s philosophical shift. Strong left his common sense realist roots and embraced the Boston school of monistic personalism, which Strong modified and labeled, “ethical monism.” Like his Southern Baptist colleague, Mullins, this Northern Baptist theologian feared the

---

<sup>29</sup> Yarnell, “Changing Baptist Concepts of Royal Priesthood,” in *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism*, ed. by Deryck Lovegrove (London: Routledge, 2002), 236-52. See also the excellent collaborating research of Stan Norman, who distinguishes the older Reformation Tradition from the relatively recent Enlightenment Tradition among Baptists. R. Stanton Norman, *More Than Just a Name: Preserving Our Baptist Identity* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* (Philadelphia, PA: Judson Press, 1908).

<sup>31</sup> Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia, PA: Judson Press, 1917), 164.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, Mullins tried to base his theology of revelation upon the radically mystical Protestantism of Auguste Sabatier while holding to the objective standard of Scripture. The Christ of Scripture is inerrantly correlated with the Christ within. He grounded the objective truth of Scripture in subjective criteria. Mullins, *Freedom and Authority in Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Griffith & Rowland Press, 1913).

instruments of grace might impinge upon the glory of Christ. According to Strong, “Church and ministry, Bible and doctrine, are [Christ’s] servants. But the servants have sometimes taken the vineyard for themselves and have driven out the Lord. . . . Neither church nor ministry, Bible nor creed, is perfect.”<sup>33</sup> Strong needlessly opposed Christ to Scripture, rather than simply affirming that Christ was epistemologically available through Scripture. We can agree with Strong on the errancy of those instruments known as church, ministry and creed, but must part with him on the errancy of the Bible. Henry expressed disappointment with Strong for having “weakened the objective authority of Scripture in the interest of the living Christ,” although he recognized that Strong was not entirely consistent in doing so.<sup>34</sup> The unresolved tension in the theologies of both Strong and Mullins would ultimately cause an epistemological divide among Baptists, between those affirming the Christ of the Bible and those affirming the Christ of personal experience.

Henry came down strongly on the side of those Baptists who affirm the Christ of the Bible. He proclaimed Christ as “the only divine mediator,” but did not do so at the expense of the perfect instrument of the Mediator. Because Henry refused to oppose the sole mediation of Christ to the instrumental mediation of the Bible, he could affirm rather nonchalantly, “The conception of Jesus as mediator has its basis in the Gospels and behind that in the Old Testament.”<sup>35</sup> When neo-Baptist theologians follow the logic of their anti-mediation bias to its conclusion, they have trouble with this statement. This explains why some Baptists want to affirm that the Bible is “just a book” and that they can know Jesus apart from the inerrant word.<sup>36</sup> For the conservative evangelical, the Bible is the channel of propositional and personal truth; for the neo-orthodox theologian, one encounters personal truth in an event vaguely associated with the Bible.

### *Henry’s Spirit-Based Epistemological System*

Carl Henry has been criticized for paying “little attention” to the Holy Spirit, or for giving the Spirit “a subordinate role” in his writings.<sup>37</sup> This writer would contend otherwise. Henry recognizes the essential place of

<sup>33</sup> Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Christ in Creation and Ethical Monism* (Philadelphia, PA: Griffith & Rowland Press, 1899), 134-36, 158-59.

<sup>34</sup> Henry, *Personal Idealism and Strong’s Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1951), 205.

<sup>35</sup> *GR&A*, III, 61. The imperfect mediators of the Old Testament—prophets, priests and kings—were superseded by the perfect mediation of the Christ revealed in the New Testament.

<sup>36</sup> Moore, “Mohler is right.”

<sup>37</sup> Mohler, “Carl F.H. Henry,” 292; Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry*, 126.

the Holy Spirit within a coherent system of revelation. Of the fifteen theses in the first section of *God, Revelation and Authority*, two are dedicated to the role of the Holy Spirit, theses 12 and 13, and these comprise the bulk of the largest volume in that six-volume set, filling over 400 pages of text.<sup>38</sup> Although the Holy Spirit is not named on every page, he is certainly behind every thought. Moreover, Henry did not set out to write a systematic theology; rather, he developed an apologetic for the orthodox method of Protestant theology. Henry must not be read by the beginning student seeking a well-balanced theology, and must not be judged as a systematic theologian.

Henry is an apologist, displaying some of the inherent weaknesses of that enterprise. Barth once criticized Schleiermacher for not understanding that the apologetic task provides an untenable foundation for theology. The apologist attempts to “take up a position which is in principle beyond that of both parties,” and is therefore forced to “at least carry a white flag in his hand when approaching the other for a parley.” “To put it unmetaphorically: as long as he is an apologist the theologian must renounce his theological function.”<sup>39</sup> Although we may disagree with Barth’s radical opposition of apologetics and theology, we must concede there is some distinction to be made between the two Christian tasks. Henry’s primary task as an apologist was to lay the epistemological groundwork for theologians. His theology, whether it be Christology, pneumatology or ecclesiology, will necessarily be presented in an unsystematic way. To discover Henry’s theology, one must peer behind his apologetics, and when that is done, an orthodox theologian, especially in his pneumatology, is quite evident.

Henry summarizes his doctrine of the Holy Spirit as he (the Spirit) relates to revelation in a threefold manner. The Holy Spirit is involved “in the communication of revelation (inspiration) and in the interpretation (illumination) and the appropriation of revelation (regeneration).”<sup>40</sup> Henry is adamant, against Barth and others who confuse inspiration and illumination, that “the Spirit’s original inspiration of chosen prophets and apostles” and “the Spirit’s ongoing illumination of readers and hearers of that word” must be considered separate doctrines.<sup>41</sup> He might also have stressed the distinction between regeneration and illumination. Cognitively understanding the word of God is not equivalent to the personal appropriation of that word. This

---

<sup>38</sup> *GR&A*, IV, 129-541. For a broader but concise treatment of the Holy Spirit, cf. VI, 370-401.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background & History* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1973), 442.

<sup>40</sup> *GR&A*, III, 203n.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 259.

could have allayed the criticism of Donald Bloesch, who believed Henry “argues that the truth of revelation can be known prior to commitment to Christ.”<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Henry did at least once affirm, “Scripture is not of course savingly efficacious apart from the Spirit’s bestowal of personal faith whereby the Bible becomes a means of personal grace.”<sup>43</sup>

Inspiration is defined by Henry as “a supernatural influence upon divinely chosen prophets and apostles whereby the Spirit of God assures the truth and trustworthiness of their oral and written proclamation.” The Bible, therefore, “inscripturates divinely revealed truth in verbal form.”<sup>44</sup> Three New Testament passages support Henry’s doctrine of revelation: 2 Timothy 3:14-16, which speaks of *qco/pneustoj*, the divine spiration or God’s breathing out of truth to and through the writing apostles; 2 Peter 1:19-21, which indicates that Scripture is sure because it is not grounded “in human inquiry and investigation or in philosophical reflection,” but in transcendent action; and, John 10:34-36, where Jesus said Scripture is indestructible.<sup>45</sup> Henry criticized Strong for allowing inspiration to be focused on the writers rather than on the writings that came from them. He criticized others for devaluing inspiration into a mere “heightening of psychic powers or creative energies.”<sup>46</sup> He reserved his harshest criticism, however, for Karl Barth, who, “in effect fosters a revelation-mysticism or gnosticism.” “What needs to be emphasized against Barth’s view is that today—and ever since the end of the apostolic age—the church and the world have had special revelation only in the verbal text of the Bible.”<sup>47</sup> Henry concludes, “To maintain silence about the divine inspiration of the Scriptures is, in effect, to attenuate the work of God and to minimize the ministry of the Spirit.”<sup>48</sup>

A derivative doctrine of divine inspiration is biblical inerrancy. Henry believes “the Holy Spirit superintended the scriptural writers in communicating the biblical message in ways consistent with their differing personalities, literary styles and cultural background, while

<sup>42</sup> Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, II, 267. Cf., Bloesch, *A Theology of Word & Spirit: Authority & Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 252-54. In turn, Henry criticized Bloesch for coming too close to Barth. *GR&A*, IV, 281-82.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-33. The 2 Peter passage states that “no prophecy of Scripture comes from one’s own interpretation” and that “moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God.” Although Henry sees only inspiration in this passage, both illumination and inspiration can be detected here. See Edwin A. Blum, “2 Peter,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976-92), XII, 275.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-43.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

safeguarding them from error.”<sup>49</sup> He agrees with the Evangelical Theological Society, which he helped found in 1949, that “the Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs.”<sup>50</sup> Inerrancy applies to the historical and scientific assertions of Scripture, although these are not necessarily the Bible’s primary focus. However, those who emphasize “biblical trustworthiness” without biblical inerrancy introduce a measure of ambiguity which may cause “a significant shift in the conception of scriptural authority.”<sup>51</sup>

Following from the doctrine that the original autographs are kept inerrant by the perfecting work of the Holy Spirit is the doctrine that the Holy Spirit helps keep extant copies of the original autographs—and we do not possess the originals—infallible.<sup>52</sup> This does not mean that they are inspired but that the copies “retain the epistemic consequences of divine inspiration of the inerrant prophetic-apostolic autographs.”<sup>53</sup> The pneumatological doctrine of inspiration, along with its subordinate doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility are only the first links in an epistemological chain which assures the integrity of divine revelation.

Henry is adamant that these doctrines are pneumatological, and that pneumatology is incredibly important. “To neglect the doctrine of the Spirit’s work—inspiration, illumination, regeneration, indwelling, sanctification, guidance—nurtures a confused and disabled church. The proliferating modern sects may, in fact, be one of the penalties for the lack of a comprehensive, systematic doctrine of the Spirit.”<sup>54</sup> He spells out what he means by this in a chapter entitled, “The Spirit and the Scriptures.” There are three modern errors among Christians: liberals reduced the Holy Spirit from a person to an influence and removed the transcendent aspect of inspiration; in defending Scripture, some evangelicals unnecessarily restricted the Spirit’s role to inspiration alone; on the other hand, Barth unnecessarily broadened the doctrine of inspiration.<sup>55</sup> In response, Henry emphasizes the doctrine of illumination. Illumination is not to be confused with inspiration. Inspiration ended with the apostles while illumination happens to people today. In illuminating, the Spirit says nothing new in relation to Scripture; rather, he enables a correct interpretation of Scripture.

According to Henry, Karl Barth’s error was to use the fear of

---

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-46.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 256-57.

bibliolatry and the exaltation of the Spirit to create a broken Bible.<sup>56</sup> Leaving aside the issue of whether or not Henry misinterpreted Barth, let us hear Henry's critique.<sup>57</sup> Against Barth, Henry honored the Spirit without opposing the Spirit to the written word. Henry says that a number of Barth's presuppositions forced him to propose an ill-advised dichotomy. The primary problem is his belief that all revelation is saving revelation. The equation of regeneration with revelation encouraged Barth to deny general revelation, to compromise the objectivity of the Bible, and to locate revelation within the divine-human encounter. This means that the presence of Christ within became equated with revelation and inspiration, while the Scriptures are not the word of God but only "become" the word of God when revelation occurs. This denigration of Scripture and this false elevation of the Spirit thus invite speculative "flights of fantasy," and, to quote Howard Loewen, a "subjectivization of the Word." The Bible is made fallible and moves from "being" the word of God to only "containing" the word of God. In this way, "Barth confuses inspiration and illumination."<sup>58</sup> Henry reminds us that during the sixteenth century, the reformers battled more radical reformers "who considered themselves recipients of direct divine revelation on a par with Scripture." The reformers instead affirmed that the Spirit aids the believer in understanding the Scripture but does not offer a new revelation.<sup>59</sup>

After illumination, the next major component in Henry's Spirit-based epistemological system is his doctrine of "Spirit-anointed couriers."<sup>60</sup> God commissions all Christians to communicate the gospel, whether that be through personal witness or pulpit proclamation. According to Henry, the Spirit and the word work together in the sermon "to reshape mind and life in the image of Christ."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, in worship, even in the ordinances, "the Spirit lifts the hearts of the faithful to the eternal realm where dwells Christ." Of course, the ordinances are properly placed in the context of proclamation of the word.<sup>62</sup> Proclamation then leads into the final component of Henry's pneumatological epistemology, the doctrine of regeneration. "Bestower of spiritual life, the Holy Spirit enables individuals to appropriate God's truth savingly and attests its power in their personal experience."<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-59.

<sup>57</sup> Thanks are due to Dr. Mark DeVine, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Midwestern Seminary, for illustrating this problem.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 259-67.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 266. Cf. the supplementary note on Calvin, 290-95.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 476.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 480, 488.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 494ff.

To summarize Henry's Spirit-based epistemology, the Holy Spirit, by inspiring the authors of an inerrant and infallible Bible and by illuminating or interpreting the Bible to us, makes Christ epistemologically available to us. The Holy Spirit, moreover, through Christian proclamation of the word, makes Christ soteriologically available to us in regeneration. This relatively tight doctrine of revelation means one may not oppose personal experience or the Spirit or Jesus Christ to the Bible. One may not oppose the Jesus of experience to the Jesus of the Bible.

### **Whose Jesus?**

With the evangelical doctrine of revelation outlined over against non-evangelical, especially neo-orthodox or neo-Baptist, doctrines of revelation, it would be beneficial to contrast two possible Christologies which issue forth from two different doctrines of revelation. For illustrative purposes, we will compare the Jesus of Carl to the multiple Jesuses of Bob. Robert B. Setzer Jr. is an avowedly moderate Baptist pastor with degrees from Gardner-Webb, Southern Seminary and Princeton. Setzer has declared his rejection of propositional revelation in favor of personal truth, with such statements as, "Others may wish to reduce the gospel to certain timeless truths, but John knew better," and Christianity is "not a faith in a body of teaching [but] faith in a person."<sup>64</sup>

#### *Carl Henry's Jesus*

The Jesus that Carl Henry knows is the Jesus of the Bible. A lengthy quote from Henry is relevant here:

There is no justification for ranging the Living Word and the Written Word in absolute antithesis. The Written Word itself demands personal faith in Christ (John 20:31). But the indispensability of personal faith in Christ in no way implies the dispensability of the Scriptures as the Word of God written; apart from Scripture we can say nothing certain either about Jesus Christ or about the necessity of personal faith in him. To displace the truth of Scripture would of necessity lead to heretical if not idolatrous views of God and Christ; without the truth of the prophetic-apostolic word we would not know which of the many "christs" we should honor (cf. John 5:43). It is Scripture that preserves the demand for trust in the life and work of the incarnate, crucified and risen Logos of God as the ground of our redemption (John 5:39).<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> *Encounters with the Living Christ: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 7, 165.

<sup>65</sup> *GR&A*, IV, 203.

This profound statement needs to be unpacked in three ways. First, note the epistemological inseparability of Christ and Scripture. The living Word is discovered in and through the written word. This is an epistemological inseparability, not an ontological inseparability, for an ontological inseparability would be bibliolatry. The Word incarnated is known through the word inscripturated. Henry agrees with B.B. Warfield in refuting those critics who try to create a partial authority for the New Testament by following one of four formulas: opposing Christ's teaching to apostolic teaching; opposing apostolic accommodation or ignorance to apostolic beliefs; opposing apostolic opinion to apostolic teaching; and, opposing scriptural phenomena to apostolic doctrine.<sup>66</sup> Again and again, Henry tells us it is not Jesus *versus* the word, but Jesus *through* the word.<sup>67</sup>

Second, note that the Christ whom Henry teaches is the Christ of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. He implies an historical approach to Christology in *God, Revelation and Authority*, where he castigates heresy,<sup>68</sup> quotes creeds as authoritative<sup>69</sup> and stresses both the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ.<sup>70</sup> He makes this approach explicit in *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*. Although the Bible is our primary source of knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth, not all appeals to Scripture are correct. For example, both "kenotic" and "moral union" Christologies appeal to Scripture, although with "tendential assumptions on the scriptural data."<sup>71</sup> These assumptions are rooted in historical critical methodologies, and Henry painstakingly helps us wade through the modern critics back to a serene historical-biblical faith in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Against the discovery of multiple Christologies in the New Testament, Henry finds "a consistent and coherent witness" to the one transcendent God who manifests himself to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>72</sup> In spite of this single witness of Scripture, modernity finds itself confused and unsure about the identity of Jesus.<sup>73</sup> Henry projects a certainty about the identity of Jesus, although he is open to further discovery in the Bible about all that this one Jesus is.

Although the Bible presents its Christology both "from above" and "from below," the Christology "from below" concerns the disciples' epistemological discovery rather than any ontological movement by a man into the Godhead. Modernity objects to the Christ "from above," not

---

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 253-55.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 75-98.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. II, 167, 318; III, 192-202.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. IV, 130, 237, 445.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. III, 99-117.

<sup>71</sup> *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 46.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

on exegetical grounds, but on modern assumptions against transcendence and eternity.<sup>74</sup> The second person of the ontological Trinity was incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. God became man. Henry offers up a litany of passages which affirm the incarnation.<sup>75</sup> However, mere recitation is insufficient. He also searches out the meaning of the incarnation, especially how Christ can be both God and man. The biblical incarnation is explained, not in nineteenth-century kenotic terms, but according to the “two-minds” view of Thomas V. Morris, who seeks to reflect the Chalcedonian formula. The “two-minds” view asserts that Christ simultaneously had “a limited human consciousness and an overriding divine mind.”<sup>76</sup>

In case one failed to note the Chalcedonian definition of Christ, Henry quotes the creed in full and devotes an entire chapter to its explication. He accentuates that Jesus is the Son of God “in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.”<sup>77</sup> Citing Craig Blaising, Henry dismisses modern objections to a commitment to Chalcedon.<sup>78</sup> Today’s Christological parties are easily separated between those who will affirm Nicea and Chalcedon and those who refuse to do so.<sup>79</sup> Of course, this is no mindless creedalism, for “even an announced intention to remain faithful to Chalcedon provides no assurance of successful fulfillment of this objective.”<sup>80</sup> Rather, there must be an engagement with the Jesus of the Bible and the historic creeds are there to aid in that engagement. The Chalcedonian formula does not have the final word on Christology, but it can be the beginning of a great era in Christological conversations.<sup>81</sup> Henry shows that even the wisest of Christian teachers, such as his own mentor, Gordon Clark, struggle to the end of their lives with how to understand Jesus Christ is both “truly God and truly man.”<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, there is but one Jesus Christ and he is the God-man.

The third thing to notice in the lengthy quote from Henry is that he exalts the Christ while recognizing there are counterfeit christs. Some people, when they hear the name “Jesus,” automatically assume a

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 75. Cf. *GR&A*, III, 116; *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 98-102.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>76</sup> Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 149-51; quoted in Henry, *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 87.

<sup>77</sup> *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 89.

<sup>78</sup> Craig A. Blaising, “Chalcedon and Christology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (1981): 326-37; quoted in Henry, *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 90.

<sup>79</sup> *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 93-97.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>82</sup> Clark makes some daring moves, such as dismissing the term “substance,” redefining person to mean “the propositions he thinks” and apparently embracing Nestorianism (*Ibid.*, 104-111).

univocal definition. Unfortunately, this is simply not the case. There are various understandings of who Jesus Christ is. John Hayes discovered multiple views of Jesus in the twentieth century, from the Christ of orthodoxy to the political revolutionary to the sexual being of *Jesus Christ Superstar*.<sup>83</sup> Richard Grigg found at least nine different Christs being worshiped today, from the ethical teacher to the source of personal success to the apocalyptic Christ.<sup>84</sup> Henry distinguished between “the living Logos” and “defunct counterfeits,” the latter primarily being the result of disordered reason. Henry believes that man’s mind is created to be logical because it is created in the image of, and for relation with, the eternal reason, the *Logos*. Although he recognizes the term *logos* originally denoted a Greek philosophical concept, he unabashedly adopts it on the basis of its inclusion in the New Testament as a description of Jesus Christ.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, he believes “the eternal and self-revealed Logos, incarnate in Jesus Christ, is the foundation of all meaning, and the transcendent personal source and support of the rational, moral and purposive order of created reality.”<sup>86</sup> The *Logos*, however, is transcendent and becomes fully immanent only in Jesus of Nazareth. Mankind can perceive the *Logos* through general revelation, but cannot soteriologically know him except through special revelation.<sup>87</sup>

If the *Logos* enlightens every man (John 1:9) through his mind, and that man seeks to know the original *Logos*, yet such enlightenment is darkened by sin and rejects the biblical revelation, it follows that man will fashion his own *logoi*. These are created by philosophical efforts to attain truth apart from revelation. Henry describes these *logoi* as “a vast assortment” of failures. “Each and every such phantom logos has its day and is soon spent.”<sup>88</sup> False *logoi* have been created by deists, Hegelians,

---

<sup>83</sup> John H. Hayes, *Son of God to Superstar: Twentieth Century Interpretations of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976).

<sup>84</sup> Richard Grigg, *Imaginary Christs: The Challenge of Christological Pluralism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 2-5. Grigg’s support for the coexistence of multiple Christs is driven by an anthropocentric bias that will not allow for human access to a singular authoritative divine revelation. He even leaves open the possibility for simultaneous allegiance to Christ and Buddha (12-13, 97-104).

<sup>85</sup> *GR&A*, III, 192-93. Henry does not seem to recognize that there is also a Hebrew background to the New Testament *logos*. The Hebrew *dabar* emphasized action, while the Greek *logos* emphasized reason. The two “words” intersected in the Johannine definition of *Logos*. George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary 36 (Waco: Word, 1987), 6-10.

<sup>86</sup> *GR&A*, III, 195.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-11. Strong and Mullins also taught the suprahistoric Christ; however, they were not careful to separate the non-salvific general revelation of Christ from the salvific special revelation of Christ incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. Strong, *Christ in Creation and Ethical Monism*, 160-61; Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*, 44-46.

<sup>88</sup> *GR&A*, III, 192.

and Protestant modernists. Again, the neo-orthodox come under Henry's guns for special denunciation. When neo-orthodox theologians radically internalize the *Logos*, he loses his transcendence and becomes "clouded and obfuscated."<sup>89</sup> Henry goes on to criticize other theological movements on the left and concludes, "severed from unconditional meaning every preferred meaning is but an idolatrous logos." These multiple immanent *logoi* rob us of the transcendent *Logos*. In conclusion, Henry believes these multiple *logoi* lead "more and more" to the demonic: they are "contra-Logos" *logoi*, "a succession of imposter-logoi," who open "the dikes of intellectual [and we might add spiritual] disaster."<sup>90</sup>

### *Robert Setzer's Jesuses*

At one point in his critique of modern Christologies, Henry quips, "It takes an unusually fertile mind to hold that the New Testament itself espouses a society of rival Jesuses. Such an approach strips the New Testament of any objective authority, deprives the Church of an 'orthodox' Christology, and considers varying modern doctrines of Christianity's Founder to be theologically acceptable."<sup>91</sup> If not for its having been written seven years earlier, Henry's jab might have been describing Setzer's theological project. Having taken the point in attacking the 2000 revision of article one of the *Baptist Faith & Message*, Setzer will be used to illustrate the importance of Henry's concerns.

As noted above, Setzer is opposed to definitions of the faith; the propositional is jettisoned in favor of the personal. Setzer admits to difficulty with believing in the Jesus of the Bible.<sup>92</sup> He also admits this is due to his academic indoctrination into acidic forms of biblical criticism. After first imbibing the wine of the critics, he doubted whether the words attributed to Jesus really were the words of Jesus. Finally, he says, concerning Jesus, "I lost him." Fortunately, this Southern Baptist pastor came to believe in Jesus again. Unfortunately, he refers to this second experience as a second regeneration: "And for the second time in my life, I was reborn." He appears to have experienced what Hebrews 6:6 has deemed impossible: Setzer was born again *again*.<sup>93</sup>

There are other heterodoxies, if not heresies. He admits Scripture teaches the doctrine of the deity and humanity of Christ, but appears to embrace a form of monophysitism: "God *melled* that glorious Word into

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 196-99.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 200-1.

<sup>91</sup> *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 57.

<sup>92</sup> *Encounters with the Living Christ*, 68.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., xiii-xvi, 147-48.

the humanity of one Jesus” (my italics).<sup>94</sup> He is aware of the biblical and historical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity, but considers it somewhat irrelevant to modern thought. He alternates between modalist analogies and a view that Jesus is not entirely God but a piece of a God who is greater than him, a perverse sort of Arianism.<sup>95</sup> He embraces a form of Patripassianism by providing an affirmative answer to the question: “Dare we say that at the cross of Jesus Christ, God’s heart ‘stopped’ on the table?”<sup>96</sup> He also anathematizes the doctrine of substitutionary atonement.<sup>97</sup>

These aberrant views of Christ and God are driven, of course, by a non-evangelical doctrine of revelation. For Setzer, as for many neo-Baptists, the individual soul appears to have a pre-regeneration access to God; all a soul need do is activate its own trust in Jesus. The elevation of the pre-regenerate soul and concomitant denigration of the deity appear in a number of places in Setzer’s work. God could not know the human heart unless part of him became a human. Setzer stresses the universal Fatherhood of God, but has no apparent place for the particular Fatherhood.<sup>98</sup> The universal immanence of God is emphasized to the near exclusion of his transcendence: “That inner spring of God’s Spirit is hidden within us all.” “The Holy Spirit is God’s heartbeat in our souls.”<sup>99</sup> Although the biblical language forces him into a recognition of divine grace, the human soul is saved by its self-activation of belief in Christ. The Christian life of discipleship is a supremely human activity; divine grace receives little attention.<sup>100</sup> Due to his anthropologically-focused Christian faith, Setzer has little need for a transcendent revelation, especially a propositional biblical one.

With such internal criteria for revelation, it should be no surprise that Setzer has experienced a number of different Jesuses in his life. “My Jesus,” as Setzer refers to *our* Lord, has appeared to him as “a

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 3. The Council of Chalcedon met in 451 to answer the heresy of monophysitism as taught by Eutyches.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 66-67, 110-13. According to Henry, the Trinity is more than an economic manifestation, God is essentially three-in-one. Those who teach the functional Trinity without affirming the ontological Trinity often lay the groundwork for unitarianism. Henry, *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth*, 78-79.

<sup>96</sup> *Encounters with the Living Christ*, 102. According to Tertullian, Praxeas promoted the modalist doctrine of Patripassianism: “By this Praxeas did a twofold service for the devil at Rome: he drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; he put to flight the Paraclete, and he crucified the Father” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III, 597).

<sup>97</sup> *Encounters with the Living Christ*, 142.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 7, 132.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 49-52, 114.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., xx, 15-16, 170. For his anthropology, he is dependent upon secular rather than biblical psychology, and is drawn to the “rugged individualism” of those denominations which downgrade ecclesiology (24, 137, 156).

Superman” or “a hip, older brother” with “long hair and sandals,” even “an Eastern sage, a kind of first-century Dali [sic] Lama.” Setzer’s view has improved over the years. Now, he sees Jesus as “the human face of the Eternal . . . God dressed up in working clothes.” Yet, this view may change again, for the Bible cannot tell the entire truth about him.<sup>101</sup> This brings us back to the questions we have posed: “Whose Jesus? Which revelation?” If your Jesus is based on an internal, individual, experiential revelation, your Jesus may change from one moment to the next. The only possible way Carl’s Jesus can be the same person as Bob’s Jesuses is if Jesus has multiple personalities. Their contrary doctrines of revelation have led them to contradictory views of Jesus.

### Conclusion

As we noted above, Henry has been accused of being imbalanced, especially in his reliance upon reason. However, Henry was pursuing the apologetic task. Moreover, he does see the dangers of fallen reason, and occasionally limits the claims of philosophy:

Revealed theology differs decisively from secular philosophical systems. But while revelation in the biblical sense is a way of knowing to be sharply contrasted with philosophical reasoning, it is not antireason, but rather is a profound Logos-revelation or intelligible Word-revelation. Not only is divine revelation rational, but it is, in Christian purview, the ground of all rationality.<sup>102</sup>

Carl Henry may have his imbalances. What theologian does not? Personally, I would take him to task for not treating ecclesiology in depth.<sup>103</sup>

However, we cannot deny his importance for evangelical theology. In my Baptist history lectures, students are given a paradigm of Baptist theological development. Although Baptists in every age are concerned with soteriology and believers’ baptism, there are characteristic concerns of Baptists during different eras. In the seventeenth century, Baptists were consumed with the issue of ecclesiology exemplified in the theologizing of the erratic John Smyth. In the eighteenth century, Baptists were concerned with theology proper as the voluminous works of the meticulous John Gill testify. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Andrew Fuller helped reorient Baptists toward evangelism and

---

<sup>101</sup> Setzer, “Meeting Jesus,” in *Real Baptists: Spotlighting Changes in the Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Baptist Center for Ethics, 2000); available on the internet from <http://www.baptists4ethics.com>; accessed September 12, 2000.

<sup>102</sup> *GR&A*, I, 196.

<sup>103</sup> Mohler, “Carl F.H. Henry,” 292.

missions. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the beloved E. Y. Mullins led Baptists toward an emphasis on personal freedom. In the middle of the twentieth century, the overriding concern became the doctrine of revelation and the representative Baptist theologian for this era can be none other than Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry.

## **Southern Baptists and the Sanctity of Human Life: the Pro-Life Stance of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000**

J. Alan Branch

*Vice-President for Student Development  
Appointed Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Kansas City, MO 64118*

When one compares the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* (BFM63) and the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* (BFM00), the ethical directness of the 2000 statement as opposed to the 1963 statement is striking. Article XV of the BFM63 offers general guidelines for involvement with culture and encourages every Christian to oppose every form of greed, selfishness, and vice and to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of truth. While the BFM00 also includes this wording, it is much more specific as to what vices a Christian should oppose and marks out racism, adultery, homosexuality, and pornography as issues for attention. Of particular interest is that Article XV now urges Baptists to contend for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. Beyond the touchstone issue of inerrancy, the ethical issues of human sexuality and the sanctity of human life have played a major part in the theological shift in the Southern Baptist Convention.

One of the reasons that the SBC went through such a dramatic change is that the convention bureaucracy of the 1970's and early 1980's vastly underestimated the amount of discontent among rank and file Baptists concerning the theological stance of denominational employees. For example, in 1978 Walter Shurden stated that denominational unity is more important to most Southern Baptists than theological arguments about the Bible.<sup>1</sup> Written from the perspective of a denominational loyalist, he demonstrates a basic inability to comprehend that the issue of inerrancy is indeed important to Southern Baptists. In a similar manner, the denominational bureaucracy failed to understand the intense convictions of most Southern Baptists concerning the ethical issues of human sexuality and the sanctity of human life. In this paper I will focus

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Shurden, "The Problem of Authority in the Southern Baptist Convention," *Review and Expositor* 75.2 (Spring 1978): 225.

on the issue of the sanctity of human life and briefly survey some selected Southern Baptist statements that reflect the pro-choice stance of denominational loyalists prior to the theological shift in the SBC.

### ***Roe v. Wade* and the Baptist Faith & Message**

When the BFM63 was drafted, the major moral debate in the United States revolved around civil rights for ethnic minorities, African-Americans most significantly.<sup>2</sup> This statement of faith was drafted just prior to one of the most socially volatile eras in American history. Within ten years of the BFM63, the United States would see further violence related to civil rights issues, the sexual revolution, more widespread distribution of oral contraceptives, the Vietnam War, and legalized abortion. It is no coincidence that *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* came at the end of the ten years from 1963-1973. This decade led to the liberalization of abortion laws, which is the logical conclusion of a society that engages in widespread sexual promiscuity. Prior to and after the *Roe* decision,<sup>3</sup> several Southern Baptists and the Convention as a whole offered comment on changes in the abortion laws. The following review will demonstrate that influential SBC ethicists and thinkers prior to the conservative resurgence favored liberalizing abortion laws.

Andrew D. Lester, who was then the Associate Director of the Department of Pastoral Care at the North Carolina Baptist Hospital, wrote one article of significance concerning abortion in the *Review and Expositor* in 1971. In "The Abortion Dilemma," Lester critiques the Roman Catholic position opposing abortion. According to Lester, "Since the Roman Catholic position sees every conception as a direct act of the will of God, it is a form of theological determinism."<sup>4</sup> He then argues that most Christians, Catholics included, allow for the killing of other humans in some cases, most notably in self-defense. While he acknowledges that the conceptus has not done any deliberate wrong or acted with malice, its presence occasionally becomes a menace to the rights of others, the mother's mental and physical health, the welfare of the family, and the survival of a society, and in that sense must be dealt with as a threat.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the unborn child is now a potential threat to society and may need to be eliminated.

---

<sup>2</sup> The 1963 statement does not have any explicit references to racism.

<sup>3</sup> For the rest of the paper, I will refer to both the *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions as simply *Roe*. The *Roe* and the *Doe* decisions were companion verdicts handed down the same day; the latter clarified the former.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Lester, "The Abortion Dilemma," *Review and Expositor* 67 (Spring 1971): 229.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

Lester next argues for a position of developmental personhood which would validate abortion. In response to Roman Catholic dogma that ensoulment occurs at conception, Lester says,

To believe the *potential* for human life begins at conception is necessary, but to go beyond this, and define this potential life in such a way as to make the conceptus at any stage of development equal in status and value with postnatal human beings, is to interpret the biological data and define humanness in an arbitrary and unsatisfactory manner.<sup>6</sup>

He later contends that we must also consider the future quality of life for the conceptus and that the most moral thing to do for children who are born into abusive families or with certain birth defects might be to abort them. Lester's article is a strong argument for the liberalization of abortion laws and uses language and logic similar to Justice Blackmun in the *Roe* decision.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to the conservative resurgence, perhaps the most infamous statement about abortion from a Southern Baptist perspective was the resolution adopted by the SBC in 1971 at St. Louis. While not completely clear who authored the resolution, it nonetheless was a strong call for the liberalization of abortion laws. Though it gave a perfunctory nod to the sanctity of human life, the last paragraph carried the most significant content regarding this issue's morality:

Be it further resolved, that we call upon Southern Baptists to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother.<sup>8</sup>

Hugo Lindquist, a pastor from Oklahoma, recognized the danger of this last paragraph and moved to amend the resolution by deleting it. His motion did not pass and James Garland of Kentucky offered another amendment that would have toned down the wording in the paragraph. This motion failed also. The previous question was moved and the resolution was adopted unedited. Timothy George accurately summarizes the moral impact of this resolution when he says, "Thus two years prior to the Supreme Court decision of 1973 . . . the Southern Baptist Convention was on record advocating the decriminalization of abortion

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy George agrees with the similarity to the *Roe* language. See Timothy George, "Southern Baptist Heritage of Life," in *Life at Risk*, Land and Moore, eds. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), 72.

and extending the discretion of this decision into the realm of personal, privatized choice.”<sup>9</sup> George goes on to comment that *Roe v. Wade* did little more than place a stamp of approval on what Southern Baptists had agreed upon in their 1971 meeting.

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court declared laws prescribing abortion to be unconstitutional in the *Roe* case. Meeting soon thereafter in Charlotte, North Carolina on March 19-21, 1973, the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention addressed the abortion issue. David Mace of the Bowman Gray School of Medicine delivered a paper titled, “Abortion on Request: Implications of the Supreme Court Decision.” In a basically favorable review of the decision, Mace said that the court “made a careful survey of the history of abortion.”<sup>10</sup> He accepts Blackmun’s assertion that English common law was not as strictly opposed to abortion as American law had been. Accordingly, he would argue, by liberalizing abortion laws, we are not abandoning our ancient tradition but returning to it. He defends Blackmun’s famous statement that “we do not need to resolve the difficult question of when life begins.” Mace argues that abortion is now part of the legal landscape and the best we can do is to attempt to minimize it. He says, “Nobody likes abortion; most doctors hate it, my medical students are quite upset about it.” However, he then immediately makes an unqualified statement about developmental personhood: “Whatever theory we hold about unborn life, we know that the fetus has the potentiality to become a human being.”<sup>11</sup> He concludes, “We may have to tolerate abortion for a time, as a regrettable necessity. But surely we can and must find a better way.”<sup>12</sup>

As the abortion debate raged after 1973, key thinkers and ethicists in the SBC at that time continued to advance a pro-choice position. This is despite the fact that, after the *Roe* decision, subsequent conventions passed strongly pro-life resolutions. Perhaps no single Southern Baptist from this era represents the pro-choice position more than Paul D. Simmons, who was a professor of Christian ethics at Southern Seminary.

Simmons’ first book on bioethics was *Birth and Death: Bioethical Decision Making*, published in 1983. When he wrote this book, he claimed that no other writer had attempted to deal with bioethics in a comprehensively biblical manner. He said that those who did refer to the Bible in bioethical debates engaged in a type of “proof-texting approach that operates on the basis of unexamined assumptions and frequently

---

<sup>9</sup> George, “Southern Baptist Heritage of Life,” *Life at Risk*, 83.

<sup>10</sup> David Mace, “Abortion on Request: Implications of the Supreme Court Decision,” in *1973 Christian Life Commission Seminar Proceedings: A Future for the Family* (Nashville: The Christian Life Commission of the SBC, 1973), 34.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

fails to struggle with the context and meaning of passages being cited.”<sup>13</sup> The targets of his ire were evidently pro-life advocates and he apparently believed they had read their opinions into the text instead of letting the Bible determine their beliefs. Simmons also says, “The truth of the Bible is not what is at stake, but the truth of our interpretation of the Bible.”<sup>14</sup> While the Bible is indispensable, he says the authors were limited by the fact that they were finite creatures and that they were sinners. Therefore, their “understandings were also shaped by some of the commonly held assumptions of their day, whether social attitudes or prevailing ideas of divinity.”<sup>15</sup>

Simmons’ book is a demand to move beyond Hippocratic ethics. Prior to the 1950s, medical ethics were pervaded by a synthesis of the ethical imperatives of the Hippocratic Oath and the Christian worldview.<sup>16</sup> Simmons directly rejects this Christian-Hippocratic synthesis. He says the Hippocratic Oath substitutes “the ethics of Hippocrates for the ethics of Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> He claims that the principle of *primum non nocere* (“first, do no harm”) is a philosophical principle and not a biblical one. While acknowledging that the principle of “do not harm” can be seen as consistent with the norm of a/ga/ph, he finds the Hippocratic tradition to be archaic and not applicable to modern realities.

What are the implications of these assertions by Simmons? He is an advocate of the liberalization of both abortion and euthanasia laws. He believes that pro-life advocates make the mistake of equating personhood to animation or to a biological form. According to Simmons, personhood involves being “(1) alive, (2) related to others, (3) reflective, (4) able to make moral decisions, and (5) spiritual.”<sup>18</sup> Since the unborn and the terminally ill may not meet these criteria, abortion and euthanasia should be practiced. In fact, choosing death may be morally supererogatory for Simmons says, “Choosing to die may require greater moral heroism and a more profound theology of death than succumbing to the coincidental ministrations of medical care after one’s own cognitive functions have ceased.”<sup>19</sup>

Simmons returned to this theme in a small booklet published for the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights in 1987 titled, *Personhood, the Bible, & the Abortion Debate*. In this work he argues that there are three

---

<sup>13</sup> Paul D. Simmons, *Birth and Death: Bioethical Decision Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Nigel Cameron has explored this synthesis in *The New Medicine: Life and Death After Hippocrates* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Simmons, *Birth and Death*, 146.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

passages which define personhood: Genesis 2:7, Genesis 1:26-28, and Genesis 3:22. He says that Genesis 2:7 refers to the biological aspects of personhood in a metaphorical manner by using the terms “dust” or “clay.” Genesis 1:26-28 distinguishes human personhood from animal life. Specifically, humans bear the image of God. Simmons defines the *imago Dei* as similarity of powers and abilities shared by God and man. Finally, he says that Genesis 3:22 portrays a person as a moral decision maker. Commenting on the phrase, “the man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil,” Simmons says, “To be a person is to be a choice maker, reflecting God’s own ability to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong. . . . The fact that they ‘ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil’ means that people are given the burden and responsibility of making decisions that reflect their unique place in God’s creation.”<sup>20</sup> He goes on to say that abortion is a god-like choice that reflects the moral decision making capacity of a woman: “Like the Creator, she (the woman who aborts) reflects upon what is good for the creation of which she is agent. As steward of those powers, she uses them for good and not for ill, both for herself, the fetus, and the future of humankind itself.”<sup>21</sup>

Noted Southern Seminary ethics professor Henlee Barnette also addressed the issues of abortion and euthanasia. Paul Simmons summarizes Barnette’s approach towards abortion as follows: “Whatever rights the fetus may have are secondary to those of the couple. Parents have a right to determine whether to abort a defective fetus. . . . They also have a responsibility not to impose upon society the burden of caring for severely defective children for whom they are either financially or emotionally able to care.”<sup>22</sup> In his 1982 book, *Exploring Medical Ethics*, Barnette stressed the basic principles of creative love and the golden rule as foundational for his ethics.<sup>23</sup> Beyond the issue of abortion, he also advocated a position of euthanasia that was different from that of pro-life Southern Baptists. In *Exploring Medical Ethics* he said, “When a person becomes incurably ill, unproductive, and a victim of an intolerable quality of life, and death is the one means of relief, the individual may be morally justified to choose to self-destruct. For love wills the well-being of the other and the self is also an other.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Paul Simmons, *Personhood, the Bible, & the Abortion Debate* (Washington, D.C.: The Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights Educational Fund, 1987), 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. Remarks in brackets mine.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Simmons, “Barnette: Clinical Professor, University of Louisville School of Medicine,” in *Perspectives on Christian Ethics: Essays in Honor of Henlee Barnette*, Rollin Armour, ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1991), 79.

<sup>23</sup> This summary of Barnette’s method comes from E. Earl Joiner, “Barnette’s Ethical Agenda: Issues That Engaged Barnette,” in *Perspectives on Christian Ethics*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Henlee Barnette, *Exploring Medical Ethics* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1982), 122.

In summary, the 1971 resolution, Andrew Lester, David Mace, Paul Simmons, and Henlee Barnette share some common presuppositions and conclusions. First, each of them seems to affirm a developmental view of personhood to some degree. Second, the Christian-Hippocratic synthesis is seen as unrealistic or insufficient for current medical issues. As a result, each one affirms the liberalization of abortion laws and, to some degree, euthanasia laws as well. As the conservative resurgence moved forward, it became evident that these prior denominational leaders failed to recognize the passion that Southern Baptists had for sanctity of life issues. An essay by Bobby Adams in 1984 illustrates the failure of old-line Southern Baptist ethicists to grasp the importance of the sanctity of life issue. He contributed an article titled, "Baptists in Wonderland: Current Ethical Issues for Southern Baptists," to an edition of *Faith and Mission*, the journal of Southeastern Seminary, dedicated to current issues in Southern Baptist life. Adams spoke of problems relating to the family, state, and economics while failing to mention the sanctity of human life or human sexuality. However, he did express great concern over the dangers involved with prayer in schools.<sup>25</sup> Even if Adams did not agree with the pro-life position, one thinks that he should at least acknowledge that it was a major issue of moral debate in 1984.

### **Pro-Life Southern Baptists and the Baptist Faith and Message 2000**

Why have current Southern Baptists taken a pro-life position completely opposite to the pro-choice position of denominational ethicists in the 1970s? I contend that it is primarily because pro-choice Southern Baptists emphasized developmental personhood, misinterpreted the effects of the fall, and divorced their concept of love from moral absolutes. Thankfully, ethicists outside of the denomination influenced some conservative Southern Baptists in that day who later helped lead in the conservative resurgence.

The pro-abortion positions outlined in the first section of this paper are based on the assumption that it is possible to have biological human life without having a person. Therefore, when pre-born humans who do not meet the threshold for personhood are aborted, no sin has been committed. However, one should note that "personhood" can become a very slippery term. To imply that someone is a "non-person" dehumanizes them and removes the moral stigma attached with ending their lives. When the description of some humans as "non-persons" is accepted, then it becomes easier to expand the category of undesirable defects and for more people to be candidates for death. In contrast, the

---

<sup>25</sup> Bobby Adams, "Baptists in Wonderland: Current Ethical Issues for Southern Baptists," *Faith and Mission* 1:2 (Spring 1984): 21-22.

sixth commandment provides categorical protection for innocent human life. With this in mind, notice that Lester resorted to the tactic of calling an unborn human child a “menace” in order to justify abortion. He vilifies the unborn in order to advocate their death. While the Bible does not offer a detailed account of the “personhood” of the unborn, it does confirm a fundamental continuity between the human in the womb and the human who is born (Genesis 4:1, Psalm 139, Jeremiah 1:5, etc.). Pro-abortion Southern Baptists phrased the moral debate around contested matters of personhood while pro-life Southern Baptists maintained that the more fundamental issue is protection of innocent human life. Thus, the BFM00 states, “We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.”<sup>26</sup>

Another flaw in the arguments of pro-abortion Southern Baptists is found in Paul Simmons’ positive interpretation of Genesis 3:22. Simmons does not properly understand the nature of the temptation involved in Genesis 3 or the terrible effects of the fall. Commenting on proper hermeneutics, Simmons said, “The historical and textual context, the nature of the material, the meanings of terms, and other factors will all need to be assessed in coming to a clear understanding of the meaning of the passage.”<sup>27</sup> With Simmons’ statements in mind, consider the context in which Genesis 3:22 is found. Genesis 3 is the record of the fall and Genesis 3:22 is part of the post-lapsarian curse. While Simmons quotes the first half of Genesis 3:22 as a positive statement about human ability (“The Man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.”), he does not refer to the surrounding verses which cast a negative image on the effects of the fall. In fact, in the following verses man is cast from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23-24). Keil and Delitzsch offer helpful commentary when they say,

For the knowledge of good and evil, which man obtains by going into evil, is as far removed from the true likeness of God, which he would have attained by avoiding it, as the imaginary liberty of a sinner, which leads into bondage to sin and ends in death, is from the true liberty of a life of fellowship with God.<sup>28</sup>

While Simmons interprets Genesis 3:22 as a good reflection upon man’s ability to make moral choices, a more careful reading reveals that this passage is *not* a positive statement of anthropology. The statement, “man has become like one of us,” more likely refers to man’s self-

---

<sup>26</sup> *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, Article XV: The Christian and the Social Order.

<sup>27</sup> Simmons, *Personhood, the Bible, & the Abortion Debate*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume 1, The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted 1991), 95.

centered sphere of activity.<sup>29</sup> Simmons fails to recognize the full extent to which the *imago Dei* has been sullied. Carl F. H. Henry has said,

Man as sinner knows the *imago* only from the perspective of revolt. He is one who distorts it in the handling. And he cannot by his own initiative reconstruct from within moral rebellion what the *imago* is really like.<sup>30</sup>

How does this affect Simmons' pro-abortion argument? He overestimates the ability of people to make the right choice when faced with moral dilemmas. Furthermore, he ignores the fact that, after the fall, God gave the Decalogue to protect people from the dangerous effects of sin. Notice that the Ten Commandments are addressed to mankind in rebellion, thus the recurring refrain of "Thou shalt not." The heart of human sin is that we indeed choose to do what we want do instead of what God desires. While Simmons may argue that women are "joining with the Creator" when they choose to abort for eugenic reasons, the reality is that eugenic abortions are but one more aspect of the radical autonomy that was at the heart of original sin.

Barnette's concept of love is weak in that it is divorced from concepts of moral absolutes. While he did affirm that the Decalogue represented eternal, universal values indispensable for the fulfillment of the individual and society,<sup>31</sup> he seemed reluctant to say that any form of medical killing is always bad. Instead, he argued that medical killing may or may not be bad dependent upon the circumstances. This is not to imply that Barnette was not a person of compassion or kindness. However, his form of love leads to a pro-abortion and pro-euthanasia position. In reality, it is a love devoid of the ethical imperative of the sanctity of human life. Barnette seems to be overly optimistic and downplays the potential for people to harm other people if medical killing becomes acceptable.

While the pre-resurgence denominational bureaucracy advocated a pro-abortion position, many of the Southern Baptists who were more conservative listened to different voices—specifically, Francis Schaeffer and Paul Ramsey, neither of whom were Baptist. With C. Everett Koop, in 1979 Schaeffer authored, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* The premise of this work was that the *Roe* decision was opening the floodgates for other forms of medical killing. At the same time, Paul Ramsey advocated protection for the weakest in *Ethics at the Edges of Life* (1978). By and large, Southern Baptists were not convinced by their

<sup>29</sup> See A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, reprint 1942), 585.

<sup>30</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 155. The description of the *imago* as "sullied" is also Henry's term.

<sup>31</sup> This is Barnette's description of the Decalogue in *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), 19.

own ethicists and were more influenced by conservatives from non-SBC institutions or ministries.

This phenomenon deeply affected the way pro-life Southern Baptists approached the *Roe* decision. While Mace offered a positive review of the historical survey that Blackmun undertook in *Roe*, most pro-life activists realized that Blackmun was not appealing to English common law as much as he was appealing to the pre-Christian pagan practices of Rome and Greece to justify abortion on demand. For example, Blackmun reiterated that the Hippocratic Oath's proscription of abortion was a minority position in Greece. From this and other historical references, he inferred certain conclusions about the morality of abortion. Pro-life Southern Baptists rejected these inferences. Instead, they appealed to the concept of absolute truth as revealed in the Bible and among those absolutes is a categorical protection of innocent human life.

The issue of the sanctity of human life illustrates one area in which the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* would have needed revision even if the Convention had not undergone theological drift. Most likely, Southern Baptists in 1963 could not have imagined that the taboo issue of abortion would become a national debate. Furthermore, they would have been equally surprised to know that many of their denominational leaders would be in favor of liberalizing abortion laws. Instead, pro-life Southern Baptists found themselves more influenced by thinkers from other denominations who may not have shared Baptist distinctives (for example, believer's baptism by immersion), but who did share a higher view of scriptural authority and pro-life convictions. The BFM00's strong pro-life stance reflects the widespread evangelical concern for the sanctity of human life in the national debate surrounding the abortion issue.

## **A Call to Endure Persecution Patiently: A Fresh Look at James 5:7-20 in Context**

Terry L. Wilder

*Associate Professor of New Testament and Greek  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Kansas City, MO 64118*

Evangelical scholars generally agree that James 5:7-20 occurs within a context in which believers are urged to patiently endure trials for their faith until the Lord's return.<sup>1</sup> However, evangelicals neglect interpreting most of this text—particularly verses 12, 13-18, and 19-20—specifically within the latter setting. In this paper I will ask some probing questions about these verses and offer a brief exposition of James 5:7-20 that seeks to interpret cohesively this passage explored against the background mentioned earlier. What results will differ somewhat from the usual evangelical understanding.<sup>2</sup>

James' readers are clearly undergoing persecution on account of their faith (1:2-4). They are being persecuted at the hands of the wicked rich (5:1-6; cf. 2:6-7).<sup>3</sup> For example, the rich are withholding their earned wages (5:4), living opulently at their expense (5:5), and even committing violent acts against them (5:6). Consequently, James urges these believers to be patient (*makroqume/w*) until the Lord returns (5:7, 8) and then provides them with three examples of patience to emulate, *viz.* the farmer (5:7), the prophets (5:10), and Job (5:11). James' readers are not to exact vengeance upon their persecutors, but rather, wait patiently for the Lord; for, he will judge and repay the wicked rich when he returns. And, James says, his return is imminent (5:9).

---

<sup>1</sup> James 5:7-20 seems to close somewhat of an *inclusio* for the letter of James. He recalls for his readers the theme of enduring the testing of faith, seen earlier in 1:2-4.

<sup>2</sup> This paper was originally read at the Evangelical Theological Society's 2001 annual meeting in Colorado Springs, CO.

<sup>3</sup> The identity of the poor and the rich in James is a *crux interpretum* for the letter (cf. 1:9-11). One half of NT scholars believe that the poor and rich are believers and unbelievers, respectively, while the other half holds that they are poor and rich Christians. It is not absolutely necessary here to decide who these groups are because the wicked rich in this context are clearly persecuting the poor. Though the grammar of 1:9-11 at first look seems to favor the poor and rich Christian view, the present writer, due to the overall context of the letter, holds that the poor and rich in James are believers and unbelievers, respectively.

Evangelicals typically explain verse 9 in the light of the judgment that will accompany the Lord's return. Good reason exists for this explanation because (a) James has just mentioned the parousia in verses 7 and 8, and (b) the *i3na* clause in verse 9 indicates the purpose for the command not to speak against another—*viz.* avoiding judgment. Against this understanding, believers are instructed not to speak against one another in order that they might not be judged when the Lord comes back; for, he will judge such disparaging criticism when he returns. However, while the latter is certainly true, this explanation still seems to miss something of the specific context.

One may find it helpful to ask, “*Why* does James issue this command?” The latter question often goes unanswered in evangelical treatments of this text. Might verse 9 be further understood against the background of the trials and persecution that James' readers are undergoing? Keeping in mind the latter understanding, these Christians are told not to snipe and complain at one another (5:9) while enduring trials for their faith. Grumbling and sniping at one another is likely to occur when under pressure and facing persecution, thus James' admonition. Believers are to act patiently towards others rather than complain about them at such times.

Evangelicals also generally interpret verse 12 in the light of the judgment that will accompany the Lord's return. Good reason is likewise present for the latter explanation because of the earlier references to the parousia and because the *i3na* clause occurring at the end of the verse again denotes the purpose for the command—averting the Lord's judgment. Thus, James' readers are told not to use oaths flippantly—swearing to heaven or to earth—to guarantee the truth of their statements so that they will not fall under judgment for those actions when Christ comes back. However, if the latter understanding stands without further clarification then James' use of the phrase “above all” (*pro/ pantw=n*) in verse 12 becomes somewhat problematic. Unless one interprets the latter phrase as hyperbole or some other sort of literary device, as many do, then James would appear to be saying that, above everything else in the Christian life, believers are to watch taking oaths. This hardly seems to be the correct understanding and a fully plausible explanation of verse 12 is still lacking.

One may find it beneficial to ask, “*Why* does James prohibit the taking of oaths?” Surely he is not prohibiting the use of all oaths. One might ask further, “*What kind* of statements might James' readers be seeking to authenticate with their oath taking?” Should not the background of endurance and suffering again be kept in mind when seeking an explanation? We may infer that when asked whether they are Christians by those who would persecute them, James' readers should

not swear to God, to heaven, or to earth—using oaths frivolously to support the truth of their claims—presumably, negative ones like, “No, I am not a believer in Christ.” Rather, when interrogated about their faith, they are simply and sincerely to say “yes” or “no” in response (5:12). The latter understanding, which seems to act as a climax to James’ statement on endurance in verse 11,<sup>4</sup> then makes good sense of the problematic phrase “above all” that he uses as an initial phrase in verse 12. These believers, above all, are not to deny their Lord in the face of trials and persecution. They are to give straight, truthful answers; they do so in order not to fall under judgment for their sin.

Evangelicals usually treat verses 13-18 as general exhortations for James’ readers to pray in all circumstances—most notably when they are really sick—while patiently awaiting the Lord’s return. As far as prayer is concerned, nothing is disputed about the latter viewpoint for James does indeed mention it in every verse. But might not one interpret verses 13-18 more precisely than they are usually explained in the light of what seems to be going on in the larger context?

James begins this passage by asking in verse 13 whether anyone amongst his readers is suffering affliction or misfortune (*kakopaqe/w*; cf. the cognate *kakopaqi/a* in verse 10, i.e. the “suffering” of the prophets).<sup>5</sup> If so, he says, the proper thing to do is to pray. James next asks whether any of them is cheerful. If so, he says, those persons should respond by singing praises, presumably because they are not undergoing trials and persecution for their faith.

James then asks his readers in verse 14 whether any amongst them are weak (*a0sqenc/w*; lit.: “without strength”). If so, then the one who is weak is instructed to summon the church’s elders,<sup>6</sup> and they (i.e. the elders) are to pray over him,<sup>7</sup> anointing the afflicted person with oil in the name of the Lord. Though not dogmatic, suffice it to say here that this writer thinks that the anointing with oil (which always receives disproportionate attention in this text) probably has a religious purpose, rather than practical, and seems symbolic in nature.<sup>8</sup> That is to say, the

<sup>4</sup> Job endured, and since he endured, these believers can also. Not only is Job an example of patience to emulate while under trial, but he is one whom the Lord enabled to endure through a time of great trial. Some may object that Job’s trials cannot be called persecution. Perhaps so, but one could view Job as being persecuted by Satan for his blameless and upright faith in God.

<sup>5</sup> The suffering that the prophets experienced is the affliction they incurred in the exercise of their duties as God’s spokesmen.

<sup>6</sup> That is, those with spiritual oversight over the community (*presbu/teroj*).

<sup>7</sup> The phrase *e0p0 au)to/n* may suggest that the elders stand over the weak person, perhaps laying their hands upon him as they pray.

<sup>8</sup> For a full treatment of this issue and the various views see Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*. PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 238-242.

elders seem to anoint the person who is weak “in order vividly to show how that person is being set apart for God’s special attention in prayer”—the anointing with oil seems to be a “physical act symbolizing consecration.”<sup>9</sup>

Most scholars focus their attention in verse 14 on whether *a0sqenc/w* refers to being spiritually weak or physically sick. But have they perhaps overlooked the possibility that the term might mean something else given the letter’s context—namely, weak, without strength, or disabled, *due to persecution*? The latter nuance is certainly conceivable because the word is used that way elsewhere in the New Testament. For example, Paul uses the stative verb *a0sqenc/w* and its cognate noun *a0sqc/nea* metaphorically when he speaks of his persecution as an apostle (2 Corinthians 11:21, 29-30; cf. Hebrews 4:15; Judges 6:6, 15—LXX). Though the latter terms do often refer to physical sickness in the Gospels (e.g. Matthew 8:17; 25:39; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; 5:15; John 4:46; 5:5; etc.), Paul employs them in 2 Corinthians 11 to refer to the physical and mental discomfort he has endured while preaching the gospel. For the apostle, weakness is physical discomfort due to persecution, imprisonments, beatings, stonings, dangerous travels, robberies, encounters with natural disasters, life without physical necessities, and distress over concern for the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23-29).<sup>10</sup>

If this writer is pressed to decide in James whether *a0sqenc/w* refers to either a spiritual malady or a physical weakness due to persecution, then the term seems to refer more to the latter. But if so, the spiritual nonetheless enters the picture in that the physical weakness seems due (in context) to trials and persecution for one’s faith in Christ. The spiritual side of things comes further into play when James says at the end of verse 15: “and if he has committed sins, they (it) shall be forgiven him.” In other words, if the weak person has committed any sins that “come with the territory” of his weak condition, they will be forgiven him.<sup>11</sup> The latter action presumes that the afflicted person will deal with any spiritual misbehavior that may be related to what he is undergoing.

About what kind of specific sins might James be speaking? Interestingly, the reference to “sins” (*a9marti/a*) in verse 15 has a lexical connection to the “sinner” (*a(martwlo/j)*) mentioned in verse 20. Does James possibly have in mind here in verse 15 the sin of “straying away from the truth” that he addresses later in verses 19 and 20? If so, James may be saying in 5:15c that if the person has strayed from the truth while

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 240-241.

<sup>10</sup> Summary sentence borrowed from Aida and William Spencer, *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 129.

<sup>11</sup> Though many do so, it is not necessary to say that the potential sins mentioned in 15c are the cause of the weakness mentioned in verse 14.

getting hammered for the faith, then those sins can be forgiven by God, provided he repents and returns.

James issues the promise in 5:15 that the “prayer of faith” (cf. 1:6) by the elders will deliver/restore (sw?/zw) the one who is wasting away/fatigued (ka/mnw); further, the Lord will raise up the weak person.<sup>12</sup> That is to say, God uses the prayer offered by faith to bring results: the one who is weak due to persecution is delivered from his quagmire and God restores him; he is able to stand again (cf. Psalm 23, esp. verses 4-6).<sup>13</sup>

James concludes in verse 16a that his readers should corporately confess their sins to one another and pray for one another in order that they might be restored.<sup>14</sup> Restored from what we might ask? If the interpretation of 5:15c given earlier is correct, they are restored from the sins of straying away from the truth.<sup>15</sup>

In verses 5:16b-18 James reminds his readers of the import of prior verses by referring to the extraordinary power of prayer in the life of the persecuted righteous (di/kaioj).<sup>16</sup> When doing so, he cites Elijah as an example of a persecuted, righteous man who experienced such prayer (5:17a). The powerful prayer in Elijah’s life that James describes in 5:17-18 is the account found in 1 Kings 17 and 18 where God used a drought to punish Ahab and Israel for their idolatry; Elijah prayed for the drought to begin and then later to end.

<sup>12</sup> The unconditional terms of this statement seems a bit problematic. James is not advocating a “name and claim it” prayer life, saying that if one simply has enough faith, then whatever he asks will be granted. However, if the prayer is offered in faith (cf. 1:6), and conforms to God’s will and purpose, then the petition will be granted. God’s will is paramount in this matter. The prayer offered in faith acknowledges that God is sovereign and has the prerogative of answering prayer in any way he chooses. For a discussion of this issue, see Moo, *James*, 243-45.

<sup>13</sup> Notice the similarity between what seems to be going on here in James and with the verses noted in Psalm 23; this affinity is worth further exploration.

<sup>14</sup> BDAG, 465: The word *ija/omai* can mean “to restore someone to health after a physical malady, *heal, cure*” (Mt 8:8, 13; 15:28; Lk 7:7; 8:47; 17:15; J 5:13; Ac 5:16; etc.), or “to deliver from a variety of ills or conditions that lie beyond physical maladies, *restore, heal*” (Mt 13:15; J 12:40; Ac 28:27; Js 5:16; Heb 12:13).

<sup>15</sup> The exegetical problem here is to determine how the prayer concerning the weakness is related to the prayer concerning forgiveness from sin. Some argue it is independent, while others view it as directly connected—either is possible.

<sup>16</sup> Of whom Elijah is but one example. This is an extremely important term. Cf. the persecuted righteous in Matthew’s gospel—e.g. 5:45; 23:35. Matthew 23 (v. 35) especially demonstrates the point. In that passage Jesus denounces the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees, pronounces woes on them, and says that they have disregarded and indeed will kill God’s true messengers, with the result that the blood of the righteous will be upon them. I am grateful to Dr. Alan Tomlinson, my NT colleague at Midwestern, for pointing out this nuance of the term to me.

Many scholars stress in verse 17 that the prophet was a person of “like passion,” i.e. a human being just like us, and thus, the encouragement by James for his readers seems to be, “Since Elijah was also human, if he can experience powerful prayer, then you can enjoy it also.” However, though Elijah is a human being “just like us,” he is more specifically a person who has undergone similar suffering and persecution (o9moioπαqh/j; cf. again kakopaqi/a and kakopaqe/w) as James’ readers.<sup>17</sup>

Evangelicals generally explain verses 19 and 20 by saying that James instructs his readers to help foolish erring believers if they turn away from the truth, i.e. from the Christian faith.<sup>18</sup> The latter understanding seems correct. However, evangelicals rarely seem to provide an answer as to why those who claim to be Christ’s are deserting the faith. In the context of 5:7-20, *why* would someone want to turn away from the truth? Could it be that some who profess Christ are renouncing the faith because they are being tested or indeed have suffered on account of their faith and they do not like it? For them, to turn away from the truth is an opportunity to escape the persecution that accompanies holding to faith in Christ. James, not lacking in compassion, instructs his readers to rescue these people who have departed. Believers are encouraged to act as instruments in keeping straying persons from eternal death and in covering their sins (5:20; cf. Psalm 32:1).<sup>19</sup> Their sins are covered and forgiven from God’s sight when forgiveness is procured. Forgiveness is procured when confession and repentance takes place and they return to the faith.

This writer acknowledges that there are other ways to understand this passage in the letter of James. He sought briefly to explore some lexical nuances and interpretative possibilities in the letter of James that are sometimes overlooked by evangelical scholars. Several no doubt will say that some of what this writer has said in this paper was inferred—perhaps so, but if so, it was done, arguably, with good reason. Biblical writers composed their works in a context containing a flow of thought. They did not divorce what they wrote from the verses that preceded and proceeded. The explanation of James 5:7-20 put forth in this paper sought to link together a series of related ideas in a coherent pattern. Context determines the meaning of words, and several words in 5:7-20—like makroqume/w, kakopaqi/a, kakopaqe/w, a0sqene/w,

<sup>17</sup> Notice the lexically-connected words in the text: kakopaqi/a (v. 10), kakopaqe/w (v. 13), o(moioπαqh/j (v. 17). BDAG, 706: The word o(moioπαqh/j (cf. o3moioj, pa/sxw) pertains to “experiencing similarity in feelings or circumstances.”

<sup>18</sup> The statement is conditional.

<sup>19</sup> Curtis Vaughan, *James* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 124.

ο9μοιοπαqh/j, and di/kaioj—seem to make good sense and fit the scenario of endurance and persecution that was painted therein.

Much of what one says in James no doubt will be in keeping with what he sees as the letter's purpose. The exposition offered above seems very much in keeping, not only with the context, but with what this writer thinks may be the overall purpose of the letter of James—i.e. James wrote this letter to persecuted Jewish Christians scattered outside of Palestine who are still part of synagogue communities. He exhorts his readers to consistent Christian living and addresses problems that have arisen as a result of their “institution within an institution”-type of relationship.<sup>20</sup>

### Application

Provided the interpretation above is correct, we can make the following brief points of application. First, this passage ostensibly has no immediate application, especially verses 13-18, unless believers are being persecuted for their faith. Second, Christians need to take stock of how they react in the face of persecution and trials for their faith. Third, believers should consider their roles in their church's ministry to the persecuted church. If their church has no such ministry, then they might want to help start one—especially a ministry of intercessory prayer for those who are being persecuted on account of Jesus. Further, they might also visit websites like [www.persecutedchurch.org](http://www.persecutedchurch.org) where they can learn the status of the persecuted church in various countries across the world, what they can do to help these fellow believers, and how specifically to pray for them.

---

<sup>20</sup> That is, the church within, or connected, to the synagogue. Though not exactly alike, my view on the purpose of James is somewhat similar to that of R.W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Book of James* (NTC; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997). But, to show that this is likely the purpose for the letter of James is another paper for another day.

## **He Being Dead Yet Speaketh**

Michael D. McMullen

*Associate Professor of Church History  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Kansas City, MO 64118*

In 1744 Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) preached the following sermon, "Christ in His Sufferings Suffered Extremely from the Hand of God the Father," in the Congregational Church of Northampton, Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> Edwards had been the sole pastor of this church since the death of Solomon Stoddard in 1729. This sermon has never, to my knowledge, appeared in print before this time. It appears here as part of my ongoing interest in the writings and influence of Edwards, after having successfully pursued doctoral studies on Edwards. The manuscript from which this transcription is taken is part of the wonderful collection of Edwards' papers housed at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University. This sermon was transcribed by me as a labor of love and is a precursor to a complete volume of previously unpublished sermons that is scheduled to appear in 2003 from Broadman and Holman Publishers, as part of the celebration commemorating the 300th anniversary of Edwards' birth.

There has never been any lack of material on Jonathan Edwards, but in the twentieth century that stream became a flood and there seems to be no decline in this present one. Jonathan Edwards is unique in several respects. One of those ways is the sheer volume of material that has appeared, portraying Edwards as so much more than an eighteenth-century colonial minister who possessed an amazing mind. He has been depicted, amongst other things, as a bogeyman, philosopher, man of letters, theologian, natural scientist, supporter of missions, and tragedy.

An excellent illustration of the degree of continuing interest in Jonathan Edwards and his importance can be seen in the range and quantity of scholarly periodicals that contain articles on him and his thought; the result reads like a fairly comprehensive index of theological, philosophical, and historical journals. I have included below a representative sample of periodical titles, together with the dates that an

---

<sup>1</sup> Edwards' sermon is largely transcribed just as it was written in his manuscript. That is to say, only some punctuation was added, but no considerable effort was made to make sentences out of sentence fragments, nor to add words to make his notes or statements read smoother, etc.

article on Edwards appeared. One should bear in mind that several articles were often printed in one volume, and that this list is by no means exhaustive: *Accent* (1948); *American Historical Review* (1930); *American Literature*; *American Quarterly* (1951); *American Theological Review* (1861); *Andover Newton Quarterly* (1975); *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (1977); *Anglican Theological Review* (1990); *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1976); *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (1860); *Calvin Theological Journal* (1996); *Center Journal* (1982); *Christian Century* (1993); *Christian Education Journal* (1990); *Christianity and Literature* (1998); *Christianity Today* (1958); *Church History* (1965); *Church Quarterly Review* (1966); *Cithara* (1987); *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (1984); *Congregationalist and Christian World* (1903); *Continental Monthly* (1862); *Crane Review* (1959); *Criticism* (1973); *Crux* (1988); *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* (1976); *Duke Divinity School Review* (1966); *Early American Literature* (1970); *Epworth Review* (1998); *Evangelical Quarterly* (1990); *Expository Times* (1994); *Faith and Philosophy* (1990); *Fides et Historia* (1989); *Fides Reformata* (1998); *Forum* (1926); *Foundations* (1978); *Fundamentalist Journal* (1985); *Great Thoughts* (1900); *Hartford Seminary Record* (1903); *Harvard Theological Review* (1988); *Historical Magazine* (1868); *History of European Ideas* (1990); *Hudson Review* (1950); *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1997); *Interpretation* (1985); *ISIS* (1951); *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (1966); *Journal of American History* (1983); *Journal of American Studies* (1980); *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (1973); *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1967); *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (1978); *Journal of Religion* (1989); *Journal of Religious Ethics* (1991); *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (1972); *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (1995); *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1972); *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (1969); *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* (1961); *Lucas* (1993); *Munsey's Magazine* (1906); *Nassau Review* (1976); *New England Quarterly* (1949); *New Englander* (1884); *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* (1976); *Open Court* (1908); *Philosophical Review* (1948); *Preaching* (1992); *Presbyterian* (1998); *Pro Ecclesia* (1995); *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* (1931); *Publications of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (1902); *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* (1999); *Princeton University Library Chronicle* (1953); *Reformation and Revival*(1995); *Reformed Review* (1965); *Religion and American Culture* (1993); *Religion in Life* (1958); *Religious Studies Review* (1998); *Review of Metaphysics* (1976); *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* (1996); *Scientific Monthly* (1949); *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (1997); *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1961); *Soundings*

(1969); *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (1999); *Southern Quarterly* (1977); *Southern Review* (1875); *St. Luke's Journal of Theology* (1990); *Studia Mystica* (1985); *Theological Studies* (1981); *Theologische Zeitschrift* (1978); *Theology Today* (1953); *This World* (1989); *Trinity Journal* (1982); *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (1975); *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (1984); *Westminster Theological Journal* (1984); *Urban Mission* (1994); *William and Mary Quarterly* (1949); *Word and World* (1984); and *Worldview* (1975).

Who was Jonathan Edwards and why such interest? Tradition has so often represented Edwards as a sort of bloodless specter with a pale drawn face, whereas recent scrutiny has found a mind more congruous with the beaming eye and sensitive mouth of the portrait.<sup>2</sup> Puritanism, said T. Schafer,<sup>3</sup> was the skeleton of skeletons in the national closet, until studies in the mid-twentieth-century by men like S. E. Morison, H. W. Schneider, R. B. Perry and especially Perry Miller, seemed to show that the Puritans, in spite of their quaint ideas, were intellectually respectable and even occasionally, good company. The similar argument then is also made that Edwards too needs to be “freed from the dust of the past,”<sup>4</sup> for, argues Ola Winslow, “He is one of the few men of the far past who still have something to say to men of the present hour.”<sup>5</sup> The current writer also agrees with Bogue’s view, *viz.* that the unfortunate plight of Edwards since his own day is that most people have an opinion about him. But apart from the serious student of Edwards, few of them have ever read his writings. Bogue is further correct, regrettably, when he says that the image of Edwards hangs suspended by the single thread of one sermon over the pit of popular condemnation.<sup>6</sup> However, those who have set aside the stereotype of the hell-fire preacher and “encountered Edwards’ penetrating mind and breathtaking power of literary expression find he exerts a fascination that belies all expectation.”<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that all can or actually do this. Edwards has always had and probably always will have his detractors. C. Darrow denounces Edwards the hell-fire preacher when he says, “Nothing but a distorted or diseased mind could have produced his ‘Sinners in the Hands of an angry God.’”<sup>8</sup> For Darrow, as for many others, Edwards’ “main business in the world was scaring silly women and little children; and blaspheming the God he

<sup>2</sup> I. W. Riley, “The Real Jonathan Edwards,” *Open Court* 22 (1908), 705.

<sup>3</sup> T. Schafer, “MS Problems in the Yale Edition of Jonathan Edwards,” *Early American Literature* 3 (1968/9), 159.

<sup>4</sup> Riley, “Edwards,” 705.

<sup>5</sup> O. Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards: Basic Writings* (New York, 1960), xvii.

<sup>6</sup> C. W. Bogue, *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace* (Cherry Hill NJ, 1975), 3.

<sup>7</sup> D. E. Laurence, “The Foolishness of Edwards,” *Worldview* 18 (1975), 49.

<sup>8</sup> C. Darrow, “The Edwardses and the Jukeses,” *American Mercury* 6 (1925), 153.

professed to adore.”<sup>9</sup>

However, one should also note that the genius or otherwise of Edwards, as displayed in his writings, is not the only way he has been viewed as being of great value and influence. In the early literature on Edwards one finds, for example, that he was adopted by a generation of eugenists who discoursed at seemingly interminable length on the worthiness of his “germ plasm.” Both E. A. and A. E. Winship argued with vigor, that Edwards’ most important contribution to the world was not the written product of his mind, but his genetic structure. In 1900, A. E. Winship contrasted 1400 descendants of Jonathan Edwards with 1200 descendants of the pseudonymous “Max Jukes” in a study of intelligence, morality and character.<sup>10</sup>

Three years later, E. A. Winship presented a representative array of Edwards’ illustrious descendants.<sup>11</sup> In this article, Winship believes that Edwards’ teachings excited no more than a passing interest, and that only students of literary history read his writings. However, the writer, in common with the other eugenists, sees his influence as being paralleled by very few men. Winship argues that what Edwards bequeathed to his lineal descendants is shown by the striking story of what they have done.

The writer then proceeds to prove the argument by listing the achievements of Edwards’ offspring. Direct descendants became, for example, presidents of Princeton, Hamilton, Union, Amherst, Johns Hopkins, Litchfield Law School, Andover Theological Seminary, Tennessee University, and the University of California. They also became missionaries in Asia Minor, Africa, India, China, Hawaii and the South Sea Islands. Also numbered among his descendants were sixty eminent physicians, more than one hundred lawyers, thirty judges, city attorneys of New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, mayors of Cleveland, Troy, and New Haven, governors of Connecticut, South Carolina and Ohio, several U.S. representatives, senators, and ambassadors. This was a very detailed work and illustrated with many such examples of the amazing achievements of the Edwards family. Those mentioned above are only examples of many more. Three years later, D. Lowell produced a similar contribution to this line of argument.<sup>12</sup> Lowell’s argument, however, is more specific. Edwards passed to his offspring, a hereditary gene, he says, whose main result was the production of college presidents! Of the five generations that followed Jonathan Edwards,

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> A. E. Winship, *Jukes-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity* (1900).

<sup>11</sup> E. A. Winship, “The Human Legacy of Jonathan Edwards,” *World’s Work* 6 (1903), 3981-3984.

<sup>12</sup> D. Lowell, “The Descendants of Jonathan Edwards,” *Munsey’s Magazine* 35:3 (1906), 263-273.

argues Lowell, never was a college president lacking among his direct descendants. Moreover, many of the direct descendants who were disqualified through accident of sex, have, in Lowell's terminology, made college presidents of their husbands!

Not to be outdone, Lowell adds to his list Rutgers, Yale (3), Columbia, and the Carnegie Institution. He then turns from presidents of colleges and universities to presidents of the Association of American Anatomists, the Boston Society of Natural History, a bank, and three railroads; he then tops the list off with the inclusion of one Vice-President and one President of the United States.

What is one to say of these studies? One marvels at the time spent on the collection of the data and respects the utter seriousness with which the material is presented. Is it something that has been outgrown as it were? The answer appears to be no, for similar pieces have continued to appear, drawing the family line even as far as Winston Churchill as a descendant.

On January 18, 1758, Jonathan Edwards paid a last visit to his friend Samuel Hopkins. Edwards had taken several of his own manuscripts with him and he left them with Hopkins for safekeeping. On January 19, Edwards left promising to return in the spring. It is said that Hopkins felt a chill of foreboding and that same day wrote to Joseph Bellamy, saying that, Mr. Edwards "expects not to return till next May," but he grimly added, "Alas his mantle has gone with him."<sup>13</sup> The spring came but Edwards never returned.

Samuel Hopkins wrote the first full biography of Jonathan Edwards in 1765. The fact that the record of received subscriptions for Hopkins' planned *Life* of Edwards was very poor could be used to argue that the lack of interest in Edwards that would be displayed later had in fact already begun. Hopkins was not deterred, however, and began to edit several of Edwards' writings for publication. But he soon recorded that "they would not be sold and . . . turned his mind to other projects."<sup>14</sup>

The Boston publishers seemed to have met the local demand for Edwards' writings, but the evidence suggests he became better known throughout Europe. That the latter is true is proven by the great number of editions of his works which were published in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and the frequent translation of them into Dutch, French and German. In fact, ten of his works were translated early on into French, German, Arabic, Gaelic, Dutch, Welsh and even Choctaw.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> S. Hopkins to J. Bellamy 1/19/1758 in "Bellamy Papers" as quoted in C. Dennison and R. Gamble, *Pressing Toward The Mark* (1986), 1.

<sup>14</sup> E. A. Park, "Memoir of S. Hopkins," in *The Works of S. Hopkins*. Vol. 1 (Boston, 1854), 219.

<sup>15</sup> T. Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1940), vii.

The lack of American interest may account for the fact that the first collected edition of Edwards' works would not appear for another forty years after Hopkins' *Life*. Even then they would not appear from American presses but British ones. The first American edition was printed two years later in 1808 at Worcester, Massachusetts. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, Edwards' works had been more widely printed than those of any other American whatsoever (except Franklin).<sup>16</sup> Murray argues that the lack of American interest is due directly to the lack of spirituality in America at that time.<sup>17</sup>

Since the "rehabilitation" of Edwards and the Puritans in the twentieth century, Jonathan Edwards has become a man to be reckoned with. Yale University has named one of its colleges after him. Princeton has exhibitions in his honor. Wheaton holds conferences on him, as do Yale and Fairleigh Dickinson Universities. Doctoral dissertations appear at ever increasing rates, with numbers doubling every decade, and theses completed twenty or thirty years ago are being revised for publication as Edwards becomes increasingly topical and marketable. Scarcely a work now appears in the fields of American theology, the history of American philosophy, psychology, religion, literature, and culture that does not have something to say about Jonathan Edwards.

The problem is that all this material that has been and is being written on Jonathan Edwards exhibits the great differences of opinion that are held concerning him. It is not a problem in the sense that it makes for good scholarship, but it seems that Edwards can almost be anything to everyone. How can this be? Are they all talking and writing about the same man and the same writings? Probably the outlook and stance of the writers themselves contribute to the latter problem.

The Yale edition of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, which produced its first offering in 1957 with *The Will*, has as one of its chief aims, if not the primary one, to let Edwards speak for himself in a way that he has never before been able to or allowed. The Yale editors promise, in fact, "a full and complete exposure of his ideas in a manner never before possible."<sup>18</sup> The need for such an edition has long been felt. Over one hundred years have passed, says Morris,<sup>19</sup> since the first suggestion for its publication was made. In fact, there has been no newly collected edition of Edwards' works since the Dwight edition of 1830. Moreover, is it not ironic, that the president of Yale in 1787 assigned Edwards' writings to the rubbish of libraries? Now, that very same university is

---

<sup>16</sup> T. H. Johnson, "Jonathan Edwards' Background of Reading," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 28 (1931), 196.

<sup>17</sup> I. H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh, 1987), 454.

<sup>18</sup> S. J. Stein (ed.), *Apocalyptic Writings* by Jonathan Edwards (New Haven, 1977), x.

<sup>19</sup> W. S. Morris, "The Reappraisal of Edwards," *New England Quarterly* 30 (1957), 515.

entrusted with the task of publishing a completely new edition of those writings. Surely the new edition will mean that we will be obliged to re-examine long-held assumptions concerning Jonathan Edwards and his thought. This can only be for the good. For, the present writer's ongoing research on Edwards confirms what he has always suspected, *viz.* that Edwards has been much maligned, often quoted, unfairly caricatured, highly misrepresented, heavily criticized, but hardly ever read. If I have any single aim in my labor of love on the unpublished writings of Edwards, it would be to help counter the misuse of his thought. Edwards deserves to be read, even and especially by those who believe they are opposed to the viewpoint of Edwards.

### **Christ in His Sufferings Suffered Extremely from the Hand of God the Father**

Jonathan Edwards

Isaiah 53:10, "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin He shall see His seed."

This chapter is the plainest and fullest account of the sufferings of Christ that there is in all the Old Testament. We have a very particular description of His sufferings and the ends and benefit thereof and then in these three last verses we have an account of the reward of His sufferings. There are three things that are mentioned in this verse which are the promised rewards of Christ's sufferings.

1. That He shall see His seed. That His death and sufferings shall be successful for the actually bringing in of many souls to salvation.

2. The second reward here promised is His resurrection and Eternal Life. And this is signified in the expression, "He shall prolong His days." The prophet had been giving an account of His death. He tells us in verse 7 that He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. In verse 8, that He was cut off out of the land of the living. In verse 9, that He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. And then in this verse, that He shall make His soul an offering for sin and yet here the prophet says, "He shall prolong His days." This is a plain prophecy of His resurrection and that the whole human nature shall after His death have eternal life.

3. The third reward promised is His advancement to the rule of the world for God and His success therein. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands, implies that that matter shall be committed into Christ's

hands. It shall be left with him to fulfill the pleasure of God to govern the world and accomplish God's decrees and good pleasure in it and that Christ shall successfully and prosperously manage the government of the world, so that God's pleasure shall be done and His glory advanced.

But to return to the first of these rewards that we are chiefly concerned with at this time, viz. that Christ shall see His seed. By the seed of Christ are here less meant believers on Him, these are said to be Christ's seed, Galatians 3:29, "If Christ's then ye are Abraham's seed." They are called His children. Hebrews 2:13, "Behold I and the Children which God hath given me."

As we by nature are the children of the first Adam, so by grace are we the children of the Second Adam. As our animal nature is derived from the first Adam, so is our spiritual nature. As the old man is derived from Adam, we proceed from the first Adam by a natural generation, so believers proceed from Christ by regeneration by being born of the Word and Spirit. Christ shall see His seed, that is, He shall see them born. And therefore 'tis added that He shall prolong His days as a man. He can't see His posterity multiply unless He lives long. So Christ could not see that glorious success which there was to His Gospel unless He rose from the dead and had His days prolonged that He might see it. This is what is promised to Christ as a reward for His making His soul an offering for sin. He should see His blest ones, those that the Father had given him: born, brought home and saved by Himself.

Doctrine: That Christ should see sinners converted and saved was part of the reward that God promised Him for His sufferings. Two propositions:

1. God the Father promised Jesus Christ a reward, if He would undertake to suffer for us. God the Father sought our redemption and His Only Begotten Son was the Person whom He chose to work it out and He appointed Him to it. It is a great and difficult work. It was necessary that He that was the Redeemer should become the Surety of the redeemed and should take their guilt upon Him and suffer their punishment. This was a very great and difficult and costly undertaking and God the Father saw meet that His Son that He appointed to it, should have a reward for it answerable to the merit and gloriousness of the work and also answerable to the difficulty and expense of it.

It was fit that such a work should be rewarded for as Christ undertook the work for mans' sake, so it was for God's sake to glorify, and it is a work whereby God is glorified in a peculiar and most distinguishing manner. This work is above all others to God's glory and therefore 'tis fit that God should reward it. It was a work wherein Christ showed

superlative love to God. Christ, under no natural obligation to undertake such sufferings, expressed an infinite love herein to the Father.

God by His love to His Son, was inclined to reward such a glorious undertaking to which He had appointed Him and which He had undertaken. And this reward was ascertained to Christ beforehand by promises and had respect to this reward. Hebrews 12:2, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Question: When did God the Father make this promise?

Answer: From all Eternity. The redemption of fallen man was a thing that was upon the heart of God from all Eternity. It was purposed and determined before the world was; there was a consultation among the Persons of the Trinity about it before the world was. Christ by the Covenant of Redemption was appointed the Mediator of the elect but He was appointed their Mediator before the world was. By which expression in Scripture, we are to understand from all Eternity, the beginning of the world being the first thing in time. What before is from all Eternity, 2 Timothy 1:9, "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Titus 1:2, "Which God that cannot lie promised before the world began." He could not promise before the world in any other covenant but the Covenant of Redemption.

Question: In what manner was the reward promised to Jesus Christ?

Answer: In a covenant that was made between the Father and the Son, called the Covenant of Redemption. There was a Covenant that was entered into between the Father and the Son about the redemption of man. God was determined that man should be redeemed and He in infinite wisdom, pitched upon His own Eternal Son to do the work. But this Person could no otherwise be appointed to such an undertaking than by agreement or covenant. The Father could not appoint Him by authority and therefore it must be by covenant or agreement. The Son is naturally not subject to any proper authority of the Father, for He too is God, equal with God. Indeed He is subject as Mediator, but he doesn't become Mediator any otherwise, than by this covenant or agreement whereby He voluntarily undertook.

After the Covenant is passed then He is become Mediator, then He becomes subject and is appointed by command, because this was part of the agreement that He should be subject in that work to the Father.

Therefore it must be by agreement or covenant that Christ first was appointed and undertook such a covenant that is plainly intimated to be between the Father and Son. Zechariah 6:12,13, The Prophet there is speaking of Christ the Branch. How He shall arise and build the Temple of the Lord. He says the counsel of peace shall be between them both, that is, between the Lord whose Temple He shall build and which intimates a consultation or agreement of peace or redemption between the Father and Son. Luke 22:29, "I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." The word in the original properly signifies to make over by covenant. In Psalm 40:6,7 the covenant between Christ and the Father is compared to the covenant there was between the servant and his master that chose to serve his master forever. That had his ear bored. Mine ear hast thou bored. Then said I, Lo! I come. In this covenant Christ promised to and God the Father promised Him, a glorious reward.

Question: What was the reward promised?

Answer: Christ's mediating glory. The thing that Christ undertook and promised the Father was that glory which He should have as Mediator. Christ as God is not capable of a reward but Christ as Mediator is. He was humbled, He was subject and He may be exalted. He is capable of receiving honor and glory.

The promised rewards are summed up in the text and the two following verses. We often have an account of the promises of God made to Christ, that He shall sit at God's right hand till His enemies be made His footstool. Give the heathen for thine inheritance. Highly exalted. Give him a name above every name. All power in heaven and on earth.

Proposition 2. This was a part of that joy that was set before Him that made Him to cheerfully undertake those sore and grievous sufferings that made Him endure the Cross and despise the shame; to see sinners converted and saved was part of that reward which Christ depended and earnestly expected; He had this in His view. This encouraged Him that the Father had faithfully promised Him that He should see this; He should see such a joyful sight as sinners coming out of a natural state and conditions coming to Him for eternal life, to see them brought out of such a miserable and undone state into a state of life and happiness. This was a great part of that joy that was set before Him.

Question: How has this the nature of a reward? What advantage is it to Christ to have sinners converted and saved? Christ has enough. His

exaltation to Heaven. His sitting at the right hand of God. His enjoying the Father. His being made head over the angels renders Him rich. He has no need of us poor worms. How can it be any reward for His suffering for us to be converted and saved?

Answer: Christ has so set His love upon men that the seeing of this sight is what He earnestly desired and greatly delights in. 'Tis that that makes it a reward. 'Tis not because He wants or is indigent, but 'tis His love that makes it joyful to Him to see such a sight. He looks upon it as a blessed sight. He tells us that before the world was made His delight was with the sons of men. Christ is the Good Shepherd that loves the sheep and therefore when He finds the sheep that was lost He layeth it on His shoulders rejoicing. Luke 15:4,5,6, "He leaveth the ninety and nine in the wild and goeth after that which was lost until He find it and when He hath found it, He layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing, and when he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.'" Love makes Him rejoice. Love makes a reward. The Father knew the love He had to men and therefore He promised.

2. 'Tis part of His Mediatorial Glory. As King over a multitude of subjects they, in coming in and in converting to Him, glorify Him and see His Glory. Their knees bow, tongues confess and extol, hearts love. Herein consists His Kingdom of Grace. These are His people. Zion is His Kingdom. Christ doth as it were adorn Himself with believers as the high priest was adorned with the precious stones of the breastplate, whereon were written the names of the twelve tribes.

Herein:

1. What Reason we have to love the Lord Jesus Christ that He should account it His reward for His great sufferings to see us converted and saved. That He should take such delight in seeing such a sight that it should be so pleasant to Him to behold us delivered from bondage, from blindness, from condemnation, from death and from Hell, as to esteem it His reward. That He should so desire it and with such earnestness expect it, that He esteemed it as a glorious reward when the Father told Him, "If Thou shalt make Thy soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." The thought of this made Christ very cheerful in undertaking that terrible death that He suffered.

Why should Christ so set His heart upon us? Why should He account it such a sweet reward for His suffering, to see us converted and saved, to have us coming to Him? We are poor miserable worms; how great was

His love; how wonderful His condescension to us. And what cause have we reciprocally to love Christ? To thank Him that He should so set His heart upon us and esteem and prize us and take such delight in our happiness.

2. Hence doubtless God will continue to carry on the work of conversion in the world. For this is the reward that He has promised Christ. He told Him, "If He would make His soul an offering for sin He would see His seed, He would prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in His hand." God won't fail His own dear Son. He won't withhold from Him that reward which He promised Him from all eternity and which He all along depended upon and which encouraged Him to undertake such hard work. Christ has well earned the reward He has suffered extremely. God will surely do as He said; He shall see His seed. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He hath built His Church upon this rock and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

He seeing that Christ so delights in seeing sinners coming out of darkness. He shall see it as long as the world stands. Multitudes shall be converted and saved. The devil and all his instruments shall not put a stop to the progress of this Work. God will raise up instruments. God will continue to pour out His Spirit however wickedness seems to prevail. There is no denying but that God will accomplish those things which He has spoken concerning the great increase of the number of those saved in the latter days.

We may be assured that the work shall be carried on, for God has committed this affair into Christ's own hand. John 17:2, "Given him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as God gave Him." Christ seeing the matter is left with Him will carry on this work that He so delights in and which is His own promised reward.

3. Hence those sinners that are seeking conversion should look to Christ for help. He is doubtless willing to help them in such an affair for converting men is a work that Christ greatly delights in. 'Tis His reward for His sufferings therefore He won't be backward. That is very great encouragement for poor Christ-less sinners to cry to Christ that He would enable them to come to Him.

4. Hence there can be no danger but that Christ will be ready to receive all that are willing to come to Him. Their coming won't be unwelcome; He'll be willing to save them. This is what He expected with pleasure. Before the world was He undertook those sorrows for the sake of these joys.

5. What Reason there is that all that are Christ's disciples should seek the conversion of sinners. Neighbors, children, ministers of their people. We should consider that herein we are honored in being made the instruments of Christ receiving His reward for His sufferings, how we should strive.

6. How we should rejoice when sinners are converted. Christians are members of Christ. When the Head rejoices they should all rejoice. His reward we should esteem our reward; there should be the same Spirit in the members as in the Head. When we hear therefore such names of any or have full evidence of a saving change it should rejoice our hearts for Christ herein has His reward for His sufferings.

## **Biblical Foundations for the Teaching Ministry of the Church**

Walter H. Norvell

*Assistant Professor of Christian Education*

*Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*

*Kansas City, MO 64118*

### **Introduction**

While organizations must continually re-invent themselves to stay relevant to changing times, those self-reinventions must not sever an organization from its purpose. Such organizations often drift from their founders' purposes and stagnate in a quagmire of lost identity. Successful organizations are organizations that effectively re-invent themselves while firmly tethered to their historical roots and founding purposes. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the church struggles to make the claims of Jesus Christ meaningful to new generations, just as it has for all generations since the Holy Spirit birthed the church on Pentecost two millennia ago. Particularly, the church in North America is repeatedly tempted to stray from its mission by the sparkle of technology and the oppression of political correctness. Yet, to remain true to the mission, certain functions must permeate the fabric of the church. These functions—worship, discipleship, evangelism, ministry, and fellowship—must mix in a living, symphonic arrangement allowing dynamic expression as the church follows her mission.<sup>1</sup> This paper will explore and review the biblical foundations for one element of the discipleship function, *viz.* teaching.

### **Old Testament Foundations for the Teaching Ministry of the Church**

Even a casual reading of the Old Testament reveals that “the religion of the Bible is a teaching religion, and the God of the Bible is a teaching God.”<sup>2</sup> Job 36:22 expresses this truth most eloquently and simply: “God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him?”<sup>3</sup> While all religions

---

<sup>1</sup> Gene Mims, *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2001), 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> Lucien E. Coleman, Jr., “Summary of the Doctrine of Education”, ed. Johnnie Godwin. *The Disciple's Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988), 1699.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, references and quotations from Scripture are from the New International Version (NIV).

have teaching components, Judaism was a teaching religion from the very beginning.<sup>4</sup>

### *God as Teacher*

In the Bible, the first words of God spoken to persons outside the Trinity were words of instruction. He told Adam and Eve about his plan for humans on planet earth (Gen 1:28). Later he instructed them in practical matters for life in general (Gen 1:29-20) and about eternal life and sin (Gen 2:16-17). After the first man and the first woman chose rebellion against God, he taught them the consequences of their sin and demonstrated his provision for sin by slaying animals from which he made coverings for them (Gen 3:16-21). These examples reveal much about God as teacher, yet they only hint at the richness of this concept. This understanding of God as teacher is so important because “what we think about God indicates what we do about education.”<sup>5</sup>

### *God's Revelation as Teaching*

What would we know about God if he had not chosen to reveal himself to us? We might ascertain that a generally benevolent intelligence created all things, but beyond that we would know nothing about God without his self-revelation. Christianity is indeed two sided: because of a God-shaped void, all persons seek to know the Creator, but because God is so transcendent above us, our search for him is futile. However, God is compassionate and revealed himself to us so that we could know him.<sup>6</sup> His act of revelation is teaching. As Baptists, we hold that the Bible is God's revelation and as such forms the basis for all of our teaching. Since the Bible provides for us the progression of God's self-revelation, we teach it and believe it in its entirety, not in a piecemeal fashion.

### *God's Initiated Relationships as Teaching*

A perusal of the Old Testament reveals that God initiated relationships with persons. Notable examples include Adam and Eve, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Isaiah, to name only a few. Each of these examples shows God starting and guiding the relationship as a teacher. Adam and Eve learned about life, both earthly and spiritual, from their conversations and daily walks with God. God called Abraham and taught Abraham about himself. Abraham learned about God as a promise-maker

---

<sup>4</sup> Jack D. Terry, “History of the Doctrine of Education,” edited by Johnnie Godwin. *The Disciple's Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988), 1728.

<sup>5</sup> Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloak, eds. *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1991), 32.

<sup>6</sup> J. B. Weatherspoon, *The Book We Teach* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1934), 23.

(and later a promise-keeper), a guide, a supplier of rich blessings, the giver of heritages, and a protector, sovereign and mighty (Gen 12:2-3). Joseph saw through God's relationship actions that God was a God who could not only give dreams but actualize them as well (Gen 37-50). Moses, away from the people of God, met God in a burning bush. Though Moses resisted God's call to lead Israel to the promised land by claiming a lack of ability, God said, "I . . . will teach you what to do" (Exod 4:15). Isaiah learned about God's majesty and glory in a way that reshaped his whole life and mission (Isa 6). Even in his corporate relationships with families, tribes, and nations, God taught through his covenant-making, indicating how he used relationships to teach about himself.

### *Moses as Teacher*

Of all Jews, Moses stands out as the greatest. A learned man, God used him to free Israel from Egyptian bondage, provide leadership to a new nation on pilgrimage to their promised land, and give Israel and the world the greatest system of law ever known.<sup>7</sup> Terry says of Moses,

Moses, chosen by God to deliver his people from the yoke of bondage in Egypt, was called the greatest of schoolmasters. Given the privilege of doing signs and wonders by the hand of God, he taught the Israelites and the Egyptians the omnipotence of God and his judgment on those who opposed him.<sup>8</sup>

God demonstrates through Moses the need and place for teachers among his people. Israel reflects the influence and results that one teacher, obedient to God, can have.

### *Passover and Other Feasts as Teacher*

Interestingly, God did not leave teaching to a few chosen individuals, but dispersed the function widely in the community of faith. One method God directed as such was the observance of the various feasts and festivals of the Jewish calendar. Much of the instruction provided by these events was centered in the home and given to parents as their responsibility.<sup>9</sup> The prime example of feasts as teacher can be seen in the observance of the Passover. Exodus 12:24-28 points out that even at its

---

<sup>7</sup> Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rea, eds. *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1975), 1152.

<sup>8</sup> Jack D. Terry, Jr., "God as Teacher," in *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 6.

<sup>9</sup> See Deut 6: 7 (NIV) and the use of our English word "impress" as indicative of the parents' teaching responsibility.

inception, the Passover was to be a lasting ordinance among God's people. They were to use it to teach each new generation about God's provision and deliverance. The Sabbath observance, the Passover, Pentecost, The Feast of Trumpets, Year of Jubilee, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles were all given in the Law as observances that taught God's people about God and his rule.<sup>10</sup>

### *Law as Teacher*

The Law was more than a codex of civil legislation. It contained God's commandments for everything from religious life to family life to business and agriculture. In Romans, Paul argued that the Law was provided to teach us of our own weaknesses and inability to please God (Rom 3-5). Galatians 3:24-25 likens the Law to a hired schoolmaster under whose tutelage we must submit until the grace of Jesus Christ sets us free. Torah, the description given the first five books of our Old Testament, is derived from words meaning "to throw or shoot (arrows)" and "to point, guide, instruct, [and] teach."<sup>11</sup> To the Hebrew mind, there was no difference between law and instruction.

### *Prophets and Priests as Teachers*

Besides giving primary teaching responsibility to parents, God instituted other means to teach his people. Throughout the Old Testament period, God inspired and used prophets and priests to teach his people. Beginning with Samuel and extending to the prophets of the divided kingdom, God spoke his instructions through them. Samuel stated, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right" (1 Sam 12:23). Even when you consider the acts of the prophets, such as Hosea's marriage to a prostitute whom he buys back from the auction block of slavery, they are instructive of God's relationship with Israel (Hos 1-3). Isaiah preached sermons. Amos illustrated God's word with familiar illustrations of plumb lines and ripening fruit.

Priests also served in teaching roles. When Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, he brought forth Ezra to read the book of the Law of Moses to all the people gathered before the water gate. Then Levites moved among the people, explaining what they had heard. The people responded first with grief over their failure to keep the law, then with joy because they now understood God's laws (Neh 8). When Josiah's reforms brought about the recovery of the book of the Law, Hilkiah the priest, along with Huldah the prophetess, are instrumental in teaching a

---

<sup>10</sup> Terry, 8-15.

<sup>11</sup> Pfeiffer, Vos, and Rea, 1727.

new generation (2 Chr 34).

### *Teaching in Israel's Worship and Wisdom Literature*

Having considered the Law, prophets, and historical writings of the Old Testament for the concept of teaching, the foundations of teaching ministry are also rooted in the worship and wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The entire book of Proverbs is instructional in nature, especially the first nine chapters where instruction from parents is given to their son (Prov 1-9). Even the hymns of Israel as found in the Psalms were in many cases instructive in nature: Psalm 1, 14, 19, 32, 84, and 119, to name only a few. Of another wisdom book, "Ecclesiastes is the English title of this wisdom book derived from the Greek Septuagint's translation of the original Hebrew, 'Qoheleth.' The word *Qoheleth* (1:1; 7:27; 12:8) suggests one who has a function as teacher or preacher in the assembly."<sup>12</sup> Israel noted little distinction between Scripture, wisdom, and instruction.

### *Synagogue*

Sometime during the Exile, after the destruction of Solomon's temple, Jews developed what was probably the most important institution of their religious life, the synagogue. Synagogues were formed wherever ten Jewish males resided. Typical synagogue services consisted of scripture readings and recitations, prayers, sermons, and a benediction.<sup>13</sup>

Although the synagogue was a place of worship for Jews living remotely from the temple, the synagogue became a place of teaching and study of the law.

Strictly speaking, the temple was the place of worship in Judaism, while the synagogue became the educational institution, providing a place to study the law. As the institution for the study and inculcation of the law the synagogue was especially suited to the Pharisaic interest; and from the 2nd cen. B.C. onward, this institution was dominated by the Pharisees. In practice, however, the distinction between worship and instruction disappeared . . .<sup>14</sup>

The importance of the synagogue cannot be overemphasized whenever we consider the spread of the gospel during the first century. Paul's custom was to speak about the claims of the gospel first to Jews in the

<sup>12</sup> Trent C. Butler, ed., *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 388.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1312.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1640.

synagogue. The synagogue's reputation was as a place of learning and teaching that provided the platform for much of Paul's missionary work.

### **New Testament Foundations of the Teaching Ministry of the Church**

The church was born at Pentecost as the Holy Spirit spoke the good news of Jesus Christ through the apostles and other disciples gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2). While the teaching ministry of the church sprouted from the soils of the Old Testament, it put down roots, sent up stalks, bloomed and bore fruit in the early days of the church.

#### New Testament Concepts

At least two major New Testament concepts must be addressed to understand the teaching ministry of the first century church. These terms are *kerygma* and *didache*.

#### *Kerygma*

*Kerygma* refers to "preaching" or "proclamation." While the early church may not have made any distinction between the act and the content of proclamation, today *kerygma* primarily refers to the content of the proclamation. In today's terms we refer to the message of the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

The *kerygma* refers to the presentation of the message of Jesus Christ by heralds, who were sent forth ("apostles"), commissioned to declare to an unbelieving world those saving acts by which God through Christ had brought salvation to mankind. It has often been pointed out by modern scholars that this proclamation underlies every writing in the New Testament. It becomes explicit at many points, but even where it is only implicit, it is the ground-message on which all else is founded.<sup>16</sup>

One such example of kerygmatic material is found in Peter's defense before the chief priests in Acts 5:30-32 (NASB):

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

---

<sup>15</sup> Michael J. Anthony, ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 389.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph G. Turnbull, *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1967), 414.

### *Didache*

A word closely interrelated to *kerygma* is the noun *didache*. Its verb form means “to teach.” In other variations of the word it may mean “those who have been taught,” those “qualified to teach,” “a teacher” or “master,” “the act of or occupation of teaching,” or “instruction” or the content of a teaching.<sup>17</sup> *Didache* is the part of the gospel that springs from the proclamation of the gospel. It is the working out of the gospel into daily living. While the *kerygma* may precede the *didache*, they cannot be separated, but are intertwined at every point. Excellent examples are Galatians 5, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus.

The implications of the relation of *kerygma* and *didache* for Christian education have been increasingly studied in recent years. Among the first serious Protestant studies of this type was Iris V. Cully’s *The Dynamics of Christian Education* (The Westminster Press, 1958). She pointed out that the very proclamation of the good news is teaching,” not in the sense of imparting information, but “the dynamic word through which a redemptive experience is mediated. The way in which it is proclaimed as well as the fact of its proclamation gives a ground for interpreting the experience. When the words are appropriated by the person and he is turned around—accepting the forgiveness of God, finding new life in Jesus Christ—then he has the ground for interpreting the experience” (p. 48). The *kerygma* at many levels yields teaching as the church seeks to understand the moral implications of the gospel, as it interprets the redemptive events in the life of the Christian community through fellowship, and as it faces the apologetic task—interpreting its life to the world.<sup>18</sup>

Turnbull goes on to note that this dynamic interplay between proclamation and teaching is infiltrating preaching, evangelism, pastoral care and ministry, and counseling as well as education.<sup>19</sup> While his words are about fifty years old, this struggle between proclamation and teaching is still troubling many pastors today. While many seem to divorce the two, a few are recognizing their connectedness and synthesizing new and meaningful efforts in proclamation and teaching in the church.

### *Other New Testament Terms*

In his chapter “Establishing Biblical Foundations” in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, Hayes identifies another set of New Testament terms that closely relate to teaching. *Dida/skw* is the

<sup>17</sup> Friberg, Timothy and Barbara. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 98.

<sup>18</sup> Turnbull, 416.

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

most common verb for teaching in the New Testament. As a noun, it is translated as “doctrine” (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim 3:16). Another form, *didaskalos* is our word “teacher.” *Paideuo/w* means “to give guidance and training” and is related to the use of terms meaning “small child” (Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 3:16). Another term, *nouqe/te*, means “to shape the mind” or “admonish.” Four examples of its use (1 Cor 4:14; 10:11; Eph 6:4; Col 3:16) indicate the richness of this strong verb. Our noun “disciple” and the verb meaning “to disciple” come from the *maqhte/w* word group. Many examples of this word’s noun and verb forms are found in the Gospels and Acts. “Building up” or “edifying” through teaching is seen in the word *oikodomew* (1 Cor 3:9; 8:1; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Pet 2:5). Teaching that allows the learner to compare and contrast is *parati/qhmi*, literally meaning “I set before” or “I place beside” (1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:2). Acts 11:4, 18:26, and 28:23 show Peter explaining his vision, Priscilla and Aquila teaching Apollos the rest of the story of salvation, and Paul defending the faith with a chronological recounting of the faith. The word used in these examples is *eokti/qhmi*. Finally, *oqhge/w* is used to show a sense of leading, guiding or demonstrating the way (Acts 1:16; John 16:13; Acts 8:31; Matt 15:14; 23:16, 24; Rev 7:17).<sup>20</sup> The use of such powerful and diverse words illustrates the richness of the teaching concept in the New Testament. Interestingly, Paul encourages his protégé, Timothy, with teaching terms: that pastors should be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2) and to disciple others (2 Tim 2:2). The office and function of pastor is oriented toward teaching.

## Other New Testament Foundations

### *Jesus as Teacher*

To discuss the roots of the church’s teaching ministry and overlook Jesus’ teaching ministry would be travesty. Yet, to talk about Jesus’ teaching ministry in some light to make it appear that his teaching ministry was some separate and distinct segment of his ministry is also travesty. In the Gospels, nearly every recorded saying and action of Jesus was teaching, usually above and beyond anything else that those sayings and actions might also be. Jesus is associated with the word at least forty-five times. Counting other related terms, the total moves up to more than sixty-six in the King James Version. Yet, he is never referred to as a preacher. He was said to be teaching about forty-five times while he was said to be preaching only eleven times. He referred to himself as a teacher and used educational language to refer to his followers or

---

<sup>20</sup> Edward L. Hayes, “Establishing Biblical Foundations” in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Clark, Johnson, and Sloak (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1991), 39.

students.<sup>21</sup>

Jesus taught in everything he said and did and set the example for all Christian teachers who follow him to do likewise. He used a variety of methods of instruction. He called for decision and commitment with his lessons. His use of language penetrated the human heart. He was a storyteller without peer. He taught persons of both genders, all ages, various ethnic persons, the wealthy, and the poor. He crossed all religious and political boundaries as he taught. He turned the questions of listeners back on them like arrows that revealed the seekers' intent. He commanded that his followers teach all he had taught. No other teacher like him has ever existed. He is the master Teacher.<sup>22</sup>

### *Paul as Teacher*

Paul was a Pharisee and trained at the feet of Gamaliel, one of Judaism's most famous teachers. Paul was trained to be a teacher. While we are likely to think of Paul as a missionary and preacher, teaching is woven into his work. In fact we might view Paul as a teaching evangelist. We do not have many examples of Paul's verbal teaching, but we do have a rich treasury of his written communication. His work is clearly didactic in nature, mixing the *kerygma* and the *didache* in a free manner. Starting with the *kerygma*, he went on to teach about the meaning of being "in Christ" with its moral and ethical principles for the social context of the community of faith. One only has to read Galatians and Ephesians, Romans, and 1 and 2 Timothy to see the breadth of content in Paul's teaching.

In many ways Paul stands as almost a unique figure in the annals of Christian history. He combined the fervency of an evangelist, the compassion of a pastor, the perception of a scholar, and the diplomacy of a statesman. He was able to minister meaningfully with the context of their appreciation to Jews in their synagogues, to Gentiles having some contact with the teachings of Judaism, and to Gentiles entirely devoid of any Jewish preparatory instruction. He was prepared to correct and instruct his converts by beginning at a point of common agreement, and then leading them on to an appreciation of rightful significance in and proper expression of their Christian faith.<sup>23</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The roots of the teaching ministry of the church permeate every facet of

<sup>21</sup> J. M. Price, *Jesus the Teacher* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1946), 13-15.

<sup>22</sup> Clark, Johnson, and Sloak, 87-102.

<sup>23</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Ministry and Message of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 111.

Holy Scripture. Yet, to conclude with that point says little to the contemporary church struggling with this vital function of the church. Coleman concludes in *Why the Church Must Teach*:

Teaching is an essential function within the Christian community, just as metabolic processes are vital to a living organism. Teaching may take place in worship services, Bible classes, counseling sessions, training events, choir rehearsals, and Christian homes. But it *must* take place.<sup>24</sup>

He goes on to state that the church must teach to maintain its identity. The church must teach to pass on the Christian tradition. It must teach so it can evangelize. It must teach so to enable church members for worship. Finally, the church must teach so believers develop the character of Christ.<sup>25</sup> The church has always taught to these ends and must always teach to these ends. With its roots deeply sustained in Scripture, the church must teach each new generation the ever wonderful, timeless, and glorious gospel.

---

<sup>24</sup> Lucien E. Coleman, Jr., *Why the Church Must Teach* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 148.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-166.

## **Book Reviews**

*Richard Furman: Life and Legacy.* By James A. Rogers. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001, xxxv + 335 pp., \$20.00 paper.

Originally published in 1985, this is the first biography since 1913 devoted to the life of the pioneer southern Baptist pastor and statesman, Richard Furman. It is a worthy addition to the growing body of literature on Baptist history and theology. The author, James A. Rogers, is primarily concerned with drawing a picture of the man and his historical impact on Baptist missions, Southern Baptist organization and Baptist education.

Furman was born into a Puritan family in New York shortly before their move to South Carolina in 1756. Converted under Baptist preaching in the early 1770s, Furman rejected his father's Anglicanism for Baptist views and was ordained within a few years of his baptism. During the Revolution, Furman had a price set on his head by the British General Cornwallis, who feared the prayers of Furman more than the combined might of two continental armies. Furman was an advocate of a pan-Protestant religious liberty, yet defended his own right as an ordained minister to be a political representative at the state level and argued for state funding of his religious school. In church government, he moved his congregation away from an aristocratic to a more democratic model. Furman showed some ability to adapt to varying cultures when he appropriated a simple vestment after moving from a rural church to become pastor of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, an adaptability for which he was criticized.

A prominent leader in the Charleston Association, the first and leading Baptist association in the South, he believed revival would come to the churches as a result of ministerial education, lay indoctrination, attention to ecclesiology and pious commitment. During the Second Great Awakening, he lauded the movement's "great tendency to excite the attention, and engage it to religion," but warned about "some incidental evils," especially the loss of rational activity (108-9). Furman was not only a dedicated pastor, but also the first true denominational statesman among Baptists in the United States. In 1814, he was elected the first President of the Triennial Convention, the first national Baptist missions society in America. Soon after his 1817 address to that same convention on the need for ministerial education, Baptists established at least ten now-prominent Baptist colleges and universities. He was invited to preach before the President and Congress of the United States in 1814.

Unlike some denominational leaders then and today, Furman understood that Baptists must have a vote on those institutional decisions which affect the churches, something that even Luther Rice did not fully comprehend (179-85). While he could evoke awe among his ministerial colleagues, he still made time for the children. In her diary, Eliza Tupper remembered her pastor requiring children to memorize the catechism. She described how he would descend from the pulpit to quiz them: "I think I hear at this very moment the dear voice of our pastor, saying, 'A little louder, my child.'" (207).

Although he established a unique form of ecclesiastical structure with the constitution of the South Carolina Baptist Convention—a form that would empower the later Southern Baptist Convention to become the greatest missionary and educational denomination in the United States—Furman also had his faults. He had earlier denounced slavery, but came to defend it during the ideological buildup to the Civil War. His letter to the Governor of South Carolina defending slavery is reprinted in all of its misdirected eloquence with the eight appendices of original documents located at the back of the book. Perhaps it is fitting that this founder of Baptist conventions, missions societies, education societies and even of a college which later bore his name, delivered his final sermon on the divinity of Christ. After all, God became a man and died on a cross for Baptist icons, too.

Rogers is a capable historian but makes mistakes when foraying into theology. Without any historical evidence to support his claim about Furman's response to a question concerning his performance of a wedding ceremony for a fellow minister, Rogers asserts that Furman "demonstrated liberalism uncharacteristic then of Baptist conservatism" (81-82). Fortunately, Rogers focuses on the historical side of the discipline of historical theology. For those interested in the doctrinal contributions of Furman, Thomas J. Nettles offers a concise and well-written essay in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. by Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990).

Malcolm Yarnell  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*The Glory of Christ*. By John Armstrong, ed. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002, 176 pp., \$14.99.

*The Glory of Christ* delivers a plea for the recovery—indeed, the rediscovery of Jesus Christ as the center of evangelical affection, obedience, and praise. John Armstrong, founder and president of

Reformation & Revival Ministries and editor of this volume from Crossway Books, cites the captivation of contemporary Christian attention by church growth methodologies, the psychology of self-esteem, political activism, co-dependency and a host of other concerns to justify the appearance of this collection of essays. Armstrong, along with three fellow reformed Baptists combine efforts to produce eight chapters treating various aspects of the glory of Christ.

In chapter one, Armstrong first gives attention to Christ's involvement in and significance for the created realm. Christ is sovereign in relation to the entire universe which he both created and sustains. Within the comprehensive scope of his reign, Christ asserts special lordship over His church within and through which His glory uniquely displays itself in the universal work of reconciliation. Christ's agency in creation, accomplishment of reconciliation, and lordship over the church both reveal and demonstrate the fullness of God in Christ. God's worthiness for praise finds its concrete expression in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Thus the path to reformation and revival among God's people involves essentially the glorification of Jesus Christ. Such a recovery of Christ's glorification should manifest itself in the church's stewardship of its time, attention, and effort. The pulpit is the place to start.

James I. Packer reviews the significance of the doctrine of the person of Christ in chapter two by exploring the meaning of the incarnation. In light of Christ's eternal divine nature in triune relationship to the Father and the Spirit, Packer concludes that the incarnation means mystery, union, addition, and mediation. Incarnation is mystery because it evokes both the confession that the incarnation has occurred and that its full meaning remains ineffable. While our reason rightly and happily pursues it in analysis, wisdom maintains that "when rational analysis can take us no further we turn to worship"(47). It is union because the divine and human truly and profitably unite not only without threatening their own distinctive natures but express themselves most purely just here, in him. Incarnation is addition because it secures even as it displays divine empathy for everything human. Finally, incarnation means mediation because through it, we sinners are truly brought into relationship with the living God.

Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, considers Christ the Mediator in chapter three. In stunningly short compass Mohler surveys the great soteriological insights of the Reformation concerning Christ the suffering, sacrificial, saving, substitutionary, superior, supernatural, solitary, sufficient, and sovereign Mediator.

In chapter four, Jim Elliff, president of Christian Communicators

Worldwide, considers the glory of Christ the Lamb of God. Elliff points readers to the awe and splendor of Christ the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world as depicted in John's Revelation.

Armstrong revisits the scandalous glory of Christ crucified and its implications for preaching and the Christian life in chapter five.

James I. Packer considers the glory of the present reign of Christ in chapter six, identifying three permanent pairs of characteristics indicative of that reign. Christ, insists Packer, is permanent image and centrality, humanity and headship, union and communion. The staggering reality of Christ's present and his promised future reign as King ought to enthrall and then empower the church of Christ to deep worship of and clear witness to her ascended Savior and Lord.

In chapter seven Albert Mohler considers the coming Christ who will manifest his lordship to all of creation, end history, and inaugurate the new age in which the authority, judgment, and most significantly, the glory of the Son of God will be universally evident.

In the final chapter Jim Elliff explores the repercussions resulting from a faithful vision of Christ's glory in the life of his followers. Where Christ's worthiness for praise is known and embraced, believers will unashamedly declare his name, magnifying him and nurturing their own passion for him in themselves and in others.

These four authors recognize the exegetical, theological and cultural causes for the neglect of Christ within the church. They also identify resources for the corrections called for, not only among Reformation, but also among patristic Chalcedonian voices from the past. But, while this volume does not lack theological, historical, or exegetical insight, its true value is first doxological and then practical. It seems clear that the authors share a common grief and a common longing. They grieve over the neglect of their Savior by those called by his name and they long for a rediscovery of his glory in the church. This volume should offer encouragement to likeminded ministers and laypersons who find themselves and their brothers and sisters in Christ tossed about and distracted by one cultural, political, or theological fad after another.

Mark DeVine  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Love in Hard Places.* By D. A. Carson. Wheaton: Crossway, 2002, pp. 208, \$14.99.

In John 13, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment: "that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you love one another" (RSV).

The Sermon on the Mount includes a more shocking demand: the disciples must love even their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Mt 5:43-48). Our Lord's standards are high, and yet they seem to be straightforward enough. We seek the welfare of our friends and foes alike, even at great personal expense. But this superficial clarity disappears once we press for specifics. Does Jesus expect us to love those who are, right now, plotting to kill us? Does he forbid all efforts to defend ourselves against deadly force? When the demands of justice and love apparently collide, which come first? If love requires enemies to reconcile, on what terms should they do so? Now we seem to know far less than we thought, as so many questions remain. But some of them, at least, are answered in D. A. Carson's latest work, *Love in Hard Places*, which addresses these and related concerns.

*Love in Hard Places* contains six chapters, the first of which recalls several claims defended in *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Crossway, 2000). As an example, Carson warns us again that to say what the Bible does about God's love will offend popular sensibilities. Modern people demand a god who is always of good cheer and who asks next to nothing of us (11-12). Consequently, they also expect Christians to adopt his uncritical ways. In the same place, Carson also discourages us from investing Greek words for love—e.g., *agapē*, *philia*, or *erōs*—with technical significance, since the biblical writers use them too freely, as modern lexicons make clear.

We then find a section which identifies several types of divine love, each one differing from the others in terms of its object and/or practical effects. We know, for example, that God's intra-Trinitarian love could not compare directly to his providential love, as the latter entails the satisfaction of needs, while the former could never do so (14). The love expressed in John 3:16 may have little in common with the election love favoring Jacob in Romans 9:10-12 (15). We cannot unify these forms of divine love under a single, non-trivial definition of "love." Nor, Carson reminds us, must we formulate any understanding of God's loves with indifference to his other attributes. His maximal benevolence does not negate his maximal justice. The God who comforts also destroys (16).

The next step is to examine the double commandment of love, as found in Mark 12:28-34. Here Jesus answers a popular "exam" question of his own day. Which commandment is the greatest? And in response, Carson observes, Jesus combines two major traditions. One does not love either God or his neighbor—when all else fails—but both at the same time. Yet the commandment of Deuteronomy 6:5 comes first logically (19). The one, true God must have our supreme loyalty and affection, the latter aspect being a special emphasis of Carson's analysis. A man cannot regard himself as being fully in line with the *Shema* if he merely wills to

obey it without desiring to do so (20-21). Affective shortcomings fall short of God's glory, though Carson does not quite suggest how one is to confront this sin. Perhaps one minds his attitude as best he can, knowing that such a change must finally be heaven-sent. On any analysis of loving God, however, knowledge of him counts; and thus Carson calls us back to our Bibles and the intensive reading habits of earlier generations (30).

The commandment to love our enemies follows two antitheses which Carson interprets for the sake of context (chapter 2, cf. Mt 5:43-48). Jesus forbids oath-taking; yet the OT commands the Israelites to swear alright, and only in their God's name (Dt 6:13). He also forbids getting one's own back, notwithstanding the *lex talionis* of Exodus 21:24 and Deuteronomy 19:21. We have a formal contradiction before us, then, and Matthew 5:43-47 causes the same worry. After all, loving one's enemy and giving him his due tend in opposite directions—or so we might have thought. But Carson resolves this tension by noticing the different contexts of these commandments. Jesus forbids oath-taking just in case the use of oaths abets dishonesty. He forbids personal revenge, but not official retribution by the state. He allows the state to inflict deserved harm, while commanding his disciples to act benevolently within the bounds of justice. All of them are reasonable answers. Carson then contrasts our duty to love "little" and "big" enemies, in that order, doing the former with awful (yet somehow delightful) detail. Little enemies, i.e. irritators who do not attack us for our faith, require commonplace—and therefore less satisfying—forbearance. Big enemies, on the other hand, attack us because of our faith; and while not all killing of Christians counts as persecution (sometimes they are just murdered), the latter's incidence has risen sharply in this century.

Since we are called to love sinful people—there being no other kind—we must also forgive one another. Relationships will break down, and the resulting grievances hinder love. The chain reaction is inevitable, so Carson considers its special challenges before taking up the hard cases of racism and Islamic terrorism. First, then, comes the note that enemies may not always reconcile. If a guilty side denies all wrongdoing or refuses to repent, he decreases the innocent man's capabilities. But, Carson argues, forgiveness can happen unilaterally: we need not wait upon our enemy to do this much (71-72). We know that the Father forgives, if not in the casual way that satisfies the modern taste; and the Son forgives even those who crucify him. Indeed, the NT makes a willingness to forgive, after the divine example, an indispensable fruit of regeneration. The old man withholds it; the new man offers it freely. None of this, however, permits the state to forgive wrongdoers: "In other words, the state cannot afford the same luxury; it cannot display the same virtue of forgiveness. The state's virtue is maintained insofar as it

pursues justice. By implication, if the state's magistrate is a Christian, that Christian better remember which virtue takes precedence in his or her role as a servant of the state" (80).

Based on his prior remarks, one can anticipate how Carson will handle racism and Islamic terrorism. People in all ethnic groups must first confront some ugly realities, one of them being that racism is everywhere. No ethnic group specializes in it, leaving the uninitiated to congratulate themselves for their innocence; and slavery follows racism. That too has existed worldwide. We also must not assume that when any two groups fail to integrate, the majority has always prevented it. This conclusion follows, according to Carson, only if "racism" is defined prejudicially, i.e. so that only the powerful can be racists. At the end of the day, he argues, the Nixons on all sides must go to China, approaching people groups that they alone can address without appearing to surrender. African-American and European-American leaders should expose race-baiting on their own sides, not each other's (91).

Carson uses Osama bin Laden as a concrete image of Islamic terrorism, since the American Christian finds himself being of two minds regarding such a man. We want to see him converted and lethally injected, perhaps both in equal measures. The same tension existed in the Second World War: we planned to shoot "Hans" on Thursday, notwithstanding Wednesday night's prayers for his soul. So we are asking about just war theory, after all; and Carson resolves the tension in those terms, arguing that some wars can be not only consistent with love, but demanded by it. One loves the victims of Islamic and Nazi wickedness, for example, by restoring the balance of justice, even at gunpoint. And one loves the perpetrators themselves by staying within the bounds of justice, however blunt the instrument of warfare may be. Therefore, Carson argues, our country may justly attempt to capture Islamic terrorists and neutralize the threat of hostile countries (123). All these measures presuppose that we, as a country, did not have September 11 coming to us—as he also cogently argues.

The final two chapters of *Love in Hard Places* deal with each side of the tension between Christian purity—whether doctrinal or behavioral—and unity. These two priorities appear to conflict in some cases, because orthodox Christians recognize that they cannot have peace at any price. Some lines will have to be drawn. But line-drawing sets us against the modern praise of tolerance which approves all that differs, no matter its content. So Carson introduces the problem of church discipline with the reminder that tolerance presupposes negative judgments. We tolerate what is, from our viewpoint, the *wrong* side, not just the other one (141). And in Scripture, the same apostles who encourage forbearance may also

prescribe confrontation and exclusion. The events of Galatians 2:11-21 make this clear enough, as Carson points out in some detail (144-160).

According to his own reconstruction of that day, unconverted Jews had begun to persecute the church in Jerusalem, and this news reached Peter by way of men “from James.” They tell him to lower his profile as a free Christian, and he does so for fear of making matters worse back in Jerusalem. Paul, on the other hand, argues that this behavior suggests to gentile Christians that the latter’s faith in Christ is not sufficient (153). Accordingly, the *demand* coming from unconverted Jews, however implicit, makes all the difference as to whether Peter is guilty of “play-acting” (152). To obey it—or even seem to do so—concedes the theological point: they are right and the Christians are wrong. Therefore, the Pauline rebuke stays within the demands of love, because it defends the very basis of Christian fellowship.

The church at Ephesus suffers from the opposite tendency. These Christians have done many things well, having endured under strain and exposed false teaching (173). They have become appropriately angry and activated when wolves have tried to invade their fellowship. However, they have also fallen from great heights of love. Carson argues that both dimensions of love—viz. the attitude and its corresponding behavior—are lacking, with special emphasis upon the former. Even when they do “love,” it occurs without the underlying surprise and wonder that God has first loved them (178). Consequently, there comes the threat of this church’s extinction, portrayed as the removal of its lamp stand. The last “hard place” of love, then, is the battle-scarred church which has fallen into comfortable and routine civility (188).

As Carson himself notes, this book about love in hard places has really become a prototype textbook on Christian ethics, covering far more ground than its reader expects (10). And perhaps that was inevitable: for when an author can address so many topics in a helpful way, he is tempted to do just that. *Love in Hard Places* gets in something for nearly everyone, rather than defending a tightly focused thesis—which is no criticism of it, but rather a fair warning as to the type of book one has in hand. We note as well that the style of the book has been affected by its early life as lectures to Oak Hill Theological College in 2001 (9). Listing occurs throughout the work (i.e. “*First*, . . . *Second*, . . . *Third*,” etc.), and this tendency may put off readers who admire less mechanical prose. But these are minor points, as *Love in Hard Places* makes for entirely satisfactory reading.

Thorvald B. Madsen II  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Jeremiah*. By Terence E. Fretheim. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary Series. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002, xx + 684 pp., \$65.00.

If a God as depicted by Fretheim in his commentary did not exist, no one would try to create him. Terence Fretheim, known to Old Testament students from his commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, and Kings and such writings as *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), recognizes that the portrayal of God in Jeremiah is particularly challenging (xiii). However, Fretheim is determined to take seriously the biblical book's words from, to, and about God. Fretheim does not attempt to side-step or to explain away even the most startling statements from or about the deity.

He does not ease Jeremiah's scandalous "confessions" to God. But to take seriously Scripture's statements about God in the book of Jeremiah, he calls into question many suppositions and theological positions. For instance, Bible believers joyfully affirm God's sovereignty over creation, Fretheim's all-encompassing term for the created order, nations, and history. When that sovereignty is limited by the tools God chooses to use, the notion of sovereignty becomes problematic. Yet Fretheim states God's free choices are constrained by relationships and related to powers available through which God can work (387). Additionally, in the disagreement among evangelicals over divine omniscience with regards to the future, Fretheim weighs in on the "open" side with such sidebar titles as "The Divine Perhaps" (377 on Jer 26:3) or "A New Day for God, Too" (467 on Jer 32).

Fretheim's theological struggles with Jeremiah's depiction of God is the most stimulating aspect of this commentary, but other features and positions are helpful, too. Fretheim reminds us Jeremiah is a book. It contains Jeremiah's preaching to 7th and 6th century Judah. But the book itself is written for a different audience, a later one, an audience that knew the historical fulfillments of the prophet's word. The book of Jeremiah, in its canonical form, then, is a coherent work that was compiled by editors or redactors some time after the prophet's ministry. (This is the mainstream view today). The compilation, while reflecting Jeremiah's words and deeds, is an intentional work addressed to a dispersed Israel and dealing with the exiles' questions (although the book may date to a period after the 538 B.C. return to Israel). Modern students of Jeremiah must read with both audiences in view.

Understood in this fashion, a reader expects the structure (rhetorical strategy) of the prophetic book to make an argument. Fretheim does not find any overarching logical argument when the book is viewed as a whole, even though he believes Jeremiah 25 is a "hinge" connecting two

halves of the completed work. (This writer finds Kathleen O'Connor's argument for structure to be more convincing; cf. her *The Confessions of Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1-25*. SBL Dissertation Series. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.) Rhetorical strategy for Fretheim, then, is the prophet's use of images and language.

The commentary is commendable in Fretheim's attempts to avoid extreme positions on such matters as authorship (what is truly from the prophet himself), historicity, and the book's relation to the Deuteronomists. But he cannot satisfy everyone and his distinction between historicity and truth may unsettle some (cf. the sidebar "Truth and History," 12) although he argues for some link between Israel's actual history and confessed history (31). Additionally, perhaps out of a desire to link closely Jeremiah's world and ours, Fretheim makes much of human agency in accomplishing God's work in the world. This agency ranges from God's use of Nebuchadnezzar and others (cf. 35f. and the sidebar "Conformation of Divine and Human Actions") to God's hiding of Baruch and Jeremiah at the instigation of royal officials (510 on Jer 36:26).

Several features of the Smyth and Helwys' Commentary series are interesting and helpful for general readers. Some three-hundred colored sidebars throughout the volume deal with such matters as historical detail (Josiah's sons, 315), archaeology (Lachish and Azekah, 484), theological points (God's willingness to change, 377), and interpretive topics (Seventy Years, 356). Several sidebars are quotes from modern authors. These quotes range from Daniel Berrigan's poetry to three sidebars relating to Jeremiah 45 (quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gerhard von Rad, and H. Wheeler Robinson). Indices include a sidebar index along with lists of scriptures, authors, works cited, etc. Most helpful for the computer-literate is a compact disc included with the commentary. The CD repeats the words, pictures, etc. of the print volume but has also Adobe Acrobat 4.05 to facilitate searching the entire work for words, phrases, etc.

Fretheim's volume has a place between the technical work of John A. Thompson (*The Book of Jeremiah*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) and the more application-oriented work of Ronald E. Clements (*Jeremiah*. Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988) and is not as tendentious as Walter Brueggeman's work (*A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Fretheim masks his knowledge of Hebrew and Greek because of the commentary series audience. The commentary and bibliography indicate the author is familiar with modern works on prophets and prophecy, but he presents information on the role and function of a prophet, the prophets' typical speech forms, etc. in discussion of particular oracles, not as introductory

material. Each major text-portion has “Commentary” and “Connections” sections. The former is helpful; the latter less so. Intending to deal with theological issues and to make application, the “Connections” provide bridges to contemporary life. The volume has few typographical errors, although the heading on page 511 refers to encounters between Jeremiah and *Hezekiah!*

This commentary series is addressed to the general reader, attempting “to make available serious, credible biblical scholarship in an accessible and less intimidating format” (from the publisher’s web site). Terence Fretheim seems to have met that goal; however, the biblical book Jeremiah does not lend itself to the general reader because of the intense and disturbing pictures of God in the book. Consequently, while students and general readers will understand Fretheim’s clear writing style, the commentary will prove to be more helpful for preachers and teachers.

Albert F. Bean  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God.* By Marva Dawn. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.

*Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God* is a clumsy title for a devotional book. But Marva Dawn wasn’t writing this work as a devotional book. For the past month, though, her book has stimulated and inspired my devotional time and helped me pray. Based on the 2000 Schaff Lectures at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Marva Dawn wrote a four-chapter work bringing together the concepts “principalities and powers” and God’s tabernacling in weakness. Then she looked at the church to see how believing communities deal with the unseen forces which affect and afflict our world. She asked if we are reflecting the presence of God by embracing our institutional weakness. Or, have we idolized and come to imitate the powers that seem to dominate human thinking and behavior?

Perhaps you have an adequate understanding of the divinely created, yet fallen powers that dominate life today. I did not and do not. But Dawn reminded me that we cannot simply ignore the drives and desires and needs that lie behind economic, political, pleasurable and knowledge-seeking activities. Nor can we make any progress by simply branding unethical and immoral activity “sin.” Instead, the church must face and witness to a powerful coalition of business, education, entertainment, political, and scientific interests, some of the current expressions of powers fallen but overcome in the coming of Christ.

Dr. Dawn's view that Jesus' atonement overcame the powers of this world is not new. Gustaf Aulen popularized the view in *Christus Victor* (MacMillan Publishing, Co; 1969 paperback edition); however, the New Testament view of principalities and powers as real, powerful, and significant has been demythologized by some and simply collapsed into their view of Satan by others. Dawn briefly surveyed the understanding of the powers prior to Walter Wink's books (e.g., Wink's trilogy *The Powers*, Fortress Press, 1984-1992 and *The Powers That Be*, Doubleday, 1999). She affirmed Wink's refocusing of the language and bringing the powers to our attention but criticized his view for identifying the powers as essentially "this world" and without significant spiritual dimensions. Most important, in chapter one Dawn underlined the importance of the church recognizing the powers today.

Chapter two is exegetical and conceptual. The author worked with the words and concepts of God's power (du/namij), human weakness (a)sqe/nea), and the finishing or perfecting of something (tele/w). All three concepts are important to Dawn's understanding of the role of the church. After studying the concepts, she brought them to bear on 2 Corinthians 12:9. In this passage, she translated the Lord's answer to Paul's prayer for removal of the thorn in the flesh as "My grace is sufficient for you, for [your] power is brought to its end in weakness." Likewise Dawn reminds us that Paul gloried in his own weakness (2 Cor 11:30). While these insights are not unique to Dr. Dawn, they are fundamental to the point she wanted to make. *The church must embrace its own weakness in order that the power of God might be evident.* She buttressed her position by discussing Jesus' tabernacling and what it means for his followers to live out their weakness, as Jesus did, for the glory of God.

The volume becomes truly convicting in chapter three entitled "Churches Being, and Acting as, Fallen Powers." Here the church, its congregations and leaders, are indicted for pursuing the same goals and using the same methods as the fallen powers with the result that churches become one of the fallen powers. (Warnings of the church's becoming "one of them" are reminiscent of Eugene Peterson, a popular writer with whom Dawn has work, taught, and written, cf., *The Unnecessary Pastor*, Eerdmans, 2000.) The remedy is found, in good evangelical fashion, in the description of the church in Acts 2. Here the author made her points about how the church can be something other than one of the fallen powers. This is where Dawn's work becomes practical in the best sense of that term, for ministers serving local congregations, seminary professors who care about the church and its leaders, and laypersons with an interest in what God designed the church to be and to do.

Dawn isolated “seven practices of the early church”: the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of *the* bread (her emphasis), prayers, signs and wonders, economic redistribution, and worship. She gave the greatest amount of space to the point about the apostles’ teaching, dealing with method and content and the “biblically-formed vision” of what the church should be. Again, while there is relatively little that is absolutely new in her treatment of these seven practices, there is much to think and to pray about when we compare the goals and methods that we promote in the church with where it all began. Conviction comes in reading this portion not because of what we don’t know with our minds but because of what we do not know by experience and what we do not try to do and to be.

Chapter four’s focus on the “gospel armor” of Ephesians 6 may be the least compelling portion of the book. The exegesis seems forced since, in my opinion, she uses the helmet, shield, etc. simply as vehicles to say what she needed to say. Still, this chapter has challenges for the church that seeks to give glory to God by showing that victories come through his strength married to the church’s embraced weakness. In all, Marva Dawn has written a book, as another reviewer phrased it, “not for the faint hearted [but] for those whose hearts have grown weary.”<sup>1</sup>

Marva Dawn is a theologian, author, musician, and educator with Christians Equipped for Ministry of Vancouver, Washington. She is also a Teaching Fellow in Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. Dawn earned a Ph.D. in Christian Ethics and Scriptures from the University of Notre Dame.

Albert F. Bean  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Can We Do That? Twenty-Four Innovative Practices That Will Change the Way You Do Church.* By Andy Stanley and Ed Young, Jr. West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 2002, 194 pp., \$16.99 hardcover.

This book provides a unique opportunity to listen to ideas from two very bright pastors. Andy Stanley is the son of Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, and Ed Young, Jr. is the son of Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist in Houston. What happens when the sons of two mega-church pastors grow up and start their own churches? In this case, Andy Stanley is the pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta, GA. Begun in 1995, the church now averages approximately nine

---

<sup>1</sup> See online review at [http://www.anglican.org.nz/News/Taonga/powers\\_weakness.htm](http://www.anglican.org.nz/News/Taonga/powers_weakness.htm) by Bryden Black. Accessed October 14, 2002.

thousand in worship attendance. Ed Young, Jr. serves as pastor of Fellowship Church in the Dallas Metroplex area. Begun in 1990, the church now averages fifteen thousand in weekly attendance. *Can We Do That?* provides an opportunity to peek inside the minds of these two “cutting edge” pastors.

The book contains twenty-four chapters and is divided into four sections. Section one is titled “Reaching Out” and discusses various evangelistic strategies employed by both churches. Section two is titled “Ministering to People” and focuses on various methods for discipleship. Section three is titled “Leading the Church” and deals with leadership and ecclesiology. Section four is titled “Getting the Message Across” and addresses worship and sermon preparation. The writing style is non-technical and the book itself can be read at a fast pace. The ideas springing from these two active minds come at a rapid-fire pace from beginning to end.

Stanley and Young should be commended for proposing many positive ideas that can contribute to an evangelistic atmosphere in a local church. Stanley summarizes the evangelism strategy for his church in a simple “invest and invite” formula. Instead of focusing on an evangelism training program, Stanley stresses that his church members should invest themselves in the lives of unbelievers and then invite their lost friends to church. Stanley summarizes the reason for this strategy when he says, “It is easier to invite people to an event than it is to confront them about their personal belief system. It is easier to include them in on something you are excited about than it is to convince them that their entire worldview is incorrect” (3). Young summarizes the strategy of Fellowship Church as “reach up, reach out, and reach in.” He emphasizes that the senior pastor must model evangelism and says, “Ultimately, senior pastors must be a model of evangelism. They must be willing to be put in situations with people in the community and be comfortable saying, ‘Hey, I’m a senior pastor. Come visit the church sometime’” (12).

*Can We Do That?* continues from the initial chapters on the importance of evangelism to give a potpourri of innovative ideas. In children’s ministry, Stanley’s church offers a “Kidstuf” service each Sunday which is designed for attendance by children and their parents (46). At Young’s church, if children trust Christ, their *parents* are contacted and invited to attend a class called “KidFaith” (59) where the parents are given help on how to disciple their children. Concerning invitations, Stanley will often conclude a service by saying “The person who invited you to church this morning would love to discuss [Christ] with you over lunch” (4). Young seems to have a grasp on the potential of the internet to reach lost people. Both churches engage in practices that are common to growing churches such as new member’s classes,

reviewing the worship services for improvement opportunities, and creating an atmosphere of excellence.

I confess that I enjoy listening to both of these men preach and that there are many ideas in *Can We Do That?* that I can embrace and suggest to others. That said, I also find some aspects of their approach with which I disagree. Foremost is an attitude that seems to emphasize the mindset that elevates the pragmatic at the expense of the work of the Holy Spirit. For example, Young repeatedly stresses the need for creativity in the church. This theme comes to a crescendo when he says, “Creativity brings people in the front door, and creativity keeps people from going out the back door” (149). While creativity is a wonderful character trait, is creativity all that brings people to the church? What about the work of the Holy Spirit convicting the lost of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8)? Integrating a well-rounded view of the person and work of the Holy Spirit could strengthen this book.

Both authors also seem to play a bit fast and loose with ecclesiology. It is not apparent that either church would fit into the traditional models of congregational, episcopal, or presbyterian ecclesiologies, though Stanley does offer an elder-led model. What is clear in both churches is that congregations are “staff-led,” which is not necessarily a bad thing. Neither church has deacons in any form. Both pastors seem to want to avoid the problems of “hyper-congregationalism” where leaders are micro-managed, a real problem in numerous churches. Young’s critique of micro-management is appropriate when he says, “Committees are, for the most part, sedentary bodies. The people on them are not usually active in the day-to-day operations of the church so it is next to impossible to instill in them the same drive and vision as the staff” (105). Well said. However, Young’s answer is to advocate what can perhaps be described as a “corporate” ecclesiology in which they have “no elders or deacons” (103). For his part, Stanley adds, “The problem with the term ‘deacon’ is that everybody who has grown up in church has a preconceived idea about what that role entails,” thus North Point has no deacons (115). What, then, is one to do with I Timothy 3:8-13? While most pastors can share stories *ad infinitum* about deacons who attempted to micro-manage the church, is the best response really to eliminate the office all together? Would biblical education about the role of a deacon be a better tact?

These ecclesiological issues demonstrate what I perceive to be a weakness in Stanley and Young’s approach: an attitude that if it works, it must be of God. Yet, methods are not neutral. Just because “we are not changing the message of Christ” does not mean that all methods are open to us. Biblical parameters for church life protect us from drifting from

methodological error to doctrinal error in the future. That said, I encourage pastors who want to grow a church to read this work for the sheer volume of ideas that flow from Young and Stanley. Adopt their evangelistic enthusiasm, but then add a healthy emphasis on the Holy Spirit and biblical parameters for methodology.

J. Alan Branch  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

## Book Review Index

- Armstrong, John. ed. *The Glory of Christ*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002. (Mark DeVine) 95
- Carson, D. A. *Love in Hard Places*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002. (Thorvald B. Madsen) 97
- Dawn, Marva. *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001. (Albert Bean) 104
- Fretheim, Terence E. *Jeremiah*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary Series. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002. (Albert Bean) 102
- Rogers, James A. *Richard Furman: Life and Legacy*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001. (Malcolm B. Yarnell) 94
- Stanley, Andy, and Ed Young, Jr. *Can We Do That? Twenty-Four Innovative Practices That Will Change the Way You Do Church*. West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 2002. (J. Alan Branch) 106

## List of Publishers

- Crossway Books, 1300 Crescent Street, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, (630) 682-4300
- Eerdmans Publishing Company, 255 Jefferson Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, (616) 459-4591
- Howard Publishing Company, 3117 North 7th Street, West Monroe, Louisiana 71291-2227, (800) 858-4109
- Mercer University Press, 6316 Peake Road, Macon, Georgia 31210-3960, (478) 301-2880
- Smyth & Helwys, 6316 Peake Road, Macon, Georgia 31210-3960, (478) 301-2117

# *Midwestern Journal of Theology* Subscription Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ One year—\$20    \_\_\_\_ Two years—\$35    \_\_\_\_ Three years—\$50

\_\_\_\_ Please find payment enclosed.

\_\_\_\_ Please add me to your general mailing list.

Please send my friend a subscription (payment enclosed):

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
Clip and mail to: Editor, *Midwestern Journal of Theology*, MBTS, 5001 N. Oak  
Trafficway, KC, MO 64118

The faculty of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
invites you to subscribe to the  
*Midwestern Journal of Theology*,  
a scholarly journal written to assist Christians and churches in making  
disciples throughout the world.

Published biannually, each issue includes theological and exegetical  
articles, inspirational sermons, and reviews of recent important books.

Please visit the MBTS website at [www.mbts.edu](http://www.mbts.edu)