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

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**SCOTTISH  
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## CONTENTS

- 77 EDITORIAL: PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS  
PLURALISM  
The Editor

### ARTICLES

- 80 WOMANHOOD AND FEMINISM  
Rose Dowsett
- 94 METAPHORS, LEGAL AND THEOLOGICAL  
Francis Lyall
- 113 THE IMAGE OF HUMANITY IN CONTEMPORARY  
CULTURE  
David Smith

### BOOK REVIEWS

- 124 Thomas F. Torrance: *The Mediation of Christ*, by Gary  
Badcock
- 125 Andrew E. Hill and John E. Walton: *A Survey of the Old  
Testament*, by Richard S. Hess
- 126 Hans Urs von Balthasar: *Credo: Meditations on the  
Apostles' Creed*, by Roy Kearsley
- 127 Duncan B. Forrester *et al.*: *Worship Now. Book 2*, by  
Alastair H. Gray
- 128 William W. Klein: *The New Chosen People: A Corporate  
View of Election*, by Peter Cook
- 130 D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *God's Sovereign Purpose: An  
Exposition of Romans 9*, by Jeremy Middleton
- 132 Ed. N. Lossky *et al.*: *Dictionary of the Ecumenical  
Movement*, by David F. Wright
- 133 Iain H. Murray: *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Vol. 2: The Fight  
of Faith, 1939-1981*, by James Taylor
- 134 Ed. Mark A Noll and David F. Wells: *Christian Faith and  
Practice in the Modern World: Theology from an  
Evangelical Point of View*, by David Smith
- 136 J.I. Packer: *Laid-back Religion*, by William Still

- 137 Ed. James Tolhurst: *Man, Woman and Priesthood*, by  
Shirley A. Fraser
- 138 *Book Notes*, by David F. Wright
- 139 Peter Coleman: *Gay Christians: A Moral Dilemma*, by  
David F. Wright
- 140 Norman L. Geisler: *Christian Ethics: Option and Issues*, by  
Nigel M. de S. Cameron
- 141 Michael Green: *Baptism*, by David F. Wright
- 142 Ed. K. Heim: *Faith to Creed. Ecumenical Perspectives on  
the Affirmation of the Apostolic Faith in the Fourth  
Century*, by Roy Kearsley
- 143 Ed. Christian D. Kettler and Todd H. Speedell:  
*Incarnational Ministry. The Presence of Christ in Church,  
Society and Family*, by Nigel M. de S. Cameron
- 145 Alister McGrath: *Affirming Your Faith. Exploring the  
Apostles' Creed*, by Roy Kearsley
- 146 Donald E. Meek: *Sunshine and Shadow: The Story of the  
Baptists of Mull and Island Harvest: A History of Tiree  
Baptist Church 1838-1988*, by Jim Taylor
- 147 Peter C. Moore: *Disarming the Secular Gods: Sharing Your  
Faith So that People Will Listen*, by A. Macleod
- 148 Aidan Nichols: *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: An  
Introductory Study*, by Kevin J. Vanhoozer
- 150 Duncan B. Forrester: *Theology and Politics*, by David M.  
Adam
- 151 John V. Taylor: *A Matter of Life and Death*, by Gary  
Badcock

## PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

There can be little doubt that the cluster of issues suggested by the words 'religious pluralism' is among the two or three sharpest challenges faced by contemporary Christianity. This brief editorial can do no more than sketch some church-historical perspectives that are rarely observed in the debate. This is not to deny the necessity of biblical and theological responses, but merely to ask some pointed questions that are surely inescapable.

Both Protestant and Catholic theologians are now not infrequently found arguing that the various religions of the world represent different, but equally valid, responses to a single divine reality. An obvious corollary is that Christians should not seek to convert Moslems or Hindus, and certainly not Jews. Christianity should not be regarded as superseding Judaism. Whatever the aims of engagements between representatives of different faiths, the Christian mission, so it is claimed, should not set out so to change the allegiance of adherents of other religions that they become Christians and are baptized.

Such in a nutshell is the stance of those who so welcome the *fact* of religious pluralism – experienced in Britain as the presence of sizeable populations of Moslems and others, and globally by the resurgence of major world faiths – as to turn it into a religious and theological *programme*. But when, we may ask, did it become wrong for Christians to pursue the conversion of Buddhists, for example? Only relatively recently – in the last few decades – has the religious-pluralist case become respectable in Christian thought. But should it have been so earlier, perhaps much earlier? Should it have been so held as God's truth in the late eighteenth century as to have precluded the birth of the modern missionary movement (which the 1992 anniversary of William Carey's 1792 initiatives has brought freshly to mind)?

But why stop there? Was it right of Christian missionaries to bring the gospel to Britain and endeavour to rescue our ancestors from the darkness of Druidism, Celtic paganism and the like? Indeed, if Christianity should not today seek to convert Jews, should it – from the perspective of what was theologically right in the sight of God – ever have done so? Was not only the worldwide expansion of the church in the last two centuries a mistake, and not only the first forays of Jesus-people from Palestine into the intellectually and culturally far superior Graeco-Roman world unpardonable arrogance, but also even the earliest missions by apostles and others in Judaea and Samaria and Galilee a false step?

The champions of religious pluralism, often without recognizing it, are setting shocking question-marks against most of world Christianity throughout most of its history. It is doubtful if any worthwhile concept of divine providence in history or of tradition can survive their depredations. Yet they cannot escape the irony of their position as themselves the products, directly or indirectly, of Christian missionary enterprise. Even Scotland – to say nothing of ‘God’s own country’, the USA – was once a wholly pagan country! *Without evangelism whose aim was the conversion-and-baptism of adherents of other religions, Christianity would never have been more than a movement among Jews in Judaea.*

Critics of the case for religious pluralism often accuse its proponents of a kind of selfish discrimination against believers of other faiths. By foreclosing on missions to Sikhs and others they are in effect depriving them of the opportunity, even the right, to hear the Christian message – which presumably they value highly themselves and are still happy to propagate among the West’s myriad non-religionists. The same kind of argument can be given an historical thrust. If it was ever right to convert worshippers of other cults in Britain, why has it ceased to be so, and when?

This line of reasoning may merit further development elsewhere. Perhaps sufficient has been said to show that the adoption of religious pluralism by John Hick *et al.* is not sustainable without viewing most of Christianity in time and space as at best questionable – and at the same time cutting off

the branch on which they are sitting. The great Scots preacher James S. Stewart once noted that some people did not believe in mission. He was not perturbed. They had no right to believe in mission, he commented, since they did not believe in Christ.

# WOMANHOOD AND FEMINISM

ROSE DOWSETT, OVERSEAS MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP AND  
GLASGOW BIBLE COLLEGE

Our topic is a minefield, and, like all minefields, liable to erupt in sudden explosions. It may be helpful, before we start walking through it, to identify and map some of the mines. Let me start with six.

## Mapping the Minefield

1. **The Fall.** I do not think it is any accident that one of the most fundamental effects of the Fall, as specified in Genesis 3:16, is that men will dominate women. It is important to register that this is a consequence of the Fall and not of creation, the product of sin and not of grace. We should then not be surprised, indeed we should expect to see the footprints of that sin tracked down through the pathways of history. Furthermore, it is precisely because of the sinful element in men's treatment of women that we find in the Gospels the Lord Jesus, the Saviour from sin, challenging male attitudes and actions, and demonstrating a radically different way of valuing women.

2. **History.** History is descriptive, not prescriptive. We need to be careful about deducing theology from what happened in the past. In so far as it is a legitimate exercise at all, we need all the time to take into account the warping effect of Genesis

3. This is the explanation, for example, why eighteen centuries of church history passed before Christians really tangled with the issue of slavery and the gospel logic of abolishing it. It is also why we cannot arrive at an understanding of Christian womanhood simply by looking at the past, even at the historical records of Scripture. We can see what women did, but not necessarily what they should have done. I take it that Jael with her tentpeg is descriptive but not prescriptive. We need to pay very careful attention to the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels since here we have the example of the only unfallen man ever, relating to women and blowing apart many of the most entrenched and unquestioned assumptions and convictions of his male contemporaries.

We have a problem with history also because most of it has been written by men. Stephen Neill, that great church historian of the twentieth century, managed to write his classic *History of Christian Missions* while almost ignoring the role of women. Time and time again, where parallel illustrations might have been given of a key man and a key woman, the former is highlighted, the latter ignored. Inevitably it reinforces the impression that women have been irrelevant in the history of the church. Marginalised, yes; marginal, no. History is not only descriptive rather than prescriptive. It also suffers from selectivity.

**3. Tradition.** Tradition may be defined as the cumulative impact of history on fallen human beings. In other words, there is a very direct link with the two previous mines in the minefield. Here we need to ask some painful questions. How has Christian tradition measured up to biblical teaching? In all too many areas, we have to say sorrowfully that the answer is 'Not very well'. How has Christian tradition measured up specifically to biblical patterns of womanhood? I believe that the answer here, too, is 'Not very well'. You may think differently. At least integrity should make us suspect that, if we are so frequently able to make a mess of things in other areas, there is no intrinsic reason why in this one area we should have nothing to worry about. You will be aware, I suppose, of the many horrendous quotations from the Fathers and from theologians down through the centuries which make feminists so incensed. The question I want to ask is: 'How have these attitudes shaped tradition? And if those attitudes were themselves at least in part the product of fallen males' predilection for domination, will they not have produced a sinfully twisted and distorted tradition?'

Listen to some of these traditions with these questions in mind.

The woman together with her own husband is the image of God, so that the whole substance may be one image; but when she is referred to separately in her quality of help-meet, which regards the woman herself alone, then she is not the image of God; but as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one. (Augustine, *On the Trinity* 12:7:10)

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Since our lives consist of two kinds of affairs, public and private, the Lord has divided the task between man and woman: to her he has assigned the responsibility of the home, while to the man is assigned the affairs of the state. (Chrysostom, *What Kind of Wife One should Marry* 4)<sup>1</sup>

The image of God, in its principal signification, namely the intellectual nature, is found both in man and in woman. But in a secondary sense the image of God is found in man, and not in woman: for man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and the end of every creature. (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia. 93, 4)

As the philosopher says, 'Woman is a misbegotten male'.... Woman was made to be a help to man. But she was not fitted to be a help to man except in generation, because another man would prove a more effective help in anything else. (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 92, 1-2)<sup>2</sup>

When a woman thinks alone she thinks evil, for the woman was made from the crooked rib which is bent in the contrary direction from the man. Woman conspired constantly against spiritual good. Her very name, fe-mina, means 'absence of faith'. She is insatiable lust by nature. Because of this lust she consorts even with devils. It is for this reason that women are especially prone to the crime of witchcraft, from which men have been preserved by the maleness of Christ. (*Malleus Maleficarum*, fifteenth-century manual of the Dominican Inquisitors against witches)

Women are created in the image of God in an inferior degree. (Calvin, *Sermons on Job* 11, on Job 3:3)<sup>3</sup>

Men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and accordingly they possess intelligence. Women have narrow shoulders and broad hips. Women ought to stay at home; the way they were created indicates this, for they have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon, keep house and bear and raise children. (Luther, *Table Talk*, no. 55)<sup>4</sup>

There are many more in the same vein. They betray attitudes and beliefs widely prevalent in the past; some of

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1 Quoted in S.B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1980), p.292.

2 Quoted in S.T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1979), p.60.

3 Quoted by M. Potter, 'Gender Equality and Gender Hierarchy in Calvin's Theology', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11 (1985-86), p.727.

4 Ed. and tr. T.G. Tappert (*Luther's Works*, vol. 54; Philadelphia, 1967), p.8.

them are still evident today. They are, I believe, insupportable from Scripture, and also raise urgent questions as to the reliability of the traditions which have shaped the teaching and practice of the church.

**4. Culture.** Culture and tradition overlap, of course. But here I want to draw attention to the need to disentangle biblical givens from our own particular culture, or even our particular ecclesiastical sub-cultures. Too many western Christians assume that 'the way we do it and see it' is in some absolute way right. I am sad that very few people in Scotland, for example, when arguing about womanhood, the role of women in the church and feminism, ever bother to ask what our brothers and sisters in other cultures think about it all. Many Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America are deeply puzzled by our arguments and our practice. They see and do things differently – and may be thoroughly convinced that they are being biblical. My own personal experience has been that there are deeper prejudices against women in the church in Scotland than in any other country in which I have lived or worked. This raises important questions about the role of culture.

In particular, we need to think hard about the facts which have decisively shaped our culture in recent centuries. For more than two hundred years, the yeast of the Enlightenment and its logical offspring has been steadily penetrating every nook and cranny of our western culture. Of all people, we as Evangelicals should not be surprised that along with certain strengths have come many doorways to sin and rebellion, through which emboldened fallen men and women have surged in their pursuit of autonomy from the very God who created them. We all stand within our culture, and may not be as astute as we like to think we are at recognising how we have been shaped by it.

Of course, that can work more than one way in relation to our present topic. Some within the church would assert that any concession to feminism, an idol of our age, is manipulation by the god of this world, allowing our culture to mould and squeeze the church. At the opposite end of the spectrum others within the church would say that feminism as a movement, both secular and religious, is an important sign to the church. Two millennia of male domination have

obscured the radical message of Jesus Christ in relation to half the human race and it is time to recover it. It would not be the first time that God has challenged the church from without.

**5. Theological and Biblical Studies.** These studies have been dominated by men, by European and North American men. They have been largely couched in the logical, legal and philosophical methodologies which were shaped by our Graeco-Roman heritage, itself pagan and not Christian. Many of my Third-World theologian friends find it frustrating that they not only have to work in English, which may be their third or fourth language, but also, if they are to enter into international debate and be treated with other than condescension, must adopt western methodologies which are not intrinsically biblical and in which they may not be very comfortable. If they use others, they are regarded as second-rate.

Women have similar hurdles to negotiate if they dare to enter the preserves of men – and the world of professional theology is a very male bastion. They must talk like men, write like men, argue like men, think like men, if they are to be heard at all. What a pity! Spiritual perception is not a matter of logic and philosophy. In so far as women may be different in the way they think, respond to God and discern spiritual truth, those differences should enhance the thinking, responding and discerning of men for our mutual enrichment.

**6. My Personal Dilemma.** The very fact that I write as a woman affects your response. It also affects mine. I cannot blot out the accumulated experiences of the years. I cannot change the fact that perhaps some of you, consciously or subconsciously, had negative attitudes before you read my first word, that some of you probably cannot really hear what I am saying, just because I am a woman and not a man.

I cannot change the fact that I have often been hurt, often angered, by the treatment I have received at the hands of some Christian men in Scotland. I have been told by one Scottish evangelical Christian leader that no woman can have other than theological fluff between her ears; by another, that it is extremely rare to meet a thinking woman; by another, that my ministry in preaching and in lecturing in a Bible College is subversive, and conclusive evidence that I cannot care about the authority of Scripture.

I cannot forget the Southern Baptist minister I heard in the States urging the men of his congregation to beat their wives to help them become godly and submissive, and urging the wives to receive all violence as a gift from God. I cannot forget the many hurt Christian women I meet as I travel the country, who are struggling to use the gifts God has given them for the good of Christ's Body, the church, and yet are constantly headed off by men.

So I speak out of pain. But I can also, in the mercy of God, speak from the comfort of those who have encouraged and affirmed me and other women in Christian ministry. In particular, I have had the very great privilege of a husband who has encouraged me to be a partner with him in ministry as well as in the home.

The minefield is liberally primed. Can we negotiate it safely?

### **Popular Concepts of Christian Womanhood**

Bearing in mind the factors we have already looked at, all of which make it harder to perceive the truth, is it possible to define and describe Christian womanhood? Once one has got beyond the biological, what then? Are there things that are clearly cut and dried in Scripture?

The more I study, the harder I find it to come up with anything conclusive. Someone will say, 'Christian womanhood is about homemaking and rearing children.' But the biblical evidence is that the frequently assumed separation of private and public spheres, with woman in the one and man in the other, is very hard, if not impossible, to sustain. That should not surprise us, given that the creation mandate is given jointly to man and woman, not one bit to one and the other bit to the other. Furthermore, it is noticeable that the majority of instructions about rearing children are addressed to fathers at least equally and often primarily. And where does this leave the Christian woman who is single and childless? And is it not odd that this insistence that 'Women's place is in the home' seems to be implying that, contrary to the Lord Jesus' injunction in Matthew 6:31, a woman's concern should indeed revolve around what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall wear: let her content herself with preparing the meals and ironing the shirts – such contentment is godly in a

woman, apparently. I can appreciate a meal lovingly prepared, or a pile of freshly ironed laundry. But I cannot for a moment see why an additional virtue is attached if the love and the time and the effort are provided by myself, but somehow diminished if the same love and time and effort are provided by my husband.

Someone else will say, 'Christian womanhood is about being meek and submissive, about being non-assertive, about not being domineering, about gentleness and goodness.' True. But all these qualities are to be true of Christian men as well. They have more to do with the fruit of the Spirit, to be evidenced in men and women alike, than with one gender over against the other. If I were a Christian man, I should hesitate to imply approval of the argument that 'Men are naturally more assertive, more aggressive, more concerned with larger concerns outside the small world of the home and family.' Such a description may reflect how it is; but that does not prove that this is how it should be. Perhaps, if women are more likely by nature or by nurture or by imposed necessity to be gentle servants, they are more fitted than men to be Christian leaders!

Someone else again will say, 'Christian womanhood is about not usurping headship, not exercising leadership in the church, not coveting what God has given to men.' Definition by negatives is usually a miserable business – and many Christian women, sadly, are more accustomed to hearing their role and calling described in negative terms than in positive terms. What a pity! This line of reasoning in any case may be falsely bolstered by an understanding of headship and leadership which is strongly hierarchical, in turn based on a faulty reading of early Genesis which makes women inferior to men. Headship and leadership undoubtedly there must be. But the New Testament has more to say about them in the context of sacrificial love than as a basis for ordering other people around or imposing one's will on others. Headship and leadership are to be the arena for living out mutual and voluntary submission in love, not an excuse for exercising structural or hierarchical subordination.

### **A Fresh Look at Genesis 1-3**

I think that all these attitudes (and we could trace many more of the same) owe more than they should to the kind of ideas we noted before in the teaching of influential church leaders and theologians of the past. And many of their ideas were derived, I believe sinfully or at the least mistakenly, from faulty assumptions about the first three chapters of Genesis. They assumed that Genesis teaches that a woman is inferior to a man, that she is not really made in the image of God although man is, that she was created to be a helper and everybody knows that the helper is subordinate and inferior to the one helped, that woman is more sinful than man and that the consequences of sin are all her fault, that man's dominion over woman is God's intended Creation pattern, that man naming woman 'woman' is clear evidence of his intended authority over her on a par with his intended authority over animals....

If, as I believe, these chapters of Genesis teach something very different, then we may need radically to challenge the centuries of belief and practice which have flowed from those faulty assumptions. Does Genesis 1:26-27 really teach that only males are made in the image of God, or does it teach that human beings, male and female, are equally made in the image of God? Probably the argument becomes circular when, as has often been the case, it is assumed that God is himself male rather than above and beyond the sexual categories that we label male and female. It has been pointed out too often to need demonstration here that the word 'helper', whatever its overtones in English, does not and cannot in Genesis involve inferiority in a hierarchy, since it is most often used in the Old Testament of God in relation to man. The formula of naming, associated with authority, is given in Genesis 3:20, after the Fall rather than before it. Before that, in Genesis 1:28, authority over the earth is given equally and jointly to both man and woman. The rule of man over woman in Genesis 3:16 is after the Fall, not before it: is not our calling as Christians to resist sin, not impose it?

### **The Teaching and Example of the Lord Jesus**

If traditional ideas about the inferiority and greater sinfulness of women, their lower place in a hierarchy pinnacled by men,

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

the divine intention that men should dominate women, and so on were based on accurate interpretation of Genesis 1-3, I cannot help but conclude that the Lord Jesus must somehow have got everything wrong. For the treatment of women in his day flowed precisely out of those same kinds of traditional ideas – and it was exactly those convictions and practices that he consistently challenged. Contrary to all that was believed and done, Jesus taught and demonstrated that women were to be respected, listened to, taught. Women could be entrusted with theological conversations, and might sometimes be more spiritually perceptive and receptive than the men around them. A woman might teach men, even despite the mind-blowing double handicap of being both of the wrong nationality and sexually immoral. Men might not justify themselves, and blame women, in cases of adultery and divorce. Women were to be regarded as trustworthy witnesses, even to the most important events in the whole of human history. Women as much as men were the recipients of the grace and compassion of God, and, as such, equally frequently the focus of a miracle or the subject of a promise. Women were as fully human as men.

It is this picture, I think, that should make us take stock. The Lord Jesus seems to be affirming the equality, the complementarity, of women with men. He does not at any point, by word or action, suggest the inferiority of women. He does not reinforce the assumption that women's role is solely to revolve supportively and submissively round men. He clearly disapproves of the legislation which victimises women, leaving them at the mercy of unmerciful men. He does not send them away when they follow him; rather, he encourages them to draw closer and to listen harder. In a general way, women as much as men may come under his anger; in particular incidents, or in relation to specific categories (such as the religious leaders), it is, I think, always men against whom he expresses anger.

I am glad that as a woman I may know the value the Lord Jesus sets upon me, that I do not have to try to be a man or in any way feel inferior or apologise because I am not. There is great liberty in that. I am not sure that all Christian men understand the dignity of Christian womanhood. I am not sure that they understand either, that what unites us as human

beings made in the image of God is far more fundamental and of much greater significance than what divides us by virtue of differentiated gender. We need to realize that the differences between men and women are actually very minor, while those between human beings and the rest of creation are immense. It may be more important to define what is truly human than to define womanhood. And, just as hierarchy within the Trinity was thrown out as heresy by the early church, so now it is time to throw out as heresy the concept of hierarchy between men and women. As with the Persons of the Trinity, there is difference but equality, diversity but complementarity.

### **The Many Faces of Feminism**

Of course, 'feminism' is a highly charged word among many Christians. I am grieved that I have met rather few Scottish Evangelicals whose hostility to feminism is based on genuine understanding as opposed to superficial judgment or stampeding with the herd. That is underlined precisely by the widespread ignorance of the sheer variety of forms that feminism takes. Indeed, feminism is today so elastic a term as to be not very helpful at all. Let me illustrate the diversity with a few examples.

There are, among others, what we might term the Marxist feminists, whose main arguments closely parallel those of classic Marxism. It is because women the world over are separated from the means of production and are economically discriminated against that they are oppressed, so the argument goes. Even in our own society, the fact that housewives and stay-at-home mothers or carers are not paid a wage is evidence of the unfairness of the system. Only when women have complete economic independence, and parity with men, will they be free. Capitalism systematically victimises women. Now the Christian must reject the basic thesis of Marxist feminism on exactly the same grounds that he or she will reject Marxism. The fundamental problems in society spring from sin, not economics, though sin may of course be expressed through economic systems and arrangements. Creating a Marxist society will not set women free any more than a capitalist society does. At the same time, we need to be quite clear that capitalism does not set women free either.

For some radical feminists, however, the problem lies not in the economic structures of society but in patriarchy, the domination of society by men who have developed and now control all institutions and structures in their own male interest. For women to be really free, the only solution is to create a world in which women are completely self-sufficient and in which men can be totally ignored and avoided. In particular, women are slaves to their reproductive function; therefore we must give women total control over their own bodies (abortion as a right on demand) and find a way to separate reproduction from female biology and anatomy (conception in a test-tube, and pregnancy in a test-tube, or attached to a male liver or some other organ, or...). Children should be raised communally and marriage abolished. Sexual fulfilment will, of course, come through lesbianism. The Christian response to this must be first of all in terms of creation. For however little else we may be able to label definitively male or female, clearly God created human beings instinctively male and female in the biological sense. To tamper with this distinctive is to challenge the Creator. All the other issues derive from that primary fact.

Then there is a wide spectrum of what we might call liberal feminists. For many of them, the key issue is that of gender identity roles. 'What matters most, and can be changed', they say, 'is gender identity.' The problems spring not from nature but from nurture, that complex of cultural expectations and influences which packages and labels little girls one way, little boys another, and then ensures that all subsequent experiences, training and opportunities take them relentlessly to narrowly prescribed destinations. The little boy has a gun and a tool kit, the little girl a dustpan and brush and dolls. By adulthood, all that has happened is that the toys have become larger and somehow metamorphosed into the real thing. Why should not a father stay at home and care for his children while their mother goes out to work? Why should not a woman become an engineer or a train driver? The only problem is that such changes challenge our long-held gender stereotypes; and since it is men who have had a dominant role in establishing those stereotypes, in their own interests, of course, it will also be men who feel most threatened by changes.

## WOMANHOOD AND FEMINISM

It is interesting that most of the 'successes' of feminism in this country, and most of the legislation designed to improve the rights and protection of women this century, have come in response to the pressures of liberal feminists. After all, they are the most reasonable, the most moderate. And it is also interesting that much of earlier liberal feminism, for example in the last century, led to very significant social reforms affecting the whole of society: for example, the abolition of slavery in the Southern States; the temperance movement and moves to deal with the scourge of alcoholism; the admission of women to higher education and the professions; the broadening of a political voice via the ballot box from a privileged minority of men to all adults, men and women. In other words, liberal feminism has often historically been associated with fundamental issues of justice, initially resisted by men but today accepted by most people, men and women, in our society as right. And it is also worth pointing out that many early liberal feminists were committed evangelical Christians whose convictions about society sprang directly from their study of the Scriptures.

And then there is Christian feminism. Now that, of course, is a red rag to some bulls. It is important to recognise that here, too, the spectrum is wide. On the one hand, some still call themselves Christians, but have moved so far from historic Christianity in any shape or form and sit so loose to the Scriptures in every way, that one wonders why they bother to claim the title. Among them are those who claim that God can only be God if redefined as female, as Mother not Father, and the Spirit as female Wisdom; that Jesus can only be Saviour if redefined as a woman – and there are female crucifixes to portray Christa. Some teach that the church is so hopelessly and irredeemably corrupted by patriarchy that we must create 'woman-church', with men excluded. This kind of feminism seeks to raise women's status by debasing men, and to deny categorically God's revelation about himself. God becomes an invention of the female imagination.

Or again, others see the role of the church and the message of the gospel as revolving around achieving social and economic justice for women. Salvation is political and economic, they say. But important though social and economic justice truly is, achieving it does not achieve

salvation – for men or women. We cannot adopt this kind of feminism, either, though we may need to think hard about how to create a genuinely more just world, for men and women both.

### **Real Questions for Real Christians**

Finally, there are the many genuine Christians who have real concerns that seem to fall at least under the edges of the feminist umbrella. They may take the Word of God utterly seriously, yet struggle with the reverberations of some of the mines in the minefield with which we started. If the interpretation of Genesis is faulty on which rests the assumption of human hierarchy with male superiority and female inferiority, what does that mean for the church today? A church that is founded on an error of that magnitude must surely have a lot to put right? Is it not important for women to struggle to gain a hearing, to seek to persuade leaders that they should be set free to serve alongside their brothers in Christ?

Why is it that there seem to be different rules for Christian women in Scotland and for women from the same churches who go overseas? If it is a clear matter of biblical principle that women may not teach men, for example, how is it that the majority of Third-World church-planting in the last hundred years has been pioneered by women whom God has seen fit to bless in their teaching and discipling? Why was it that God brought revival to several areas of China through the ministry of women when there were plenty of godly men available? Why is it, if it is all so crystal clear, that many Third-World Christians see it all quite differently and say that since Calvary and Pentecost the important issue is gift, not gender?

And what do you say to the Scottish man who would under no circumstances have a woman teach in church, but may allow her to 'report' in the church hall, or will listen to her mediated via a tape recorder? What happens when a woman, scripturally well taught and spiritually mature, is expected to listen to a man making a complete hash of things, distorting the meaning of the Word and misleading the people?

Is it really necessary to use exclusive male language in talking about the Lord's people? Is it not questionable to

## WOMANHOOD AND FEMINISM

describe God in terms that inevitably project him as a larger than life exclusively male being?

If Acts and the Epistles show women working shoulder to shoulder with the men, why cannot that be so today? Why is the radical nature of the Lord's dealings with women not taken more seriously? Why are three exegetically hard passages from 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy always thrown at me as simple and decisive, even though that means that other extensive portions of Scripture no longer make sense?

The questions tumble out. If the very expressing of them makes me a feminist, then so be it. I prefer to describe myself as a Christian with profound questionings about Christian womanhood. Further, I find many women, and some men, struggling with all these questions and more besides. In some cases, Christians find themselves in such pain over these issues that they cannot with integrity stay within their churches. Clearly, Evangelicals will not all reach agreement. Let us be sure that we respect those from whom we differ but who equally with ourselves seek to live by Scripture. Let us be sure, too, that we who claim to live by the Word are not in truth living by tradition.

On behalf of many of my Christian sisters in Scotland, and for the sake of the health and well-being of the church, may I appeal to you, my brothers in Christ, to listen to our questions, to hear our pain, to search the Scriptures again, and, if need be, to repent.

# METAPHORS, LEGAL AND THEOLOGICAL

Scottish Evangelical Theology Society  
Finlayson Lecture, 1992

FRANCIS LYALL, UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## Introduction

First it is an honour to be asked to deliver this lecture. My predecessors are distinguished, and I am proud and flattered to be asked to follow in their train. Although occasionally I dabble in foreign streams of thought, these limited and spasmodic occurrences prove me no theologian or biblical scholar. I am an amateur in these fields – albeit, I hope, in the best sense of the word. It is, of course, both the privilege and the duty of a Christian to seek to understand the faith, but amateurs are not often *au fait* with the full range of an area, nor with recent scholarly developments (and fashions). They may, I hope, in necessity shelter in their status as amateurs. Others can later do me the gentle kindness of telling me of my errors of omission or commission. But even with all these caveats I am sensible of the honour.

Secondly, I am glad to acknowledge publicly a debt to Professor R. A. Finlayson. I remember his visits to the then Evangelical Union at the University of Aberdeen. From a tradition different from my own – and that itself was a lesson – he brought insight and cogency. His was a mind both congenial and challenging. I wish I had told him so face to face. Indeed, as I get older, there are others too that I regret not having thanked in person when that was still possible. But that apart, let me here record my debt to one from whom I learned.

Thirdly, today's title is not perfect, but it will suffice. We will run broader than metaphor, but to have given a title such as 'Figures of Speech in Law and Theology' would have been too bland.

## Law and Theology

The disciplines of law and of theology go back into the dawn of history. Indeed, the two are intertwined in the Bible, and are found as twins in other ancient writings. Law for the

regulation of society, and the theological underpinnings of that society, are close fellows. It is therefore not surprising that there are similarities between the two as to how they go about their business. It is also not surprising that, as I would submit, each of our houses can learn from the other.

My discipline is law. In what follows, please imagine me leaning over the wall, looking into the theologians' garden. You are somewhere within speaking distance, I hope, beavering away or leaning on your spade. I have stopped to pass the time of day. You theologs have, you know, some interesting features in your garden and some attractive plants well chosen for their sites. There are also one or two areas that Sellar and Yeatman would have characterised as 'Unpleasaunces'.<sup>1</sup> I am aware that various of your number have similar reservations about parts of the limited area of law that they can descry from where they are standing. And perhaps there are points for discussion between us as to those overhanging branches and burrowing roots.

I hope that you will not consider the preceding paragraph flippant, and unworthy of the Finlayson Lecture. It has been written deliberately. I want to communicate. I have taken a concrete image with various associations, and have used it to put across a statement of what I am attempting to do in the following pages. I want to conjure from within you the idea of two estates running cheek by jowl, and of neighbours in conversation. I reckon I have a reasonable chance of evoking a generalized image on those lines, although no doubt each of us forms a slightly different picture as precise colour and depth are added by personal experience and understanding to the impression generally elicited. The actual colours and depths depend upon your own notions of gardens.

### **Metaphors in Law and Theology**

What I want to speak about is one of the similarities between the way our two disciplines go about their tasks: 'tasks', plural, not 'task' singular, for there are two major tasks that both law and theology have, and which interact in the realm of the vocabulary and syntax that are used in

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<sup>1</sup> W.C. Sellar and R.J. Yeatman, *Garden Rubbish and Other Bumps* (London, 1936).

discharging them. Both law and theology are concerned to explore ideas, and to express them to others in, one hopes, a sufficiently convincing form. The minimum is that the expression of the idea is intelligible, though often the intention is that the imagery also helps lend cogency to the expression. What I think each discipline can learn from examples from the other is how helpful metaphors can be, and also how damaging a failure to treat metaphor as metaphor can be. I am aware that analogies and such matters are studied among my theological friends, and perhaps what follows is quite unnecessary: but I have some hope that we can help each other – novel examples freshening one's appreciation of familiar points.

In both law and theology discourse often uses imagery. We freely employ metaphors, similes, analogies and other figures of speech as aids to comprehension. The most abstruse ideas are grappled with and made usable by being expressed in metaphor. Of course the Holy Spirit can use what is, on the human level, the most pedestrian, halting and woolly. But the best preachers and orators are marked by their use of concrete images. The striking phrase – the stuff of the sound-bite with which we are bedevilled – is often metaphorical encapsulation of the point it makes. The images make their points readily graspable. They strike home because they already have root in our minds. That is one reason why C. S. Lewis's writings have found such acceptance. His imagery is both easy and sticks in the fuzz of the mind like a burr. I found many of Professor Finlayson's addresses to the Evangelical Union at Aberdeen struck home, not because of their philosophical or theological elegance, but because he used images which meant something to me.

But words are not only means of communication.<sup>2</sup> They are the medium in which we think. Vocables, as the specialists call them, are essential for thought on any matter above the most general or most primitive. We tend to think of words as the means of communication between us, but that forgets the stage before communication, the thinking that we engage in

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Glanville Williams, 'Language and the Law,' *Law Quarterly Rev.* 61 (1945), pp.71-86, 179-95, 293-303, 384-406, 62 (1946), pp. 387-406.

on any matter. Words and syntax are important in thinking as well as in communication. This is the exploration of ideas that I indicated as the first task of our disciplines. It must therefore be a matter of concern in both our disciplines that, from where I stand (and I have no reason to suppose divinity schools any different), the mastery of language is not something which schools impart in the way they used to. Good grades in Higher or 'A-Level' English cannot nowadays be taken to assure facility in syntactical construction or an extensive vocabulary. Not enough of our intake to Universities possess in advance the words with which to think, with which to differentiate fine shades of meaning, with which to turn over and hone a concept. They lack the words in which to formulate a concept with clarity so as to detect its flaws, and then to fracture it by a few precise taps – perhaps to make a few smaller baguette and crown-cut jewels out of a lumpen idea, or perhaps to show it as entirely worthless.

Yet figures of speech do help even in these cases, allowing the communication of enough to permit the transmission of ideas, and of sufficient argument so as to initiate comprehension.<sup>3</sup> And there lies an important word. Figures of speech aim at comprehension, not at explication. The idea is grasped sufficiently for it to be used, without there necessarily being a complete understanding. And if that is important in my area of operation, the law, how much more so in yours, where almost by definition the fundamentals are unknowable in the completest sense, although they can be comprehended if the meaning of the imagery is grasped.

But there are dangers, huge dangers, in figures of speech. Are these dangers avoidable? Probably not. Only were law or theology reducible to pure music (not song or dance), or to some mathematical expression, could the dangers be avoided. But music and maths may not be suitable vehicles for the expression of theological truth. Certainly they would not work to convey legal principle.

One danger is that the expression of the theological truth or legal principle by metaphor is unnoticed, by which I mean that what is metaphor is taken for reality. The incidences, the

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<sup>3</sup> I omit here the question of symbols – semiotics: that is a cognate field of great interest.

accoutrements, the baggage of overtones that accompany the metaphor, are taken up and explored, to the extent that they dominate, and eventually pervert and distort the kernel of the truth the metaphor conveys.

An opposite danger is that the depths of the metaphor are not perceived, and the whole is taken too superficially. A third danger is that the metaphor takes meaning from something current at its time of first use, but comes to be outdated. It may then develop a quaint charm that stultifies it, blunting its impact. By this comment I express occasional disquiet with some preacherly use of Paul's armour analogy (Eph. 6:10-17). The picture of the sword of the Spirit, the breast-plate of righteousness and so on is wonderful – shining knights, venturing out from the postern to strike a shrewd blow or two, before retiring to safety. That sort of passage had a rather different impact on Paul's audience, an impact which we can approximate only by reference to the horrors of modern war. Bear in mind that warfare by sword and javelin was not glamorous. Paul was speaking of being prepared to be hacked at by an iron edge wielded by a strong arm. The modern equivalent of the 'fiery darts of the wicked' is an Exocet missile or some cross between napalm, a cruise missile and a 'smart bomb'. Remember the TV pictures of the Iraq war!

Metaphors need careful handling. Let me now show you what I mean from areas of my own discipline and from yours. I take two examples of baggage and accoutrements, and then two examples from theology, of, perhaps, unperceived depths. The first idea is taken from U.K. Constitutional Law and I will deal with it at some length, so that its nature may become clear to those perhaps unaccustomed to working with legal thought. Seeing metaphor at work in such a milieu may help perception of metaphor in another discipline.

### **Parliamentary Sovereignty**

Are you for or against the European Community? Are you concerned about the effect that joining the Community has had upon the ability of Britons to order their affairs as they choose? Do you hanker for the days when Parliament in Westminster and not Brussels ruled? If so (and given the heat of the debate over the last few years, I suspect even if not),

you will be familiar with the argument about Parliamentary sovereignty. I express here no view about the rights and wrongs of entry to the Common Market. I merely use the argument that rages on the matter as fuel to engine this lecture.

The doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty is the notion that Parliament in Westminster is supreme, that it has no legislative rival, and that whatever it enacts is the law of the land which will be enforced by the courts of this country. This 'doctrine' – note the word – was enunciated in Victorian times by the first great writer on constitutional matters, Albert Venn Dicey.<sup>4</sup> Dicey was seeking to crystallize and explain the generalities of the constitutional position of Parliament and of the courts of the Empire in relation to it. He found this gorgeous figure of speech, 'the sovereignty of Parliament', which carries with it a misty impression of power and authority, of history and legitimacy. It has an aura of benevolence and wisdom still.<sup>5</sup> There is a remanent nostalgia for the days of Victoria, when the sun ne'er set on Empire, and dedicated colonial officers administered that curious mixture of justice and mercy that brought so much peace and order to those many and extensive red areas on the globe.<sup>6</sup> 'Parliamentary sovereignty' explained much of the practice of the courts in their approach to the legislature and to what the legislature had laid down. It was a good phrase.

It was also a slogan. Stripped of its overtones, it meant that the reviled doctrine of the Stuarts, the Divine Right of kings, was metamorphosed. The Divine Right was the invincible and unchallengeable right of the monarch to determine law, because he had a direct line to the God who had put him and

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4 A.V. Dicey, *An Introduction to the Law of the Constitution*, (1885), 10th ed. by E.C.S. Wade (London, 1960); Part I (chs. 1-3) is on 'The Sovereignty of Parliament'. See for modern discussions Wade's Introduction to his edition of Dicey, and C.R. Munro, *Studies in Constitutional Law* (London, 1987), pp.79-108.

5 Dicey may have taken some seed from John Austin's theory of law, expounded in *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined* (1832), in which law is seen as the 'command' of a 'sovereign' who himself owes no obedience to any higher authority.

6 Charles Allen, *Plain Tales from the Raj* (London, 1975); *Tales from the Dark Continent* (London, 1979).

not someone else on the throne.<sup>7</sup> It drew its strength from Romans 13. The Divine Right of the king transmuted into the Complete Right of Parliament, Parliamentary sovereignty. Yes, there are other voices in our Scottish past. There is the Declaration of Arbroath, 1320, and the Claim of Right, 1689 (c.28). There are the terms of the Treaty of Union between Scotland and England, 1707, and the Acts of Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments that gave effect to it.<sup>8</sup> But that did not prevent Scottish judges – not only English judges – from being beguiled by the power of Parliament. They had been only too willing to chant the incantation: the function of the courts is merely to apply what Parliament has enacted.<sup>9</sup> Dicey encapsulated that notion in a simple phrase, and enough judges have repeated it often enough for it to have been impossible for the courts in modern times to review an Act of Parliament even when someone offered to establish that the Act had been obtained by someone misleading Parliament.<sup>10</sup> In short, in formulating his concept, Dicey left out some of the original data he should have taken account of, and, once his theory was stated and accepted as being correct, later data have been distorted in order to fit the concept.<sup>11</sup> More

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7 J.N. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings* (Cambridge, 1896) and 'The Great Leviathan' in his *Churches in the Modern State* (London, 1913).

8 Union with England Act 1707 c.7, Union with Scotland Act, 6 Anne c.11.

9 *Edinburgh & Dalkeith Railway v Wauchope* (1842) 8 Cl. and F. 710; *Lee v Bude and Torrington Junction Railway* (1871) L.R. 6 C.P. 577. Some judges have indicated that the Treaty of Union may still impose limits on the power of Parliament but we await a proper decision: *MacCormick v Lord Advocate* 1953 Session Cases 396; *Gibson v Lord Advocate* 1975 Scots Law Times 134.

10 *British Railways Board v Pickin* [1974] Appeal Cases 765.

11 Cf. Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life* (London, 1989), for a similar proceeding in the realms of scientific thought, where in the early years of this century the famous American palaeontologist Charles Dolittle Walcott failed to perceive the importance of the Burgess Shale fossils because he too swiftly applied his prior expectations as to their taxonomy.

importantly, what was a legal principle has been taken up as a political incantation.

Parliament was never as powerful as 'Parliamentary sovereignty' seems to imply. It could legislate only within British jurisdiction, or to instruct British courts. Even within its apparent jurisdiction, when it was unwise in what it tried to do, that jurisdiction might be thrown off. Unwise legislation gave birth to the United States. Dicey spoke during a period of relative calm. He would not have phrased things in the way he did had he been writing in, say, 1815. He wrote at the peak of Victorian times, and his seed fell on willing ground. Then the Empire began to crumble. First the Dominions began to resent Westminster being able to legislate for them.<sup>12</sup> Then the colonies became independent. But still the phraseology of metaphor is mouthed, Parliamentary supremacy, Parliamentary sovereignty. Some said that what was important was 'legislative supremacy', that is, that within the U.K. there is no higher legislature or body to call Parliament to account, and that the concept should be understood only within the walls of the law.<sup>13</sup> It has not remained so. We entered the Common Market and have been there for nineteen years, but Parliamentary sovereignty remains a slogan, a 'principle' to be appealed to by those who want us out.<sup>14</sup>

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12 The Statute of Westminster, 1931, indicates conventional limitations on the power of Westminster to legislate for the Dominions which were agreed at Imperial Conferences in the 1920s.

13 It can be argued that parliamentary supremacy, a concept dealing with the place of Parliament within the legal system, is different from the concept of sovereignty: see E.C.S. Wade and A.W. Bradley, *Constitutional and Administrative Law*, 10th ed. (London, 1985), pp.60-90, but this reinforces my point. The phrase 'the sovereignty of Parliament' is not always used with legal circumspection.

14 In *R. v Secretary of State for Transport ex parte Factortame* [1990] 3 Weekly Law Reports 898 (H.L.), the House of Lords finally accepted it could and should as a matter of interim relief suspend the operation of an Act of Parliament in conflict with an obligation under Community Law. This could be a useful power if broadened to a general power to hold invalid Acts in conflict with fundamental legal principle.

You may agree. It may be intolerable to you that we are in the Community, and you may consider that precisely by virtue of our Parliamentary sovereignty we can easily get out. Unfortunately, the law of the European Community has no such concept. Any move to secede would be fraught with difficulty. It would be irresponsible to minimize that difficulty by appeal to what started life as a Victorian metaphor, albeit that the metaphor has gained a life of its own.

And that life has had other effects. In part because of Parliamentary sovereignty, we do not have a Bill of Rights, a statement of fundamental rights and freedoms. Again, I leave aside whether we should have a Bill of Rights. That is a separate question. But one problem of enacting a Bill of Rights is Parliamentary sovereignty, for an aspect of Parliamentary sovereignty is that one Parliament cannot bind its successor.<sup>15</sup> A later Act contravening an article of a Bill of Rights might be held implicitly to repeal the earlier article, merely by being an Act of Parliament later than the Bill of Rights. It would certainly be possible, within the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty, to have an express repeal in a later Act. And if that is the case, how secure is any statement contained in a Bill of Rights passed by Westminster? How secure is the much vaunted recognition of the independent jurisdiction of the Church of Scotland indicated by the Church of Scotland Act 1921, which schedules the Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland in Matters Spiritual and declares them to be lawful for the Church to hold?

Dicey had looked at the cases, and like many distinguished writing lawyers, he sought to express what he perceived as a principle underlying them. But the words he used were metaphor, and went beyond what was strictly necessary to formulate his idea. He could have said: 'It seems that the courts ordinarily apply the law which has been expressed in an Act of Parliament, although there are some statements, one

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<sup>15</sup> It is accepted that one Parliament can bind another as to the 'manner and form' of subsequent legislation; that is why an Act passed under the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1947 would be reckoned as law although the Lords would not have assented to the Bill.

or two cases, certain constitutional documents and international law treaties which indicate that there may be limits to the power of Parliament.’ But he did not. He went for the succinct but grandiose formulation, Parliamentary sovereignty. That slogan changed our later legal history, making any notion of judicial review of Acts of Parliament impossible.<sup>16</sup> It also means that we have no legal controls to prevent or at least make difficult sudden constitutional change. We could abolish the House of Lords. We could abolish the monarchy. We could introduce a colour bar, and send all immigrants back where they came from. The defences against that sort of development are not found in the law, because of the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty. And it is now a ‘doctrine’, a matter of belief as much as of practice. The language in which Dicey formulated the concept has taken over. Politicians use the concept to oppose developments they do not care for. The root of the concept, the facts that it purported to encapsulate, are ignored.

What can that teach us as to the use of metaphor in theology? Examine your theological reading bearing the example of Dicey in mind. When I look at Scottish church history, I find myself occasionally thinking that an idea which originally was useful, has developed attractions by being too simply expressed in metaphor, and then has become a principle, and even a doctrine, that has distorted. Examples would, of course, be contentious: but what about ‘the Crown Rights of the Redeemer’?

### **The Wall between Church and State**

Now, let me get up on the wall between our disciplines, and let me talk about exactly that – the wall between church and state. It was Jefferson who coined the phrase that has bedevilled the relationship between church and state in the United States. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States provides *inter alia* that ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.’ In a letter to a friend Jefferson said that these words were intended ‘to build a wall of separation between church and state’ in the U.S. Much has flowed from

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<sup>16</sup> But note for the future n. 9 above.

that small comment. The words were first quoted judicially in the U.S. in 1878,<sup>17</sup> and then almost by accident. They are the context of Jefferson's noting that the law can reach only actions, not thoughts. The phrase was disinterred in *Everson v Board of Education* (1947) 330 U.S. 1, and since then the notion of the wall has taken wing. What was the intention of the drafters of the Constitution? Was the wall to be high or low? Was it a great gulf or a line? Was it even a semi-permeable membrane? In construing the ambit of the 'establishment clause', the harmonics and overtones of the metaphor of the 'wall' have been important. Can public funds be given to an institution which is conducted on a religious basis? How far does the prohibition go? Is it lawful to start the day in a state-financed school with a school prayer? Can such a school have a Christmas crib? The list of questions seems not yet to be complete.<sup>18</sup>

Now let me climb over the garden wall and take a few faltering steps into the minefield. What about theology? There too metaphors are used regularly. Sometimes they are perceived, and sometimes they are not. Some metaphors, even biblical ones, have lost their impact. As I indicated already, the 'armour' passage in Ephesians has developed a quaint aura, has it not?

Other biblical language needs explication. There is a lot of 'Law in the New Testament'.<sup>19</sup> Some of it I have explored elsewhere, seeking to show the Roman law bases of much

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17 *Reynolds v United States* (1878-9) 98 U.S. 145, 25 L. Ed. 244, citing Thos. Jefferson, *Works*, vol.8, p. 113. The case involved Mormon polygamy and Brigham Young's Secretary.

18 John J. McGrath, *Church and State in American Law: Cases and Materials* (Milwaukee, Wisc., 1962); John J. Noonan, *The Believer and the Powers That Are* (New York, 1987). See also D.H. Oaks, (ed.), *The Wall between Church and State* (Chicago, 1963), particularly R.M. Hutchins, 'The Future of the Wall', pp.17-25.

19 See J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London, 1970); *Studies in the New Testament*, 4 vols. (Leiden, 1977-86).

METAPHORS, LEGAL AND THEOLOGICAL language in the New Testament Epistles.<sup>20</sup> That discussion is still available, but let me indicate its tenor.

### **Roman Law in the Epistles**

The New Testament Epistles contain many figures of speech that are clearly legal in origin. Consider a famous passage in Romans:

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit itself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Rom. 8:15-17)

These words make a lawyer sit up. There are slavery, adoption, witnesses and inheritance, all woven together. But what do they mean?

Paul was, of course, trained in law, and was a Roman citizen. It is my contention that he used many figures of speech drawn from Roman law. I can see them in epistles written to Roman cities like Corinth, or to places where there was a significant Roman presence, like Ephesus. Romans, the epistle to the seat of Roman law, is full of such language. Paul speaks of slaves and of freedmen, of citizenship and aliens, of heirs, of adoption, of children and their Father. I would even argue that he uses the concept of trust.<sup>21</sup> Others, for example the non-Roman Peter, use language they would have cause to know from personal experience – citizenship and the alien (1 Pet. 2:9-11).

Of course there are other contenders for the root of the legal metaphors and language, but there are greater difficulties with a non-Roman referent. Adoption, for example, was unknown among the Jews, and indeed was still unknown in British civil law when the Westminster Divines formulated Chapter 12 of their Confession. Adoption came into UK law only with the Adoption Act 1930, some three hundred years later. For their concept, the Westminster Divines drew on their Bible and the writing of theologians. But at root the concept is one of law,

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<sup>20</sup> F. Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the New Testament Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.131-41.

with overtones and connotations that must be considered, and if the legal background is properly considered it will be found significantly to deepen the ideas being expressed.

Adoption is a Roman notion. In Greek law it was used as a succession device, usually occurring at a death-bed: the new 'child' would succeed the dying father. In Babylonian law adoption was used to place someone as an apprentice, for traditionally it was the duty of a father to pass on his knowledge to his child and he should not train someone outside his family. Adoption got round that social norm. But such adoptions were terminated at the end of the apprenticeship. Neither Jewish nor Greek nor Babylonian law, therefore, provides an acceptable meaning for Paul's use of the term, adoption.

Roman law does. In Roman law adoption meant that one entirely ceased to be a member of one's former family and came under the power and authority of a new head of family, the *paterfamilias*. And the *paterfamilias* was quite a figure. In civil (but not public) law he had total control over the affairs of his child. The child had no property of 'his own'. Hurts and damage done to or by the child were legally done to or by the father. Social relationships, including marriage, were at the father's pleasure. And there was no legal 'coming-of-age'. Irrespective of age, the child remained the child of the *paterfamilias* until the *paterfamilias* died, or himself terminated the relationship. That is what lies behind the notion of 'adoption', those simple words used five times by Paul, and expanded by Westminster Assembly into a magnificent chapter.<sup>22</sup>

### **Confusion, Composition and Conversion**

We pass to post-biblical matters for our final example. Consider the early heresies. Think of the debates as to the nature of Christ and the relationship between Christ and God. There surely we can see profound thought in verbal form. We can also see that some of the heresies do what Dicey did: they come to conclusions that omit some of the data that have to be taken into account. Being, essence, and will are human or

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.67-100; F. Lyall, 'Roman Law in the Writings of Paul Adoption,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1969), pp.458-66.

## METAPHORS, LEGAL AND THEOLOGICAL

physical characteristics but their interplay gave incessant difficulty. Indeed, have these things been fully clarified? I suspect not, because they are discussed in figures of speech. The words used had immediate referents at the time they were employed, and the sense which they thereby contain is applied to explicate theology. I read of the debates about the *hypostasis* and *physis* and see on occasion terms with which I am familiar creeping in to the discussion. I find myself wondering how the debates would have been conducted if they were being conducted now. In commercial law we have such interesting ideas as the company and the partnership, which we speak of as 'personality' for certain purposes. We are aware of the concept of the trustee, and even of the individual acting in several capacities. Of course the notion that ideas from law might intrude into theological discussion may appal. The fact is that legal ideas were used back then as tools of thought and discourse on profound matters.

'On the Nature of Christ' the Westminster Confession declares as follows:

The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion, Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.

(Westminster Confession of Faith, 8:2)

It reads well. I get a special tingle from five words: 'without conversion, composition, or confusion'. (Elsewhere –although I have been unable to find the reference<sup>23</sup> – I have read that the two natures exist 'without commixtion'.) And I recognise that the thinking going on and into these matters was borrowing from my patch, the garden of the law, for the words, and therefore also for the concepts that were employed.

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23 It would be a kindness to inform me.

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

I understand the Westminster language traces back to the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon of AD 451.<sup>24</sup> There we read that the two natures of the Lord are to be acknowledged:

without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved and concurring into one person and one substance, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten Son.<sup>25</sup>

Confusion, change, division, separation. The *New Dictionary of Theology* says that Chalcedon represents the definitive statement, albeit in Greek ontological language, of how Jesus Christ was God and man at the same time.<sup>26</sup> It may be Greek ontological language; it is also the language of law. Confusion, change, division, separation, are legal concepts to be found in Roman law, the law of the Empire by the time of Chalcedon. The *Edict of Caracalla* (the *Constitutio Antoniniana*) of AD 212 had given Roman citizenship to all born and resident within the Empire. Roman law was in force throughout the Empire. The so-called *Law*

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24 H. Denzinger and A. Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 23rd ed. (Freiburg, 1965); translated by R. J. Deferrari (with *imprimatur*) as *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis, MO, and London, 1957); T. H. Bindley, Rev. F. W. Green, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith* (London, 1950), pp.191-3.

25 I quote the Bindley translation. Deferrari puts it that the Lord is to be acknowledged in two natures 'without mingling, without change, indivisibly, undividedly, the distinction of the natures nowhere removed on account of the union, but rather the peculiarity of each nature being kept, and uniting in one substance, not divided or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son only begotten God Word, Lord Jesus Christ ...' The Deferrari translation of the Rusticus version may contain an error, the word 'nowhere' being omitted from the passage. The other change in the version of Rusticus is that 'uniqueness' replaces 'peculiarity'.

26 B. Demarest, 'Creeds', S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester, 1988), pp. 179-181 at p. 180.

of Citations of AD 426 had recently been issued by Theodosius II and Valentinian III to regularize the weight given by courts to the citation of Roman juristic writing. Some of the Chalcedonian thinking comes from the *Tome of Leo*, that is from Rome itself. And the Council of Chalcedon itself indicates that many in holy orders were familiar with the law – they were discouraged from embroiling themselves in civil matters to the detriment of their ecclesiastical functions.<sup>27</sup> We may therefore suppose that they knew the legal meaning of the concepts they employ.

Confusion, change, separation or division; or to return to the Westminster words, conversion, composition or confusion, and the two natures: we are in the realm of property law and ownership rights. We are in mainline Roman law. Let us take the simplest factual cases. If I sew your buttons on my jacket, what is the legal position? Have you lost ownership of the buttons? If I weave with your wool, to whom belongs the cloth? If I make bread with your flour, to whom belongs the loaf? If I make bronze with your tin and my copper, to whom belongs the bronze? If I make the bronze into a goblet, to whom belongs the goblet? If I solder your spout to my container, to whom belongs the kettle? If I write on your parchment, to whom belongs the document? If I paint on your wood, to whom belongs the painting?

Under Roman law property could be acquired in a variety of ways. One was *accessio*: a building belonged to the owner of the land on which it was built. That was clear, and remains Scots law. Title to the building goes with the land, irrespective of any claim for compensation for the use of materials. But what about the case of movable property, the kettle, the bronze? Where the two elements are readily separable, the solution is to separate the elements. I take your buttons off my coat. There is no problem. But if separation is not possible, what then? In that case, there might be *confusio* or *commixtio*, and common ownership of the property. Confusion occurs usually in fluids where the mixture is not reducible. In commixtion separation is possible in theory, but

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<sup>27</sup> Canons of Chalcedon, Canon 3. Other of the Canons similarly imply a familiarity with the secular law; eg. Canons 4, 10, 12, 21, 23, 27.

not in practice, as where two herds of sheep, neither marked, graze together and mingle. In both confusion and commixtion cases the resultant mixture is owned in proportion to the input. That common property may then be divided, with new property rights being constituted in the new parts: one would not get back the same sheep as one's original herd. But until that is done there is common ownership of the whole mass (or mess?).

Such ideas do not exhaust the possibilities. There also might be *specificatio*, where the essence of the argument focuses on whether a new thing is created by the mixing of the elements or the undergoing of a process. If there were a 'new thing', then there must be new ownership, and that need not be common.<sup>28</sup> This is where we come to the question of the woven wool, the new loaf, and, some would say, the written-on parchment or the painting on the wood panel. The 'new thing' cannot be resolved into its component parts without its destruction or at least major detriment to it. It is a 'new thing' and as such will have a new owner. I cannot forbear to note that another word for *specificatio*, specification, is conversion. What nuances may be there!

Confusion, commixtion, change and conversion. The language that the Fathers employ in thinking of the two natures of Jesus, human and divine, show them grappling with that difficult question. The tools of legal thought which they use deal with essences, and consider whether there is

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28 On *accessio*, see W.W. Buckland, *A Textbook of Roman Law*, 3rd ed., revised by P. Stein (Cambridge, 1963), pp.208-15, *specificatio* is dealt with at pp.215-18; Justinian's *Institutes* II.1.19-34; Gaius, *Institutes*, II.70-9. For the concepts in modern law see, D. Carey Miller, *Corporeal Moveables in Scots Law* (Edinburgh, 1991) (confusion/commixtion, pp.71-4; specification, pp.64-70). Glanville Williams (cited n. 2 above) considers that the concept of *specificatio* was 'largely a product of erroneous Greek philosophy' that 'every tangible thing was supposed to be a combination of matter (substance) and form' compounded by dispute 'as to the relative importance of the two supposed elements', *Law Quarterly Rev.* 61 (1945), p.293. At pp.293-299 he argues that the complexity of *specificatio* is unnecessary, artificial and best avoided by a legal system. I am not so sure.

something new, something joint, or something which is still separable into its components. The Fathers deal with each systematically. No, there is no 'new thing' created for that would be to change God. Neither is Jesus something which can be disassembled into two component elements. There is no 'confusion' involving common ownership of Jesus by God and Man. Nor is there that change which the Westminster Confession speaks of as composition, a putting together of element. There is no 'conversion'. There is no commixtion. These are the possibilities which the civil law concepts of property and property rights raise in the Chalcedonian minds. These are the possibilities which they hasten to exclude.

In so doing, the Fathers provide an example of metaphoric thought and explication which is useful. Yes, they leave the question of the two natures mysterious, but surely by their careful excluding of the normal legal categories of thought they do provide a better representation of what the Bible says of Jesus.

The Westminster Divines, drawing on the law of their time,<sup>29</sup> take up the point. Their 'without conversion, composition or confusion' also uses legal terminology. As we have seen, conversion and confusion are terms from *accessio* and *specificatio*. Composition is also putting things together: what the result is in law depends on whether there is *accessio*, specification or separability. The two natures are 'inseparably joined together in one person', but the results that would normally follow in the legal realm, do not occur. Westminster follows Chalcedon, albeit in fewer words.

Finally, where does this fit into my discussion of metaphor? I have used 'Parliamentary sovereignty' and the 'wall between church and state' to point the dangers of figurative language, the potential that figures of speech have to distort thinking. I have indicated the depth of the legal imagery in the Epistles. What of the two natures of Christ? This is an example where knowledge of the background again increases one's appreciation of the point being analysed,

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<sup>29</sup> Stair's *An Institute of the Law of Scotland* (1692), which discusses *accessio* and *specificatio* in Book 2.1.41-2, is evidence of the law of the time of the Westminster Divines.

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

discussed and then made. Confusion, commixtion, change, separation - there is an approximate level at which these words can be appreciated. But take the legal depths they imply, and the nature of the discussion changes. There were good reasons why Eutyches had to be dealt with. It was not just a debate about words: it was a debate about fundamental matters.

But I have said enough. I leave it to others to explore examples from more modern theology.

# THE IMAGE OF HUMANITY IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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The subject is both fascinating and problematic – fascinating, because it takes us to the heart of the dilemmas and tragedies of the modern world, but problematic because there is no such thing as a single, unified modern culture. The culture of the West at the close of the second millennium is notoriously fragmented, diverse and pluralist. Indeed, some analysts question whether the intellectual and moral chaos of the West merits the term ‘culture’ at all. Thus, the Oxford sociologist Bryan Wilson writes, ‘The erosion of the traditional culture of western society has been in process... for a considerable time. We have been learning or half-learning how to live without a culture, or with the rags and tatters of an earlier culture still clutched about the parts of us that we least care to expose.’<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly then, there is no consensus among Western thinkers about human nature; indeed, contemporary theories concerning humankind often propose diametrically opposed views. In the absence of God humanity has become a problem. Where the psalmist could ask in wonder and amazement ‘What is man that you are mindful of him?’, modern people living in a culture that has declared God to be dead, simply ask in confusion ‘What is man?’ In view of the supermarket of anthropological theories on offer today this paper should really be entitled ‘*Images of Humanity in Contemporary Culture*’.

## **The Basic Dilemma: Humanity between Heaven and Earth**

Christians have always recognized that human beings are defined and distinguished by two fundamental characteristics. On the one hand, they are *creatures* – they belong within creation and are subject to the limitations of nature and of death. At the same time, they possess self-consciousness and, uniquely among created beings, are aware of the

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<sup>1</sup> B. Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford, 1979), p.112.

*transcendent*. In the words of Koheleth in Ecclesiastes, despite radically secular world-views and hedonist lifestyles they discover an ineradicable sense of eternity set within their hearts (cf. Eccl. 3:11).

However, where Christianity held these two dimensions together in creative tension, secular anthropologies swing wildly between one and the other. At one extreme we find a naturalistic reductionism which focusses on humanity as a biological organism in such a manner as to explain human nature away. At the other end of the scale we find a romantic self-deification which ignores the earthiness of human beings and encourages them to indulge in dangerous fantasies. In the words of Stephen Evans, 'The post-Christian world cannot make up its mind about the human person... it cannot decide whether the human person is a monster to be tamed or a divine-like creature who must simply be freed to express or "realize" its own innate potentialities.'<sup>2</sup>

This secular dilemma has been expressed with great clarity by Ernest Becker. In his remarkable book *The Denial of Death*, he shows how Renaissance thinkers stressed the divine-like qualities of man, emphasizing those characteristics which clearly separate human beings from nature. But, Becker says, this same being is also 'a worm and food for worms'. Humanity is a terrible paradox, 'out of nature and hopelessly in it... up in the stars and yet housed in a heart-pumping, breath-grasping body'. Excluding both God and eternity from view, secular thought struggles to come to terms with this paradox. 'Man is literally split in two; he has the awareness of his own splendid uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty, and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in order blindly and dumbly to rot and disappear forever.'<sup>3</sup>

Becker claims that the basic driving force in modern culture is human fear of death. An illustration of this can be seen in the tragic words of Simone de Beauvoir; 'I think with sadness

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<sup>2</sup> C.S. Evans, 'Healing Old Wounds and Recovering Old Insights: Toward a Christian View of the Person for Today,' in Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells (eds.), *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World* (Grand Rapids, 1988), p.68.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York, 1973), p.26.

THE IMAGE OF HUMANITY IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE of all the books I've read, all the places I've seen, all the knowledge I've amassed and that will be no more. All the music, all the paintings, all the culture, so many places: and suddenly nothing....'<sup>4</sup> However, before we consider those who, like de Beauvoir, have openly faced the reality of death, we need to note an influential theory of humanity which suppresses this feeling of terror.

### **Human Being as Machine**

The view I wish to notice here has been described as 'scientific humanism'. In sharp contrast to the ethical humanism which strives to retain human dignity and freedom, this theory emphasizes biological conditioning and denies the traditional claim that human beings are unique. According to scientific humanists, men and women are embedded within nature, locked into the evolutionary process. Everything previously understood to be distinctive and unique in humankind is explicable in terms of genetic engineering. B.F. Skinner, the distinguished American psychologist, deliberately distanced himself from classical humanism by giving his most famous book the provocative title, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Skinner argued that modern anthropology was trapped between an outmoded traditional philosophy of human nature and a consistently scientific view of humanity. Discredited notions of human freedom and responsibility must be replaced by a consistent materialism in order that rational, scientific social planning and management may come into their own.

As the prestige of science has been eroded in recent years, such deterministic theories of human nature have lost favour. However, views similar to those of Skinner continue to be advocated, notably within the discipline of socio-biology. Richard Dawkins, for example, argues that science is perfectly capable of dealing with all the classical questions concerning the meaning and purpose of human existence. He quotes with approval a zoologist who claimed that all attempts to answer questions like 'What is man?' or 'What are we for?' prior to 1859 should be completely ignored. Dawkins' view of the human person is clearly based on evolutionary biology

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<sup>4</sup> Hans Küng, *Does God Exist?* (London, 1980), p.693.

and leads him to conclude that 'we, like all other animals, are machines created by our genes'.

The moral and ethical implications of such a theory become plain when we are told that the 'universal love and welfare of the species as a whole are concepts which simply do not make evolutionary sense'. Furthermore, if there is no such thing as human nature, if people possess no dignity which distinguishes them from other species, then my death is, quite literally, no different from that of a dog. Clearly, the way is wide open here for genetic engineering and for the attempt to create a utopian society by means of what Skinner called 'behavioural technology'. So far as the beginning of life is concerned, Dawkins states that the notion that the human foetus can claim some special protection over that accorded to an adult chimpanzee 'has no proper basis in evolutionary biology'.<sup>5</sup>

It is difficult to judge the extent of the influence of scientific humanism of this kind. On the one hand, such a reductionist view of human beings runs counter to the mood of our times according to which people are encouraged to break free from the limits of nature by means of a plethora of quests for the transcendent. On the other hand, the impact of such ideas should not be underestimated; in areas like penal theory, medical research and the treatment of mental disorders, behaviourist ideas often underlie practices which involve treating people like machines. Similarly, animal rights activists often deny the uniqueness of the human person and appear to show greater concern for the well-being of rats and mice than they do for people.

### **'Ye Shall Be as Gods'**

If one stream of secular thought flows toward the pole of 'nature' and defines the human in terms of rootedness within the world, the other moves toward the opposite pole and proclaims the divinity of human beings. Nietzsche, whose philosophy has been extremely influential among artists and writers, explicitly denied that humanity is the result of special design or purpose. In his view, the 'death of God' demanded the emergence of a new race of men who would take upon

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (St Albans, 1978), p.11.

## THE IMAGE OF HUMANITY IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

themselves the task of recreating the world. Nietzsche wrote, 'Once you said "God" when you gazed upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say "superman"'.<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx also saw God as an obstacle to human liberation and understood his socio-political project in explicitly Promethean terms. Religion, said Marx, 'is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself'.<sup>7</sup> These nineteenth-century thinkers really did believe that humanity could and should replace God and that, in doing so, the way would be opened to a new world of freedom, justice and happiness.

It did not take long, however, for the realization to dawn that modern men and women, alone in an empty cosmos, now carried a crushing burden of responsibility. Nietzsche might exult in the task facing the human race in the absence of God, but for those who followed him, the profoundly negative consequences of the human attempt to rule the world soon became plain. Max Weber, anticipating the stifling growth of bureaucracy and rationality, spoke of our becoming trapped in an 'iron cage' while Sartre, in a famous phrase, described modern people as 'condemned to freedom'. Albert Camus, one of the most honest and courageous of all modern writers, saw the tragedy of post-Christian humanity in terms of the ancient myth of Sisyphus. Having stolen the secrets of the gods and put death in chains, Sisyphus was condemned endlessly to push a rock up a hill, only to watch it repeatedly roll back again. So, Camus said, modern man has paid a terrible price for his freedom; like Sisyphus 'his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing'.<sup>8</sup> This note of despair has become pervasive in modern culture; it can be heard in the music of composers as different as Vaughan Williams and Shostokovich and is reflected in the bleak canvasses of European artists like Picasso and Edvard Munch. Perhaps nowhere is the desperate loneliness of

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6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader* (Harmondsworth, 1977), p.242.

7 *Marx and Engels on Religion* (Moscow, 1975), p.39.

8 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p.108.

modern people more movingly portrayed than in the work of the American painter, Edward Hopper. His 'Nighthawks' is a terrifying picture of the lostness of people in the industrialized, urban wilderness.

However, in addition to bearing the burden of despair and loneliness which is the lot of secular men and women, contemporary thinkers must also explain why the liberation from ancient restraints and superstitions proclaimed by Nietzsche and Marx actually opened the floodgates to barbarity and violence on a scale unprecedented in history. How is it, to be precise, that human beings were no sooner pronounced free from the obligation to worship God, than they allowed a succession of *human* tyrants to place new chains around their ankles? Why was it that, at the very point at which people aspired to become like God, Europe fell under the control of fascism, Nazism and Stalinism? The psychologist Eric Fromm addressed this issue in his book *The Fear of Freedom* and concluded that while the culture of the West provided individuals with certain external liberties, it actually left them more isolated, anxious and powerless than ever. 'Behind a front of satisfaction and optimism', Fromm wrote, 'modern man is deeply unhappy; as a matter of fact, he is on the verge of desperation.'<sup>9</sup> People so terrified of the freedom offered to them in the modern era become easy prey for 'hero' figures whose ideologies provide a sense of meaning and purpose and whose charisma and power give security to the anxious. The work of Fromm, while seriously deficient from the Christian perspective, offers an enlightening diagnosis of our times and reminds us of the fragile nature of our civilization and the continuing vulnerability of modern humanity to the claims of false messiahs.

### **The Hedonistic Alternative**

As Koheleth realized long ago, faced with the stark terrors of life in a godless universe most people will turn tail and take flight from reality, immersing themselves in activities which provide a shield against the truth of existence. In this connection it has to be said that if we wish to identify the

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<sup>9</sup> Eric Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London, 1984), p.220.

'image of humanity in contemporary culture' we will need to spend a month reading the tabloid press as well as studying the kind of works cited above. Actually, little has changed from the time of Ecclesiastes; money, sex and drugs still provide the escape routes for people who lack the strength to look death in the face. Pascal, who observed the restlessness of modern people with such acuteness and sympathy, wrote, 'Being unable to cure death, wretchedness and ignorance, men have decided, in order to be happy, not to think about such things.'<sup>10</sup> What is new today is the range of technologies by means of which the 'silence of eternity' can be shattered and rational thought and reflection rendered impossible. The lack of quietness and the sheer volume of noise now taken for granted in the West, whether piped into shopping malls or emanating from a million walkmans, is itself testimony to the futility of life 'beneath the sun'. Ernest Becker neatly sums up the modern flight from reality when he says, 'Modern man is drinking or drugging himself out of awareness, or he spends his time shopping, which is the same thing.'<sup>11</sup>

### **'A Being Reaching out Beyond Himself'**

As the Enlightenment project to build a new world of freedom and happiness on a humanist basis has foundered, psychologists and sociologists have asked whether this failure may be the result of something fundamental in human nature having been overlooked. Peter Berger, for example, says that secularized world-views appear to frustrate deeply grounded human needs, including 'the aspiration to exist in a meaningful and ultimately hopeful cosmos'.<sup>12</sup> In similar vein Becker observes, 'The every day food quest alone cannot answer to his restlessness; the cycle of eat, fight, procreate, and sleep – that absorbs the members of other species – has only the barest meaning for man.'<sup>13</sup> Albert Camus, to whom I have referred earlier, developed his 'philosophy of the absurd' on the basis of two fundamental convictions – that it

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<sup>10</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Harmondsworth, 1966), p.66.

<sup>11</sup> Becker, *Denial*, p.284.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Berger, *Facing Up To Modernity* (New York, 1977), p.210.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Becker, *The Structure of Evil. An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man* (New York, 1968), p.171.

is impossible at present to discern any meaning in the world, and yet the human heart continues to ache with longing for just such a transcendent purpose. Camus' atheism is very different from that of Nietzsche and leads him to say, 'The certainty of a God giving meaning to life far surpasses in attractiveness the ability to behave badly with impunity. The choice would not be hard to make. But there is no choice and that is where the bitterness comes in.'<sup>14</sup> The significant point here is that Camus' anthropology recognizes both the deep human longing for a meaning that transcends this life and the extreme difficulty of living in the world without such knowledge.

Another important witness to the human need to discover a meaning to life which transcends present experience is Viktor Frankl. As a therapist he concluded that many of his patients were not, in fact, suffering from physical or psychological disorders. Their problem, according to Frankl, was 'spiritual'; people were unable to face life because they had no way of making sense of it. Frankl described 'existential frustration' as 'the collective neurosis' of our time, a profound crisis at the level of *meaning* which was incapacitating modern people and leaving them in a state of dis-ease and boredom. At the same time Frankl observed that despite the frantic search for pleasure, people remained unsatisfied and he pointed out that happiness forever eludes those who make it the object of their lives. Happiness, Frankl insists, is a by-product of the discovery of the ultimate meaning of my existence; when made into the goal of life it becomes an idol which will turn to dust in my hands. Thus, Frankl concludes that the quest for ultimate meaning is a definitive mark of the human person: 'The essentially self-transcendent quality of human existence renders man a being reaching out beyond himself.'<sup>15</sup>

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14 Camus, *Myth*, p.65.

15 Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning - An Introduction to Logotherapy* (Boston, 1964), p.8.

**Modern Anthropology and the Tasks of Theology**

In view of the crisis facing modern people in the context of a culture which is manifestly unable to satisfy the human craving for meaning, what response should theology make?

First, I suggest that there is need for a sympathetic understanding of the dilemmas confronting modern people. Unfortunately, theology in general, and evangelical theology in particular, still wears the clothes and speaks the language of the ghetto. It remains largely an internal business divorced from the apologetic and missionary task which should, in an age such as this, be its primary concern. Our ears must be open to the cries of pain and despair coming from contemporary writers and artists. Take, for example, this description of grief on the part of one of John Fowles' characters on hearing the news that his girlfriend has died: 'Staring out to sea, I finally forced myself to stop thinking of her as someone still somewhere... but as a shovelful of ashes already scattered, as a broken link, a biological dead end, an eternal withdrawal from reality, a once complex object that now dwindled, dwindled, left nothing behind except a smudge like a fallen speck of soot on a blank sheet of paper... I did not cry for her... but I sat in the silence of that night, that infinite hostility to man, to permanence, to love, remembering her, remembering her.'<sup>16</sup> Given such a tragic view of humankind, theology must be done with compassion, cultural relevance and a servant-like determination to engage in serious dialogue with a generation which knows itself to be facing the abyss.

Secondly, I suggest that we need to be cautious in speaking about God. I am not proposing that Christian theology should become defensive or inhibited in its witness to faith – far from it. And yet, there is a shallow triumphalism which, for all its apparent certainty, is desperately lacking in reality. The late Klaus Bockmuehl, responding seriously to the Marxist critique of religion, said, '...we must show that God is not just a language event.... When we speak of the reality of God, we tend to sound as though we are talking about life on Mars – no one knows much about it and even if one did, it

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<sup>16</sup> John Fowles, *The Magus* (London, 1977), p.441.

would not make a difference in everyday life.<sup>17</sup> Jacques Ellul, who has a way of putting his finger on the right spot, wrote a book entitled *Hope in Time of Abandonment* in which he said that, reviewing the work of the churches over the past century, he had the feeling of being in front of a very bad orchestra! Ellul insisted that in the present crisis, Christians needed to *feel* the tragedy of the withdrawness of God from Western culture: 'what I see is that we are abandoned by God. Oh I do not say forever, or that we are excluded from salvation, but that here and now in this moment of history, in this night which perhaps has refused the light, no actual light is shining any longer.'<sup>18</sup> If Ellul is correct, then theology must not only seek relevance, but it must be done on our knees with the cry of the psalms of lament on our lips – asking God 'Why?' and 'How long?'

Thirdly, given the absence of consensus in our culture concerning the nature of the human person, our doctrine of humanity is clearly of critical importance. However, we cannot simply repeat the formulations of the past since, as is well known, it is precisely Christian teaching concerning the uniqueness of humankind which has come under sustained critical scrutiny in recent years. We must listen to our critics and not dismiss out of hand the charge that, by stressing humankind's separateness from other species and right to rule creation, historical Christianity must take some responsibility for the looming ecological catastrophe. We may have to acknowledge that by teaching a particular concept of the 'image of God' the church has had a part in creating a technological society in which, as Douglas John Hall says, it is almost impossible to 'live like the truly human beings exemplified by the One who walked with his disciples in the wheat fields and slept in a storm-tossed boat and ate fish from unpolluted waters'.<sup>19</sup> While we should certainly resist the temptation to develop a merely faddish 'green theology', the

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17 Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Challenge of Marxism* (Leicester, 1980), p.81.

18 Jacques Ellul, *Hope in Time of Abandonment* (New York, 1977), p.181.

19 Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God – Dominion or Stewardship* (Grand Rapids, 1986), p.111.

## THE IMAGE OF HUMANITY IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

fact remains that Scripture provides a secure basis for an understanding of personhood which, rather than threatening the earth, stimulates responsible stewardship and grateful respect. More than that, when the *imago Dei* is understood biblically, so that men and women regain their sanity only as they enter into a relationship of love and obedience with their creator, then Christian theology has in its hands a message with the potential to renew hope and bring new life to a despairing age. As Ernest Becker wrote at the conclusion of his last book, 'If we were not fear-stricken animals who repressed awareness of ourselves and our world, *then* we would live in peace and unafraid of death, trusting to our creator God and celebrating his creation'.<sup>20</sup> It is our privilege to tell modern people that just such a life of freedom and hope is possible as we recognize our status as forgiven sinners and sons and daughters of the Father.

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<sup>20</sup> Ernest Becker, *Escape from Evil* (New York, 1975), p.163.

## REVIEWS

### **The Mediation of Christ (Revised Edition)**

Thomas F. Torrance

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1992; 128pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 567 29205 3

Professor T.F. Torrance is clearly one of the major Scottish theologians of the twentieth century, his numerous publications over the past four decades being well known. Curiously, what is not so well known despite all of this is the shape of his theology as a whole. In this little book, happily, the main lines of Torrance's theology appear in a form likely to be accessible to most theologically informed readers. As such, it is clearly the best introduction to Torrance's thought currently available.

*The Mediation of Christ* is, however, more than an introductory study; it represents, rather, Torrance's mature theological position, and gleans material (unfortunately often without acknowledgement) from all the main sources of his theological outlook: the Eastern Fathers, John Calvin, Karl Barth, and of course, modern physics. Both the value and the difficulty of the book, indeed, is often the sheer diversity of the material drawn upon. What is new in it is the explicit attempt Torrance makes to argue the case for Christian-Jewish theological dialogue.

The first edition of *The Mediation of Christ* covered themes ranging from theological method to the Jewish milieu of revelation and its contemporary importance, the doctrines of Christ and the atonement, and the basis of the human response to God in Christ. In this revised edition, Torrance locates his understanding of each of these themes within the doctrine of the Trinity in an entirely new chapter, arguing that the ground of reconciliation with God must be understood not only nominally in Trinitarian terms, but as a direct function of the doctrine of the Trinity. In this, Torrance echoes the thought of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, for whom the doctrine of the Trinity is, in effect, the mystery of salvation. Since so much of Torrance's work over the years has been concerned with Trinitarian questions, the addition of this chapter was entirely appropriate; indeed, the earlier edition was incomplete without it.

The constructive rather than analytical character of the book means that an index is unnecessary, and none is provided. The more extensive use of headings and sub-headings in this new edition is, however, helpful both for an initial reading and for subsequent study.

There are a number of typographical errors and very long sentences in the book, suggesting that it could have done with careful editing. If the book has a particular weakness, however, it lies in Professor Torrance's tendency to assume that his often sweeping judgements need no detailed

justification. For example, his running critique of theological dualism as stated here is unsatisfactory, for the simplest reason that all Christian theology must be dualist in *some* sense, given that in it we are constantly concerned with God and his creation. In effect, Torrance recognizes this, but greater sensitivity to the problem, in both its historical and theological dimension, would have improved his exposition.

*The Mediation of Christ* is nevertheless a useful book for students, ministers and others who wish to come to terms with Torrance's theology. For those who know his work, the book will further clarify his understanding of the atonement, and outline his recent thoughts on the question of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Gary Badcock, Aberdeen

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

Andrew E. Hill and John E. Walton

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1991; 461pp., N.P., ISBN 0 310 51600 5

A beautifully presented evangelical work discussing the content of the Old Testament for the undergraduate is something which has been a need in the publishing world for many years. This book is very helpfully arranged, with an introductory section followed by four sections, each of which studies a major part of the Old Testament: the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, the Poetic Books and the Prophets.

The opening section introduces interpretative approaches to the text and discusses the origins of the Old Testament. Introductory material of this sort is key to an understanding of the Old Testament. Students will be indebted to the authors for the background which they gain by a cursory reading.

Each of these sections begins with an introduction which discusses questions of genre, date and authorship of the works. Each book of the Protestant Old Testament is given a chapter in which the discussion is arranged under the major headings, The Writing of the Book (authorship, date and related questions), The Background (historical, cultural and formal matters), Outline, Purpose and Message (theological thrust), Structure and Organisation (literary analysis), and Major Themes. Every chapter concludes with Questions for Further Study and Discussion and with an annotated bibliography. Two concluding chapters provide a theological bridge with the New Testament and survey an Old Testament theology of God's attributes. Many charts, diagrams and photographs highlight the attractive format in which the book is presented. It is clearly intended as a textbook for the undergraduate beginning studies in Old Testament.

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

In general, I found the book most helpful when it was surveying the Old Testament and reviewing aspects of the message of each of the books. As such, it achieves its purpose and can be used without reservation. I suppose one cannot demand everything of a survey text, so perhaps it is not surprising that the book tends to omit some of the many ideas and approaches which have emerged in the last decade. Where more recent approaches are mentioned, sometimes it is not clear how carefully they have been assessed.

Despite reservations such as these, this work is possibly the best available evangelical survey of the Old Testament, especially for those for whom the content and some of the major teachings of each book are the central concern.

*Richard S. Hess, Glasgow Bible College*

### **Credo: Meditations on the Apostles' Creed**

Hans Urs von Balthasar

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1990; 105pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 567 29185 5

The publishers are probably correct to claim that the contents of this book 'amount in their extraordinary compactness and depth to a little "summa" of (von Balthasar's) theology'. The lucid introductory summary by M. Kehl makes the book a very useful starter indeed for anyone wanting to explore the attractive writings of an unusual star in Roman Catholic theology.

A commentary on the Apostles' Creed is almost a theological cliché, but von Balthasar makes it much more than theology. How many theology books contain words like the following prayer: 'Be rainfall upon our parchedness, be a river through our landscape. And should your water bring forth ... fruit in us, then let us not regard these as our own produce, for they ... are Yours to use for You and for us, or to reserve for another who has nothing'?

Theology, devotion and service mingle throughout the work, bound together first and foremost by a forceful Trinitarianism. In many ways this is a traditional Western Augustinian Trinitarianism turning unashamedly to the psychological analogy, particularly the attribute of love. The Father is the source of love, the Son a self-declaration of love that receives and gives itself back infinitely and the Spirit a love that binds together infinitely, effecting their overflow into creation. But the love so expounded is attached to the axiom that God, 'in his essence, is love and surrender'. It is that word *surrender*, curiously Islamic in its ring, that provides a fresh twist to the traditional doctrine. The meaning of death in the creation emerges through the cross. Death is a radical image of 'original life'. And what is that, but the 'living process of

reciprocal self-surrender between Father, Son and Spirit'. The Spirit is called 'the most delicate, vulnerable, and precious one in God' who produces in believers an initiation into the mystery of this love.

For all its attractiveness the book must generate the suspicion that it really aims to resolve a tension faced by the author's own tradition, namely that between Mary as gentle and approachable, and the divine Trinity as formidable power. Others have sought with great integrity to tackle this tension theologically, as for example Karl Rahner by re-defining God as Mystery. Von Balthasar's distinction is his boldness. He has carried traditional Marian qualities right into the Godhead. In a simple and brilliant stroke he has thus found one way within his own tradition of securing a future for both Mariology and Trinitarianism.

Evangelicals would be wrong to think that such a theology has nothing to offer to them. Perhaps we have for too long exalted the power of God above gentleness and mercy, bewitched by the claimed superiority of muscle, masterfulness and ego over mutual submissiveness. Whatever the presuppositions of the author, he has set out a theology which puts the Trinity at the centre and contains some valuable and challenging little epigrams of which the following is a typical example: 'God perhaps finds our feeling of superiority harder to endure than the shortcomings of the weak.'

*Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College*

### **Worship Now Book 2**

Compiled by Duncan B. Forrester, David M. Hamilton, Alan Main and James A. Whyte

Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh; £7.95, 235pp.; ISBN 0 7152 0633 8

This is a collection of prayers for leading worship. As well as many which can be used for Sunday services, there are also prayers for weddings, funerals and informal fellowship groups. It is a supplement and a follow-on volume to *Worship Now* (1972). The editors represent the four Faculties of Divinity in Scotland. There are 27 contributors, including five former Moderators of the Church of Scotland General Assembly. The aim is to bring together a wide spectrum of current devotional and liturgical prayer, and make this available to those involved in leading worship. There is a recognition that worship in the present day is more varied in setting, style and content, and this collection is a response to, and in some ways an encouragement to these changes. It is also a seed-bed of ideas from which others will conceive their own prayers. The present reviewer has found many phrases and extracts useful in this way. The large clear print and ringbinding makes it easy to use,

but better page headings would be more helpful. There is no index of contributors which is a miss.

The wide spectrum referred to shows the contributions in sharp contrasts. The more liturgical items of (*e.g.*) Longmuir, seem dry in comparison to the warm-hearted spirituality of Doig, which is less formal. The wordiness of (*e.g.*) Kesting would lose our concentration, but the conciseness of McLellan does not. But the real gems of this collection are from W.J.G. McDonald. Here there is material which helps people to be honest about themselves and helps the human spirit to approach God. His prayers are personal, orderly, honest and uncomplicated – all important factors in leading public worship.

In a book which sets out to be widely representative of the current Church of Scotland, it is surprising that there is no place for ministries which are supported by large weekly prayer meetings in their congregations. These ministries have raised the status of prayer in the church to its rightful New Testament place at the very heart of any service of God. A flavour of these ministries would help us to see where much of the inspiration comes from.

*Alastair H. Gray, Haddington West Church of Scotland.*

## **The New Chosen People. A Corporate View of Election**

**William W. Klein**

Academie Books (Zondervan), Grand Rapids, 1990; 319pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 310 51251 4

A young and able Reformed theologian in England recently told me that once he had grasped the Calvinistic doctrine of election, everything else fell neatly into place. Most folk of Reformed conviction would want to apply that test also to the teaching of Scripture at large. There are those, however, who, although brought up in the Reformed tradition, do not find themselves in sympathy with the traditional Reformed doctrine of election and predestination, and feel that intellectually and spiritually they must pursue other possibilities. Dr Klein is one such, as he bears witness in the introduction to *The New Chosen People*:

‘I first learned theology from a Reformed position. But I also read the Wesleyans, Arminians, Lutherans, and Barth to name some others. Instead of finding a consensus based on the Biblical evidence, I discovered conflicting claims and mutually exclusive positions.’

Puzzled and unsettled by this experience, Klein decided to pursue his own study of the theology of election, and, taking Sabbatical leaves in 1985 and 1989, spent much of the time in the library of Tyndale House, Cambridge, the fruit of which is this present work.

Klein is quite convinced that both the Calvinist and Arminian positions deviate from biblical perspective, insisting at the same time that the theme of election in the Bible is too important for the serious minded student of Scripture to disregard.

'We cannot understand Israel's position and mission apart from her election', he asserts, and enlarges: 'The New Testament writers devote much attention to God's choosing. Jesus *chose* disciples; Paul was *chosen* prior to his birth; and Christians are God's *chosen ones*.'

But Klein goes on to plead that election to *salvation* should never be seen to refer to *individuals*, but only more widely to the corporate body – the church. *Individuals* are free to accept or to reject salvation; that is, to join or not to join the body through faith in Christ. Klein only admits to an *individual* election to specific acts of service. In this sense, even Judas could be said to be of the elect insofar as he had a particular function, although clearly not for salvation, inasmuch as he voluntarily rejected Christ.

Klein takes us through the Old Testament, the Qumran documents, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Rabbinic sources and then the entire corpus of the New Testament, highlighting what he considers to be the principal texts relevant to the doctrines of election and predestination.

He summarises his findings at the end of each chapter, drawing together all his conclusions into a final section. His style is clear and coherent, and his chapters are neatly broken up, making the work very easy to read and to understand. The text is amply endowed with biblical and other appropriate references. Apt quotations from other scholars appear from time to time with copious footnotes. His bibliography is formidable, nearly 16 pages in length (although theologians and expositors from the Reformed tradition seem to be relatively sparse. His preference is for contemporary liberals!)

While Professor Klein provides a useful exposition of those aspects of election which he will admit, the serious weakness of this work, many will protest, is its unwillingness to accept that election refers to – indeed is *conditional* for – individual salvation, which, of course, is a principal point of his thesis. It is certainly not a corrective of Calvin's exposition of the doctrine which is to be found in his tract 'On the Eternal Predestination of God' (and which, incidentally, entirely scotches the increasingly prevailing teaching that Calvin was not a Calvinist!)

Calvin's biblical theology runs much deeper and is, for the reviewer at least, far more satisfying. Calvin, it should be observed, did not try to *resolve* the doctrine of absolute predestination on the one hand (so near to the heart of his biblical theology), and his insistence on human responsibility on the other, so characteristic of his voluminous commentaries.

He was content to let them lie in a mystery hitherto unrevealed by the Almighty. They can both be found in Scripture, and we fail in our task if we do not go as far as Scripture goes, but we become lost in a labyrinth if we speculate beyond it. An interesting exercise would be to re-examine the texts highlighted by Dr Klein to support his contention that election is only corporate in the light of Calvin's corresponding exegesis and exposition of them, for the preciseness and accuracy of biblical exegesis was ever Calvin's chief concern. His theology was merely the carefully measured produce to be derived undoubtedly from it.

Meanwhile, like our young theologian aforementioned, those of Reformed convictions are not readily going to accept Dr Klein's case, only to find themselves bereft of an aspect of a biblical doctrine to which not only can they assent intellectually but one to which their own deepest experience heartily warms; that which Article 17 of the 39 Articles describes as being 'full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ ... as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation ... as ... their love towards God.'

A belief in individual personal election to salvation is not then only an intellectual matter, it is one of the deepest pastoral significance.

*Peter Cook, Stockport, Cheshire*

## **God's Sovereign Purpose: An Exposition of Romans 9**

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1991; 328pp., £12.95;  
ISBN 0 85151 579 7

This is vintage Lloyd-Jones. To read through this latest addition to the series of his published sermons on Romans is to understand again why so many remain indebted under God to 'the Doctor': for here, as clearly as anywhere in his published work, the full array of his great qualities as an expository preacher are seen to their best. Anyone concerned to 'get understanding' will not be disappointed.

The twenty-five chapters, prepared by his wife for publication, provide, primarily, a masterful and comprehensive exposition of a chapter as difficult as it is important.

His starting point, of course, is an unashamed and reiterated commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture (e.g. '...our view is that our whole faith is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and that we would know nothing at all were it not for their teaching. It is always wrong to sit in judgement upon the scriptural teaching.' p.172). That basic conviction determines his whole approach, and indeed the whole attitude with which the chapter is addressed.

## REVIEWS

His exposition is marked by a transparent *honesty* (e.g. 'I am not interested in whether you like it or not. I am trying to expound Paul's argument.' p.130). The theological issues are never ducked, and the perplexing questions never shirked. When he does not know the answer he is not afraid to say so (e.g. "Why are only some saved...?" Let us be clear about this. I do not know! I will go further, I am not meant to know! I will go further still, I should not even desire to know!' p.244).

His exegesis, equally, is characterised throughout by a scholarly *precision* that leaves the reader both informed and persuaded: where necessary, and not least at the points of major controversy, the exact meaning and significance of each word is considered and elucidated; but at the same time Lloyd-Jones is careful to set each verse in the context of the whole argument, whose broad contours are regularly set before the reader.

His application, as one would expect from a man forever a pastor at heart, is always *wise and challenging*, as he constantly earths the principles he expounds in the world and the church of today. God's truth is always contemporary: Lloyd-Jones never lets the reader forget it!

It is not just as a superb exposition of the text of Romans 9, however, that this volume has value: as an object lesson also in Christian instruction it can have few parallels. Time and again Lloyd-Jones draws attention to the teaching methods of Paul, but all that he says about Paul might equally be said about himself – '...we should observe again the great delicacy, the sensitive nature and character of the great Apostle and his tenderness. ...When we are handling a difficult matter like this, we should always do so in a manner which is calculated to win people and persuade them.... We should always try to answer the people who are putting the question.... The Apostle never evades a difficulty, never skirts round it.' (pp.92f, 96, 145). The section, for instance, in which Lloyd-Jones demonstrates that 'there is no such thing as free will in fallen man' (pp.204ff) is quite thrilling in its compelling Christian apologetics.

The book's highest commendation, though, lies in the fact that it enlarges the reader's awareness of the greatness of God, and nourishes genuine worship in the heart. As Lloyd-Jones himself says about the whole chapter (Romans 9), its theme 'is God Himself in the glory of His person and character.... If all this doctrine does not lead us to wonder in amazement and astonishment, and to worship, there is something wrong with our understanding of it' (pp.7ff.). There should be little wrong with the reader's understanding of it after working through Romans 9 with Dr Lloyd-Jones!

*Jeremy Middleton, Blackhall, Church of Scotland, Edinburgh*

**Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement**

Edited by N. Lossky *et al.*

WCC Publications, Geneva / CCBI, London / Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1991; 1196pp., £44.95; ISBN 0 85169 225 7

Good reference works are worth their weight in gold, and this new *Dictionary* is a welcome addition to the shelves. It is much more comprehensive than one would expect, and at times comes nearer to being a dictionary of modern Christianity, or even of the modern world. For it contains quite a number of articles on topics on which, it seems, there is little to say ecumenically, such as 'Solidarity', 'Birth Control' and 'Subsidiarity'. But users will find here clear entries on a wide range of subjects, especially lesser known figures within the movement, both international and more local, ecumenical bodies and events, and themes such as 'Revolution', 'Reconciled Diversity', and 'Koinonia' which have featured prominently in recent ecumenical discussion. The range of contributors is very broad (most are responsible for only one entry), bibliographies accompany virtually all entries (but sometimes include nothing in English), the indexes are very helpful and the layout and visual presentation easy on the reader. The photographs add little to the volume.

An article is devoted to 'Criticism of the Ecumenical Movement and of the WCC', and space is found for the ICCC and several evangelical organisations. The North American IVCF appears, but IVF (UCCF) rates a mention only under IFES, and Evangelical Alliance only under 'Evangelicals'. Robert Coote is the author of several of these entries. The editors appear to have followed a policy of selecting contributors sympathetic to their assignments.

Scotland is not generously treated, with notable absentees including Archie Craig, John Baillie, T.F.Torrance, Ian Henderson, the Fellowship of St Andrew (its English counterpart is present) and the Iona Community. Ireland is also poorly covered, with no mention even of the Irish School of Ecumenics in Dublin. Other omissions that caught my eye were pilgrimage, Joseph Ratzinger and the endeavours for reunion during the Reformation.

But these gaps must be set against the remarkable comprehensiveness of the *Dictionary*. It has impressed upon me the far-reaching extensiveness and massive activity of the ecumenical movement. The *Dictionary's* coverage represents, as it were, the movement's bid to embrace the whole of world Christianity – and indeed the whole of the human race. If its scope from time to time seems, imperialistically, to overreach any plausible bounds, the expansiveness of the canvas it paints should remind readers of this *Bulletin* of the inescapably ecumenical

dimensions of most mainstream Christianity in the dying years of its second millennium.

*David F. Wright, New College, The University of Edinburgh*

**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Vol. 2: The Fight of Faith, 1939–1981**

Iain H. Murray

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1990; 830pp., £15.95; ISBN 085151 564 9

The long awaited second volume of Iain Murray's biography of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones is to be welcomed. In addition to being an account of a God-honouring and God-honoured many-sided ministry it is also a valuable record of Evangelicalism from the end of the Second World War to the early 1980s. The subject's life is inseparable from the history of the I.V.F. (now U.C.C.F.), I.F.E.S., the Evangelical Library, the resurgence of interest in the Puritans and Reformed Theology and the controversy over separation which shook the evangelical world in England in the 1960s. What Iain Murray has written of the Doctor's not inconsiderable, and sometimes reluctant, part in these events and movements is both instructive and engrossing.

The biography's value as a record, however, is complemented by the relevance of his ministry and emphases to so many areas of contemporary church life where questions are being asked. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was insistent on the primacy of doctrinal preaching and was increasingly critical of the slide toward the priority of experience. He believed deeply that strong Christians are created through the exposition of the Scriptures and the elucidation of the doctrines of grace. He saw this emphasis being replaced by the charismatic movement's fondness for repetitive choruses, mime, dance, drama and other habits which he regarded as entertainment. Though he criticised much that passed for worship in his day he believed that 'atmosphere' was Spirit-given, not artificially cultivated. As a prophet does he still not warn?

Lloyd-Jones believed strongly in separation from those elements in the main denominations which did not hold to evangelical truth. He pulled back from good friends (e.g. Dr J.I. Packer) who, he believed, weakened in their stance and became 'guilty by association'. He rejected the claim that by staying in these denominations greater influence could be exerted; rather he believed that his friends were compromising revealed truth. As a member of a church which declined to have anything to do with the new 'ecumenical instrument' in Scotland (ACTS – Action of Churches Together in Scotland), your reviewer heard bells ringing throughout the account of the controversy in which Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott played such leading parts. Where lies our greatest influence over an

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

inclusive body – within or outside? What does the Doctor's stance have to say to much-maligned Evangelicals within a modern denomination?

Though not mentioned specifically in the biography a crucial question is posed by the many years of Dr Lloyd-Jones' ministry in Westminster Chapel. Undoubtedly these were years of anointed preaching but was a church being built? Oblique references are made by Murray to the weakness of the leadership, the Doctor's insistence on 'doing things himself', his failure to train the deacons for a vacancy and so on. Is a yearly Pastoral Letter enough and what knowledge did he have of the homes and background of his congregation? Can his ministry at Westminster Chapel be regarded, in any way, as a model?

One final point of relevance deserves mention. Increasingly Evangelicals are applying themselves to economic, social and political issues. Lloyd-Jones believed that the responsibility of the preacher was to diagnose sin as humanity's greatest problem and offer a life-changing salvation. The pulpit exists, not to offer Christian insights on contemporary problems, but to herald the message of sin, salvation and the nearness of eternity. Was he right?

Many will value this biography, now happily complete. I suspect its main value lies, not in its record of the past, but in its challenges for the present.

*James Taylor, Stirling Baptist Church.*

## **Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World: Theology From an Evangelical Point of View**

Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells (eds.)

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988; 344pp., \$11.95; ISBN 0 8028 0279 6

As the title hints, the really significant thing about this book is that it represents a serious attempt on the part of evangelical scholarship to interact with, and respond to, modern thought and culture. In an introductory chapter the editors comment that believers are frequently so unconcerned about (one might add, ignorant of) the minds which have shaped modern consciousness that they effectively 'rule themselves out of active participation in the established marketplace of ideas'. The opening contribution from Noll and Wells is a fine piece of work in its own right; they offer a definition of Evangelicalism (seen here as an 'American-British-Confessional-Coalition'), trace the history of the post-war evangelical resurgence, and then proceed to challenge the smugness of a tradition too often content to repeat received orthodoxies which reassure those within the constituency while leaving the secular world totally unmoved. The urgent challenge facing evangelical theology, say the editors, is to understand what faith means 'in a world whose cognitive

horizons are so vastly different from the biblical and whose life poses questions the biblical authors did not see or answer directly'. While the perspective of the contributors is said to be 'antimodernist' (in the sense that they refuse to allow modern thought a normative authority), they insist on the need to understand the secular mind and, to a greater or lesser extent, are willing to utilize the genuine insights of contemporary non-Christian thinkers. When Noll and Wells acknowledge that unbelievers 'may enable Christians to see more clearly the implications of the gospel', one begins to appreciate their earlier claim that this volume provides evidence of 'an unmistakable stirring of something different'.

Contributors like John Stott, Jim Packer, Anthony Thistleton and Donald Bloesch are too well known and respected by readers of this journal to need recommending here (Thistleton's contribution is particularly valuable). What makes this book so significant however, is the evidence it provides of the appearance of a new type of evangelical theology which, while faithful to the foundations of the tradition, is genuinely open, innovative, original and committed to the tasks of apologetics and mission. It is invidious to single out particular contributors but I cannot forbear mention of Stephen Evans' interaction with modern psychology, David N. Livingstone's masterly chapter on the encounter between science and faith, and the essay of the late Klaus Bockmuehl on secularization.

Inevitably, since meaningful dialogue with an unbelieving world involves unavoidable risks, a volume like this contains statements liable to provoke lively debate. Perhaps the most controversial chapter in this book is Clark Pinnock's offering on 'The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions'. Pinnock early lays his cards on the table: 'I dare to hope...for the final salvation of many unevangelized persons who longed for a Savior but never heard of Christ...' It is difficult, in my view, to quibble with the claim that Evangelicals 'have tended to conceal God's generosity in the Bible'. Pinnock deserves our thanks for his candour and honesty in handling a difficult subject, yet this reviewer is left with an uneasy feeling that the doctrine of general revelation offered here could easily become not simply an extension of the evangelical household, but a half-way house toward universalism.

One final point. While this is a superb book which offers encouraging evidence of the maturity and confidence of evangelical theology, one cannot but observe that the intended readership is clearly in-house. In view of the authors' contention that Evangelicals have failed to come to terms with the real world, this orientation is doubtless justified. Nonetheless, this highlights the fact that the really challenging task has scarcely begun; it is one thing to write about the modern world for fellow Evangelicals, but something else to address that world as Evangelicals.

*David Smith, Northumbria Bible College*

## Laid-Back Religion?

J.I. Packer

Inter-Varsity Press; Leicester, 1989; 158pp., £3.95; ISBN 0 85110 799 0

A new book from James Packer (although half the chapters have appeared before) is for most evangelical Christians an event. Nor is it a disappointment. There is nothing 'laid-back' about it but the title!

He writes as a theologian, to help people read and follow the biblical map towards a worthy Christian life. The map needs to exhibit seven basic qualities: it must be accurate, God-centred, doxological, future-oriented, church-centred and freedom-focussed. It is God's plan of basic Christian orientation, found only in the Bible – the whole book, not snippets: its main theme is God, not man. To those who accept the plan, God's purposes are good, but we cannot know all his secrets and must trust him. We were created for his glory, which is both rational and real. It is ours to find what this means.

We do so in the 'Basic Christian Relationship' of personal encounter with the holy God, by atonement, which is a shock (*cf.* Isaiah 6). After this the next chapter on the 'Theology of Pleasure' is a surprise. Pleasure is not only permissible but essential in a world created for God's pleasure, if not sought idolatrously, egocentrically, this-worldly. See Calvin's *Institutes* for the place of pleasure, since 'pietistic asceticism' has 'cracked under the strain'. Live life in two worlds, but love of God is a 'life-transforming motivation' (see Ecclesiastes).

As to 'Guidance', Evangelicals are more 'up-tight' about it than Roman Catholics. It is healthy to want to know God's will, but fear of being misguided is unhealthy 'unthinking unbelief'. He is to be trusted, and obeyed, not irrationally through blank minds or games of chance or plotting stars; but he will not divulge his secrets. Packer offers ten useful check-points on guidance. Other points: the extraordinary is not the ordinary – guidance comes by instruction in wisdom and understanding, not by signs and voices, but by the Holy Spirit authenticating Scripture. Psalm 23 is full of guidance!

Joy is a 'neglected discipline', divinely intended, precious, has models, is commanded and is definable. Being loved incomparably is its source, breeding acceptance of our lot and a sense of worthwhileness. Packer writes eloquently of joy in sorrow, which is necessary to Christian life and ought to be sought.

Sanctification is chiefly progressive in Christian theology, not positional, its purpose transformational. Referring to his *Keep in Step with the Spirit* Packer says sanctification is 'a neglected priority... and fading glory in the evangelical world'. Agreed! Rampant superficial

evangelisticism has taken over. He recommends the Westminster Confession, the Shorter Catechism and John Owen, views rooted in Augustine and in Luther, Calvin, etc. Who would dare, but Packer! Good works must be good in content, manner and motive, having reciprocal effect on sanctification.

Three chapters remaining apply principles and practice of holiness to stubborn facts of life, such as 'Poor Health'; 'Disappointment, Despair, Depression', citing William Cowper, and 'Church Reformation'. Reformation must be inward issuing outward in changed lives and society, with many examples from history. Today Reformation would look like standing for biblical authority and seriousness about heaven and hell; would be passionate, holy, deeply concerned for the welfare of Christ's church, willing for change where necessary. Such Reformation is divine visitation, the work of Jesus Christ, calling for repentance. To be achieved it must be perceived as necessary, prayed and prepared for. Amen!

*William Still, Gilcomston South Church of Scotland, Aberdeen.*

## **Man, Woman and Priesthood**

James Tolhurst (ed.)

Fowler Wright Books, Leominster, 1989; 225pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 85244 162 2

Edited by a Roman Catholic parish priest, this book is a symposium of six contributions from the Anglican, RC, Orthodox and Presbyterian traditions. The inclusion as appendices of several official church documents on women's ordination is a useful feature. The unifying factor is stated to be the writers' opposition to the ordination of women, but the contributions are very uneven in terms of both style and depth. It was surprising to find a conservative Evangelical of the international reputation of J.I. Packer prepared to write the Introduction.

The opening chapter by Graham Leonard, Bishop of London, and those from the RC tradition leave the reader in no doubt that priestly activity in the church today is considered to be a continuation of the priestly ministry of Christ himself. Theologian Joyce Little is convinced that all the pressure for women's ordination to the priesthood stems from the feminist lobby and 'the theological arguments supporting women's ordination wreak havoc with our faith', as they call into question the whole nature of the RC Church!

The chapter by Roman Cholij within the Orthodox tradition, together with the Orthodox paper on the *Place of Women in the Church* (1988), make interesting reading if one is less familiar with the arguments used by the Eastern Church. In stressing that maleness is essential to priesthood, the writer can speak of the priest as the 'liturgical icon of

Christ'. This Christocentric, Christoiconic theology implies that 'if a woman presumed to seek sacramental ordination to the priesthood, she would not be seeking to represent Christ, the incarnate Logos'.

Although Dr Packer, along with other contributors, does concede that there are functions open to women in the church's ministry, it is disturbing to find him endorsing the belief in the essential maleness of ministers in these terms: 'Without in the least denying that informally Christ ministers through women no less than through men...it is regularly better and more edifying that Jesus' official representatives in the Church's life should be male.' This surely comes close to saying that maleness is more important in the Christian ministry than Christlikeness of life and spiritual gifting. How does Dr Packer deal with the reality of the preponderance of female missionaries?

Reviewing the symposium as a whole enables one to see a certain incongruity in the inclusion of the chapter entitled 'Women Elders?' by A.T.B. McGowan, a Church of Scotland parish minister. Taken in its own right, it states very lucidly the 'narrow' conservative evangelical position on women elders and ministers, but at the outset the author has to disown the fundamental presupposition of the book: the priestly nature of ordained ministry. By advocating a pragmatic approach at congregational level which enables him to remain within his denomination, McGowan makes himself an obvious target for criticism.

It is regrettable that neither Dr Packer nor any of the other contributors explores the biblical understanding of ministry in the church, nor even questions the concept of ordination. Those omissions, together with the variable quality of the contributions lead one to question whether this book adds anything constructive to the debate on women's ministry.

*Shirley A. Fraser, Tillydrone Church of Scotland, Aberdeen*

## Book Notes

John Bowden's *Who's Who in Theology* (SCM, London, 1990; 152pp., £5.95; ISBN 0 334 02464 1) is not quite what its title promises. 'Theology' is interpreted loosely enough to justify a 20-page appendix on the popes, and to include Plato, Josephus, Constantine, William Carey and Billy Graham. Within short compass it is surprisingly comprehensive, concentrating especially on modern – and living – figures.

'A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem' is the sub-title of John Wenham's *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1991; 319pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 340 54619 0). The fruit of a lifetime's worrying away at the origins of these Gospels, it dates them before the mid-50s. It is a substantial, carefully argued challenge to a

consensus which is now probably more widely – and variously – questioned than for several decades.

The Banner of Truth Trust has reprinted two volumes of B. B. Warfield's Princeton addresses and sermons: *The Saviour of the World* (1991; 270pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 85151 593 2) and *Faith and Life* (1991; 458pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 85151 585 1). They display a learned and powerful theologian teaching and preaching central facets of Christian belief and practice, without frills or trivialities. If James Denney was right in being interested only in a theology that could be preached, these collections give us the measure of Warfield.

*Going Somewhere* is the uninformative title of a welcome addition to SPCK's 'New Library of Pastoral Care' by Sheila Hollins and Margaret Grimer (London, 1988; 121pp., £4.95; ISBN 0 281 04336 1). It deals with the pastoral care of people with mental handicaps. This is a helpfully practical survey, which encourages pastors and others to help such people go somewhere. Donald Carson is a widely appreciated author who has now assembled 'Reflections on Suffering and Evil' in *How Long O Lord?* (IVP, Leicester, 1990; 275pp., £7.95; ISBN 0 85110 950 0). They are right up to date, with an appendix on AIDS, but they offer no short-circuit simplicities. In particular, they direct us to some of the oft-forgotten features on the Christian landscape, such as divine providence, the cost of sin, and hell, and engage us in pastoral meditations in this context.

The theme of Anne Borrowdale's *Distorted Images* (SPCK, London, 1991; 152pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 281 04530 5) is not fully exposed by its sub-title, 'Christian Attitudes to Women, Men and Sex'. It is really a probing diagnosis of the evils of patriarchy (one of the principalities and powers of Ephesians 6:12). When read not as a prescription for health (it is thin on Scripture, and indulges in too many unqualified assertions about sexuality) but as a painful analysis of sinful disorder in society it will speak not least to macho Evangelicalism.

*David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh*

## **Gay Christians. A Moral Dilemma**

Peter Coleman

SCM Press, London, 1989; 208pp., £8.50; ISBN 0 334 00532 9

This work by the bishop of Crediton in Devon is an informative and balanced guide to the debate of the last three decades in the churches, chiefly the Church of England, about the morality of homosexual behaviour. It is written for the general reader, not the scholar, and hence provides both an introduction to the terminology involved (though I cannot believe that 'gay' is 'etymologically based on the legend of

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Ganymede') and a brief survey of the biblical teaching. This latter has its weaknesses (it fails, for example, to take full measure of the Greek of 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10; see my brief study in the *Evangelical Quarterly* 61, 1989, 291-300), but rightly concludes that in both Old and New Testament homosexual conduct is clearly condemned.

After documenting the debate, Coleman's *via media* Anglicanism ends up preferring most of all a position that holds a close lasting relationship with another human person to be the primary purpose of sexuality – 'and ideally with a person of the opposite gender'. This is less soundly biblical than at first sight appears (quite apart from his reluctance to exclude altogether an option that leaves the gender open), for the Christian tradition knows nothing of human sexuality except in a heterosexual frame. The notion of an indeterminate sexuality whose direction in relationship is open to different possibilities ('ideally') is quite alien to it.

Perhaps what Bishop Coleman does least justice to is the damage such thinking will do to the doctrine and practice of Christian marriage. It was surely no accident when recently in the USA an openly, not to say blatantly, homosexual man was ordained priest, only to be suspended within a few days for teaching that made monogamous fidelity only one option for (heterosexual) marriage between Christians. This ultimately must be the fundamental concern – theological, ethical and pastoral – with the toleration of homosexual liaisons. Marriage is under sufficient pressure from heterosexual disorder – for which an earlier generation of liberal church teachers must shoulder some of the blame. The tragedy will be compounded if Peter Coleman and his fellow-bishops further undermine it by such indecisiveness about homosexual unions.

The book has every sign of being produced in haste – numerous errata and an inadequate index.

*David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh*

### **Christian Ethics: Options and Issues**

Norman L. Geisler

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1989; Apollos, Leicester, 1990; 335pp., £14.95; ISBN 0 85111 418 0

This expanded re-write of earlier work by Geisler on Christian ethics offers a welcome overview of, as the title says, 'options' and 'issues'. Approximately the first one-third of the book is taken up with fundamental questions of ethical discussion (with chapters on 'antinomianism, situationism, generalism', and so on) with the remainder focusing on traditional questions like war and homosexuality with a final chapter on ecology. The text throughout is divided into small sections to make it digestible, and much of the discussion is in terms

which any interested reader will be able to follow. Each chapter ends with a short list of 'select readings', which range from standard texts from ancient and more recent times to some popular Christian material and even the occasional doctoral thesis. A lengthy bibliography and a glossary, together with helpfully full indexes, complete this substantial book.

Geisler's approach throughout is to show how each position – both with the general 'options', that is to say basic approaches to ethical discourse, and also with the individual practical questions – interacts with the others. If this does involve a certain over-simplification (because the amount of space that can be allocated to each of these interactions is sometimes rather small) it introduces the reader to ethical argument in every case, and does not leave the different approaches high and dry. It does raise the question of the reader for whom the book is particularly intended, whether the interested lay person or the (presumably Christian) student beginning to approach ethics in an academic context. But for both groups this will prove a useful tool.

*Nigel M. de S. Cameron, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School,  
Deerfield*

## **Baptism**

Michael Green

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1987; 141pp., £1.95; ISBN  
0 340 41056 6

This examination of baptismal issues from an evangelical Anglican viewpoint starts with present confusions and ends with baptism in the Spirit, which it interprets in terms of the discovery in actual experience of what has been ours all the time through our baptism – a case of 'possessing our possessions'. Michael Green is a fluent writer, with a strong grasp on the necessity of repentance and faith for baptism to be fruitful, but without minimising the objective reality and completeness of baptism itself. Confirmation is rightly cut down to size – a domestic Anglican requirement, quaintly described as 'getting into fellowship with the bishop', although it is still puzzling to find 'confirmation' given two quite different meanings. To fend off demands for 'rebaptism', the author recommends the reaffirming, remembering and possibly quasi-baptismal re-enacting (illustrated from New Zealand Presbyterianism) of a person's original baptism. But clarity is not helped by claiming that "Rebaptism" is wrong because it cannot be done! If it is impossible, why all the fuss? What exactly is the unrepeatability of baptism?

Michael Green is not at his best on historical questions (Kurt Aland will be surprised to find that he is 'a distinguished Baptist theologian'), and some details of the book will not satisfy Reformed Evangelicals,

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

such as the notion of a child speaking through its godparents and the confusing attempt to justify the non-literal meaning of liturgical declarations that the baptized baby is regenerate. But the traditional defence of infant baptism is vigorous, and objections squarely faced, along with an unqualified condemnation of indiscriminate administration. The all-important distinction between what baptism means and what it effects helps on this front, but the argument lacks sufficient tightness to challenge believers-baptist convictions. It is more likely to stiffen wavering paedobaptists.

*David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh*

### **Faith to Creed. Ecumenical Perspectives on the Affirmation of the Apostolic Faith in the Fourth Century**

K. Heim (Ed.)

Eerdmans (for Commission on Faith and Order, NCCC)  
Grand Rapids, 1992; 205pp., \$13.95; ISBN 0 8028 0551 5

It is not very often that a collection of papers or articles carries the satisfying ring of consistency. Here is one that does. Ecumenism watchers should not be completely surprised to find scholars of stature in the World Council of Churches who take a creed seriously. This group of contributors responded to a call from the WCC for an exploration of the 'apostolic faith' as a means to express visible unity. They worked on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed which had already been identified as a possible universal focus of unity.

The background of the team was mixed, denominationally and ideologically. The distinguished representative of Eastern Orthodoxy, John Meyendorff, appears first with a typically lucid review of the significance of the creed, its place amongst creeds in general and its use. The essay blended well with that of André de Halleux which tackled the history and internal development of the creed as well as helpfully reviewing modern attitudes to its degree of usefulness in ecumenism. W.G. Rusch, the well-known Lutheran writer, comes out clearly against modern radical criticisms of fourth-century Trinitarianism as Hellenistic tampering with a pristine biblical monotheism. However, he also expresses caution about a stagnant reception of any creed and calls for sensitivity towards those churches not consciously credal in nature.

Roberta C. Bondi offers a spirited account of the monastic outlook associated with the pro-Nicean Greek Fathers and finds both in them and 'orthodox' Trinitarianism a social and political concern which calls into question their allegedly compromising opportunist stance. Rosemary Jermann's study of the Cappadocians and Paulo D. Siepierski's

translation of the creed into liberation categories each come to similar conclusions.

Two contributions strike out from the rest in only muted recognition of the Nicene Creed. E. Hoornaert, also a Latin American liberation theologian, finds too little ethical and democratic content in the creed and finds it lacking in admonition to liberate the poor. This seems to expect too much from the document and its context. The Baptist Glenn Hinson expounds an eirenic non-credalist position, reminding us of doctrinal terrorism in the past and arguing that creeds are for evangelising and teaching purposes.

Finally, two contributors from radical starting points, A. James Reimer and Max L. Stackhouse, surprisingly come to the defence of Trinitarianism, claiming it as a pillar of social righteousness. At the same time Stackhouse's pluralism betrays the fact that he is mainly interested in the universal Spirit and his closing pages foreshadow the controversial pluralist strain that so scandalised the Eastern Orthodox and conservative delegates at the WCC's Canberra assembly in 1991. All in all, there is much here to stimulate and sustain discussion, and to keep a great patristic text at the centre of modern debate.

*Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College*

### **Incarnational Ministry. The Presence of Christ in Church, Society and Family (Essays in Honor of Ray S. Anderson)**

Christian D. Kettler and Todd H. Speidell (eds.)

Helmets and Howard, Colorado Springs 1990; \$29.95, xvii+330pp.; ISBN 0 939443 20 1/21 X

This fascinating *Festschrift* brings together twenty-one essays in three groups around the theme set out in the subtitle. Dr Anderson's life and work are duly assessed and celebrated, and his unusual range of publications listed – the range of contributors and the variety of their subject-matter testimonies to the impression which he and his work have made on many. The perspective of subject and editors is well set out in the introduction: 'the tendency among many theologians is either to adopt uncritically a confessional, traditional theology – gaining a degree of security but forfeiting the critique of the Word of God over our tradition – or simply to reject all tradition for the sake of the novel and the trendy. Anderson has refused to do both, because of his theology of the freedom of the Word of God. This has allowed Anderson as a theologian to draw heavily on traditional incarnational theology, particularly in developing implications for a theology of ministry, while always maintaining the judgement of the Word of God over both tradition and innovation.'

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Part 1 addresses 'A theology of church ministry' and contributors include a number very well known to readers of this *Bulletin*. Thomas F. Torrance writes on 'The distinctive character of the Reformed Tradition', Alasdair I.C. Heron on '*Homo Peccator* and the *Imago Dei* according to John Calvin', Geoffrey W. Bromiley on 'The ministry of the Word of God' and Alan E. Lewis on 'Unmasking idolatries: vocation in the *Ecclesia Crucis*'. Colin Gunton also contributes to this section, on 'baptism and the Christian community'.

Under 'a theology of social ministry', James B. Torrance writes on 'The ministry of reconciliation today' and other essays address the *Imago Dei*, 'Incarnational social ethics', covenant, evangelism, leadership and more besides. Part 3 focuses more particularly and more interestingly on 'A theology of family ministry', a subject – particularly theologically addressed – on which we need all the help we can get. Here we may single out for comment 'The challenge of modernity for the family' by Jack O. Balswick and Dawn Ward, in which a 'radical response' to modernity is sought and suggested. We are encouraged to work towards the 'decommodification' of family life(!), essentially 'reversing the two-hundred-year-old trend of economic institutions usurping the parenting role'. Practical proposals including improvements in employment provision for parents with young children are recognised to have a necessary context in the eschatological expectation in which 'some day', if not today, 'the disintegrating effects of modernity will be overcome'. In 'The Whole Image of God' Frances and Paul Hibert offer 'a theological and anthropological understanding of male-female relationship'. They focus on the 'brokenness' of the image in the Genesis story, where 'the human actors were a man and a woman, not two men'. The image is 'put together again' in Christ. 'The first sin disrupted male-female relationships not only in marriage but between men as a class and women as a class. It is important to realize, however, that this is the consequence of sin and not what God first intended for humanity.' So, there is firm biblical evidence that both Jesus and Paul lived and worked in the reality of restored relationships between women and men. In the new era inaugurated by Jesus, men and women, rather than being at war for the dominant position, are restored to the position of equality that constituted their life before the fall.'

This volume is very much to be welcomed, with its consistent approach to contemporary 'church, society and family' questions in the light of a theological understanding of human nature. Not everyone is going to agree with all of it (indeed, some interaction between different contributors would have been worthwhile, though that is a hard thing to arrange), but every Christian seriously concerned with the issues raised by 'modernity' for church, society and family life should read this book.

*Nigel Cameron, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield*

**Affirming Your Faith. Exploring the Apostles' Creed**

Alister McGrath

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1991; 140pp., £2.95; ISBN 0 85110 854 7

It is surely a tribute to the lucidity of this book that the reviewer was able to read it through in a relaxed couple of hours. Given the author's distinction as a writer in academic theology, it is to his credit that he can communicate in a simple and clear style suitable for another kind of readership.

Here he uses the Apostles' Creed as a basis for introducing readers to key affirmations of the Christian faith. It will be particularly useful for putting into the hands of new but thoughtful Christians and as a taster for the more concentrated paperback treatment in Bruce Milne's *Know the Truth*. Alister McGrath has hit the target perfectly for that particular section of the traditional IVP market.

The main phrases of the creed are broken down into manageable sections and handled with an emphasis upon relevant biblical texts and with a welcome sensitivity to historical reflection, showing catholic taste. Each chapter turns doctrine into discipleship in a section handling practical implications. Each chapter also carries three questions for group discussion or personal reflection and three book titles for further reading. The book breathes a robust confidence in the Christian faith and offers healthy prompts to witness and evangelism.

The author plainly aims at introduction and there is little theology that would be new to those with just a foundation course in Christian doctrine behind them. But it is written with a light touch that could well be imitated by those who teach such courses. A pastor or house group leader can hand this book on to the intelligent enquiring newcomer with confidence.

*Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College*

**Sunshine and Shadow: The Story of the Baptists of Mull**

Donald E. Meek

Tiree Books, Edinburgh, 1991: 25pp., n.p.

**Island Harvest: A History of Tiree Baptist Church 1838-1988**

Donald E. Meek

Tiree Books, Edinburgh, 1988: 58pp. n.p.

Donald Meek, of Edinburgh University's Department of Celtic, has established himself as an insightful chronicler of Baptist history in the highlands and western isles of Scotland. His chapter in 'The Baptists in Scotland: A History' (Ed. David Bebbington, Glasgow, 1988) demonstrated that he could paint on a wide canvas and assess trends and movements on a large scale. In these two booklets he uses the microscope, equally effectively, to look at the history of the Baptist cause on two islands, Mull and Tiree. He varies the perspective, examining the churches in terms of their outstanding leaders over the years and then looking at them in terms of their reaction to the social and economic changes which have so transformed remote crofting communities. It is good to be reminded that such churches were once full and that revival touched these distant and, apparently, isolated communities. Pastors, mostly home bred and Gaelic-speaking, were men of unsparing faithfulness who were not slow to travel immense distances in the service of the gospel. Both these booklets make enthralling reading as the author describes church communities, relatively small in size and set in climatically inhospitable places, influencing whole islands and enduring despite immense difficulties. The interest of the booklets owes much to Dr Meek's obvious understanding of the scene of which he writes. In 'The Baptists in Scotland' Donald Meek ascribes much of the strength of highland churches to the presence of Gaelic-speaking pastors. It is interesting that the Mull and Tiree churches are currently experiencing growth. Both their present pastors are English! These booklets are commended to all who have a concern for the church in the western isles.

*Jim Taylor, Stirling*

## **Disarming the Secular Gods: Sharing Your Faith So That People Will Listen**

Peter C. Moore

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1991, 192pp., £5.50. ISBN 0 85110 697 8

Peter Moore, now rector of Little Trinity Church in Toronto, has had an extensive ministry as an apologist in American high schools and universities. He believes apologetics is a vital element in the church fulfilling her evangelistic mandate, defending a historical faith, clearing away misconceptions, answering serious questions, and helping to equip lay people for ministry. His writing is distinguished from much in the area in that he has not written a technical treatise awaiting professional rejoinder. He has actually engaged in evangelistic apologetics, and he is able to illustrate his approach from personal encounters. That approach is avowedly and unashamedly eclectic (but perhaps practical apologetics demands *ad hominem* flexibility).

His book is an introduction to world-views, and is aimed at the thinking Christian. The defence of the faith is set in the context of five contemporary mind-sets, those of the New Ager, the Relativist, the Narcissist, the Agnostic and the Hedonist. In each case he offers a survey and critique of the world-view, and a Christian response. His treatment is clear and fair, and is illustrated with a wealth of quotations from a wide range of authors. The book concludes with a study guide consisting of chapter outlines and questions to stimulate reflection and discussion.

A dip into his argument on Narcissism may illustrate something of the flavour of the book. Moore borrows from Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, the suggestion that we understand a culture when we look at its sicker members. Emotional illnesses are culturally induced and reinforced, and so when we understand the neuroses prevalent at any given time we have insights into the problems which in milder forms plague the society as a whole. Moore describes Western culture as one hostile to authority of all kinds, fearful of dependence, and preoccupied with the self. In stark contrast to such an age stands a movement whose symbol is a cross, the antithesis of narcissism. This cross reveals a God who suffers as substitute. Narcissism is afraid of the call to dependence and loss of self-centredness. But it is superficial, living off affluence, and cannot deliver what it promises. Christianity calls for commitment outside myself, commitment to another. The glorious paradox, however, is that those who lose themselves find themselves.

For Moore the Christian world-view is to be presented as compelling because it offers over-arching meaning and significance. In his response to agnosticism he quotes C.S. Lewis: 'I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I

see everything else'. His final chapter on 'The Christian's Certainty' cautions, obviously enough, against basing assurance on infallible reason, an infallible church, or infallible experience. But he also warns against basing certainty on an infallible Scripture, not because he denies infallibility, but because that belief rests on Jesus' witness to Scripture. 'To begin with an infallible Scripture is to put the cart before the horse.' The only certainty, he insists, lies in the inherent truthfulness of truth, as it presents itself to the total person, mind, spirit, will and body, and as it offers comprehensiveness, tying together the whole of reality. Certainty only comes through personal trust in Christ, putting him at the centre of life. 'Once done, we know him to be true, because he causes the whole story to make sense.'

A. Macleod

### **The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: An Introductory Study**

Aidan Nichols, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1988; 338pp.; ISBN 0 5647 29148 0

Aidan Nichols lectures in theology at the Pontifical University of St Thomas at Rome and holds posts in England as well. He is thus well placed to introduce the thought of the Vatican's senior doctrinal guardian to an English-speaking audience. Cardinal Ratzinger, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, enjoys a high degree of visibility, particularly in the wake of the disciplinary actions recently taken against leading Catholic theologians (e.g., Schillebeeckx, Küng, Curran) and liberation theology (published in English as *The Ratzinger Report*). But Nichols has wisely decided not to focus on the more sensational aspects of Ratzinger's career but to present his broader theology. This he does admirably, and one is left at the end of his study convinced that Ratzinger, despite his reputation in the popular press for heavy-handed theological conservatism, is a major theologian in his own right.

Nichols' own interest in Ratzinger began with the publication of *The Ratzinger Report*. He believed that Ratzinger's criticisms of liberation theology stemmed from a wider vision of ecclesiology and the Christian faith. The present book arises out of his earlier attempts in the *London Tablet* to highlight the positive vision behind Ratzinger's criticisms of liberation theology. Nichols surveys Ratzinger's theological development from his Bavarian roots through his early studies of Augustine to his present Roman Prefecture. He devotes separate chapters to a number of Ratzinger's historical and theological interests: Bonaventure's idea of salvation history, the idea of Christian brotherhood, the Apostles' Creed,

eschatology and ecumenism. Chapters on Ratzinger the preacher, the liturgist and the prefect round out the account. This chronological structure does not obscure the two central themes – ‘eucharistic’ ecclesiology and the unity of the faith – which form the *basso continuo* of Ratzinger’s prolific opus of over fifty books.

The book opens with an account of Ratzinger’s Bavaria, which is best characterized, like Ratzinger himself, by its emphasis on cultural and institutional continuity (p.6). The next chapter, ‘Augustine and the Church’, surveys Ratzinger’s twenty year dialogue with Augustine. Ratzinger studied the contemporary significance of Augustine’s metaphors for the Church as the ‘people’ and ‘house’ of God, in part because of his belief that the twentieth century was indeed going to be the ‘century of the Church’. This strategy of addressing the present situation via the past is typical of Ratzinger; Nichols shows him anticipating both the *aggiornamento* and the *ressourcement* of the Second Vatican Council insofar as his goal was ‘the binding of tradition and contemporaneity in a living unity’ (p.296).

Nichols’ portrait of Ratzinger’s theology may prove helpful to Protestant readers who wish better to understand Roman Catholic life and thought. There are some helpful comments on the relation of Scripture to Tradition: ‘The supreme authority for the Church is Scripture-read-in-Tradition’ (p.275). The Mass and the Magisterium also receive a theological interpretation and rationale: the Church is the sacrament of Christ (p.249). But Nichols’ most intriguing argument concerns Ratzinger’s formulation of the nature of Christian unity. He claims that Ratzinger holds to pluralism in theologies but to unity in faith. The Church finds its unity neither in philosophy nor in social or political praxis. Rather, the unity of the Church is the unity of truth, which is only realized eschatologically. It is precisely because we Christians live on the hither side of the *eschaton* that pluralism is constitutive of present Christian life and thought. And yet Ratzinger also argues that the magisterium is necessary in order to ensure unity in the church. Rome represents the ‘unity-in-plurality’ of the Church. After all, the Church is founded on Peter’s person *and* on Peter’s faith. Nichols offers a helpful paraphrase: ‘The unity of the Christian We is held together by personal bearers of responsibility for that unity’ (p.254).

The remit of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith requires it to adopt the positive function of encouraging good theology in the Church, alongside its historic negative function of discouraging bad. It remains to be seen to what extent Ratzinger can do this while keeping the Catholic Church *Roman*. But Nichols’ introduction to this erudite and ecclesial theologian intelligently charts Ratzinger’s solution to the ecclesial problem of the One and the Many.

*Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Edinburgh*

**Theology and Politics**

Duncan B. Forrester

Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988; 182pp., £7.95, ISBN 0 631 15283 0

Professor Forrester's book, though standing on its own, is part of a series entitled 'Signposts in Theology'. The reader should not expect either a statement of political theology for Britain today, nor a critical engagement with the diverse theologies of the contemporary world, but rather an excellent introduction to the central themes and issues of political theology – a guidemap plotting the terrain for students before they venture into the field for themselves. The author's enthusiasm for his subject is evident throughout, and his liberal sprinkling of quotations, together with an extensive bibliography, points the direction for anyone wishing to follow it up, having had their appetite whetted.

An historical overview of the subject sets the scene. The place of religion in ancient societies is considered, the particular distinctives of Christian theology are alluded to, and three giants of the early church – Eusebius, Tertullian and Augustine – are introduced as examples of varying political-theology positions within Christianity. The present-day politicisation debate is also considered in an historical context.

In the third chapter, Forrester turns to his main subject – liberation theology. While the author's reasons for this focus cannot be disputed ('it is the liveliest and most challenging school of political theology today', p. 150), it is a little disappointing that, with so many other introductions to liberation theology around, more attention was not given to the thought of South Africa, Europe or the Far East (which are all referred to briefly) or indeed Africa or North America (which rate no mention at all).

The main themes of liberation theology having been introduced, the author then considers in turn three theological issues in the light of their treatment in political theology – the use of the Bible; Christology; and ecclesiology.

Throughout, the book achieves what any introduction should – leaving the reader frustrated because greater depth is desired, but despite this inevitable feature, one feels a little more critical engagement with the subject, and a little less passionate advocacy of it, would have provided a better balanced introduction.

For example, in the section on the use of the Bible, though there are discussions of fundamentalism, the Biblical Theology movement, western scholarship and the repossession of the biblical narrative by the poor of Latin America, there is no real critical assessment of the important hermeneutical issues which arise in the methodology of liberation theology. Similarly, no voices of criticism are cited in the Christology chapter, where the priority of the *praxis* of Jesus over the

teaching of Jesus is affirmed. An introduction to critical literature would have been a useful 'signpost' as well.

This book concludes with a stimulating discussion of the responsibilities of political theology, a summary analysis of the present map of the field, and a few pointers to the lessons to be embodied in any political theology of the church of the Northern World.

With the one reservation about the lack of critical engagement this book is highly recommended to anyone, particularly the theological student, seeking an introduction to political theology.

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## **A Matter of Life and Death**

John V. Taylor

SCM Press, 1986; 88pp., £3.50; ISBN 0334 00977 4

John V. Taylor is known from his earlier book, *The Go-Between God*, as a theologian of the Holy Spirit, and this subsequent volume confirms this general impression. Like many who engage with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, he is also a man with a deep interest in Christian spirituality and life. The key theme of *A Matter of Life and Death* is Christian life, 'life in all its fullness,' lived in the power of the Holy Spirit and grounded in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The five chapters which constitute the book are five addresses given at a mission in Oxford in 1986. The content is geared to the context: the addresses were and are intended as unashamed evangelistic meditations on the life to which Christ calls us. As such, they cover many of the classic themes of the evangelistic campaign: the human dilemma, the divine answer, its basis in the person and work of Christ, and the Christian fellowship. They do so, however, without once either beating the drums of evangelical rhetoric, or ossifying in theological jargon the many fresh insights offered.

There are many things of value in these pages, not the least Taylor's insistence that the work of the Spirit is not confined to the 'religious' sphere as it is traditionally, and narrowly, defined. If God is the one 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being,' he seems to say, then we must understand ourselves as living always in relation to God, or perhaps better, as having the potential to discover ourselves and live most fully when we are open to the winds of the Holy Spirit and the person of Jesus Christ. Taylor's insistence, even in the context of a series of mission addresses, that this does not lead necessarily to a 'religious life' marks the most refreshing aspect of his work: just as Jesus was against religion that inhibits life and obscures the love of God, so we ought to be. Towards the end of the book, Taylor constructs a case for the church and

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

for the necessity of Christian fellowship, but it is one which is honest enough to acknowledge the extent to which those who look for life within the church are likely to be disappointed. It is this honesty, which is so often missing in religious writing, and perhaps especially in the evangelistic address, which I most appreciate in this book.

If the strength of *A Matter of Life and Death* is its non-technical and fresh grappling with the well-springs of Christian life, its weakness is that in so doing it does not present anything like a theological system. I was at times left wondering, for example, whether Taylor's was a Spirit or a Logos Christology. Given the book's aims, it probably does not matter, but it is a theologian's lot to be troubled by such questions. Certainly Taylor leaves a great deal unsaid, but at the same time he writes beautifully and says more than most

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