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SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

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

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

EDITORS: THE REVD DR ALISTAIR I. WILSON, HIGHLAND THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, HIGH STREET, DINGWALL, IV15 9HA & THE REVD ALASDAIR I. MACLEOD, 5 CHAMBERS PLACE, ST ANDREWS, KY16 8RQ

REVIEW EDITOR: THE REVD DR IAIN D. CAMPBELL, Free Church Of Scotland, Vatisker, Isle Of Lewis HS2 OLN (Books and reviews to Rutherford House)

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President: Professor I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen

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Secretary: The Revd Canon Peter Cook, Bel Abri, Leadgate, Alston, Cumbria CA9 3EL Tel. 01434 381873

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EDITORIAL

If I may be allowed to begin my first Editorial with some personal reflection, it is a particular privilege to take on the rôle of Editor of the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* for several reasons:

First, one of my earliest encounters with an academic journal as an undergraduate theology student was with a copy of *SBET*. Although I cannot pretend to have understood a great deal of the theological discussion, I began to see something of the value of the focus and immediacy of journal articles. I also greatly appreciated the extensive review section, which not only helped me to make wiser book purchases as a rookie theological student but also helped to turn me into a compulsive review reader and writer! I hope that *SBET* will continue to guide, inform and enthuse the novice as well as the seasoned theologian.

Second, I am delighted, once again, to have a more formal association with the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society, which provided me with a context in which I could not only hear constructive theological reflection and develop critical thinking, but also meet with others who shared a concern for evangelical theology in Scotland (and beyond) and learn something of what it means to do theology in community. I trust that the society will go from strength to strength and I look forward to including papers from the SETS annual conference in future editions.

Third, I am honoured to take the mantle from my esteemed teacher, Alasdair I. Macleod. Alasdair has been a mentor and friend since my student days in the Free Church College, graciously sparing time to a talkative student who could only (it surely must have seemed) talk about New Testament studies. I am delighted that he will continue to serve as an associate editor.

Fourth, it is a pleasure to work with a wider team of highly competent colleagues, working within the Church and the Academy in Scotland. I believe we share a concern for careful theological reflection that has the good of the Church at heart.

As I write this, the year 2004 is only two and a half weeks old. That we should now be living in the year 2004 is quite amusing to one who, as a child, watched a science-fiction television programme called *Space 1999*. Thankfully, I am still able to enjoy a tasty meal in the twenty-first century rather than the pills and pastes which the science-fiction writers envisaged!

That we should live in a time which is identified as 2004 years from the birth of Jesus Christ (even if the mathematics is a few years adrift!) might lead Christians to believe that things will continue as they always have done. How mistaken, we may think, were those throughout the ages who anticipated the return (or 'parousia', meaning 'presence') of Jesus in their lifetime. And so, in our determination not to fall into the same trap, the people of God of today may well dismiss from our day-to-day experience any thought of Jesus' return, relegating discussion of the parousia of Jesus to those moments when we feel in need of a rip-roaring argument about 'the rapture' or 'the Millennium'.

I suspect that if Paul had been told towards the end of his life in the mid-60s AD that Jesus would not have returned by the beginning of the year 2004 AD, he would have been surprised. I do not believe, however, that it would have led him to despair, because Paul (no doubt following Jesus' own words) always recognised that his responsibility was not to know God's timetable for Jesus' return but to be prepared for it. But neither, I believe, would this news have led him to complacency. As he writes to his colleague Timothy towards the end of his final letter (2 Timothy 4:1-8), written perhaps some 30 to 35 years after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, he charges Timothy in the strongest of terms to carry out a task which will occupy him still for an undefined period into the future. Yet, he does so by charging Timothy 'before God and Christ Jesus who is coming to judge the living and the dead' and calling him to live out his ministry in the light of his 'appearing' (*epiphaneia*, 4:1, 8). As Paul describes his own experience, it is clear that this has much more than academic significance for him. Rather, he has lived and lives in hope of the 'crown of righteousness', the victory wreath which will be awarded to him in person by the Lord for whom he has longed. Like a highly focused athlete (*cf.* 4:7), Paul's delight in this face-to-face encounter has been his motivation through all the arduous course he has completed.

I wonder what impact it may have had on Timothy's ministry, if he lived in the light of Jesus' return as Paul did. I wonder what impact it might have on our lives and ministries if we did so too, even in the year 2004. Will we really be among those who 'have loved his appearing' (4:8)?

In this number

We begin with a fresh perspective on the so-called 'New Perspective' from Professor Donald Macleod of the Free Church College in Edinburgh, who

argues that Luther may have had stronger support for his views on Jewish theology than some modern scholars have claimed.

From ancient Jewish literature, we are led into the recent contentious debate concerning the 'Openness of God' by Professor Stephen Williams of Union Theological College, Belfast, who raises important questions not only about the portrayal of God found in certain 'Open Theism' writings but also about how discussion of the serious issues which are undoubtedly at stake should be framed.

We are glad to welcome an article by the Revd Ivor Macdonald of Skye, who provides some theological reflection on 'the land' – an issue of considerable contemporary importance in the part of Scotland where he ministers, and of significance well beyond these borders.

The fourth article comes from Michael Bird, a PhD candidate at the University of Queensland in Australia, who surveys the way in which recent literature has related the resurrection of Jesus to justification, before providing fresh exegesis of some significant Pauline passages to support his own proposal.

Finally, the Revd David Strain, who has recently begun pastoral ministry in a new charge in London, provides biblical-theological reflection on church planting.

The Editors trust that these articles will so inform, encourage, stimulate and provoke readers that they will be of benefit to the Church and will enable readers to clarify further their thinking on these important topics. If they result in future articles for *SBET*, so much the better!

Alistair I. Wilson

THE NEW PERSPECTIVE: PAUL, LUTHER AND JUDAISM

DONALD MACLEOD, PRINCIPAL, FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

The phrase 'The New Perspective on Paul' was first used by Professor James D. G. Dunn, who chose it as the title of his 1982 Manson Memorial Lecture.¹ Ever since, he has been one of its foremost proponents, but, as he himself was quick to acknowledge, its real architect was E. P. Sanders, whose *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (published in 1977)² had broken the mould into which descriptions of Paul's life and theology had been poured for centuries. Krister Stendahl, however, had already given Pauline studies a severe jolt with his seminal article, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West'.³ Other scholars quickly adopted the new perspective, most notable among them being N. T. Wright, who gave it a qualified endorsement as early as 1978⁴ and continued to use it as the foundation of a series of major Pauline studies.⁵ Soon, the New Perspective had precipitated what Douglas Moo called 'an avalanche of print'.⁶ Much of this 'avalanche' is safe only for experts in Second Temple and Tannaitic Judaism, but the New Perspective also has clear implications for historical and systematic theology. It has particularly serious implications for the Confessional theology (and hence the preaching) of Protestantism. If Stendahl, Sanders, Dunn and Wright are

¹ Subsequently reprinted in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 65 (1983), pp. 95-122.

² E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London, 1977).

³ Reprinted in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 78-96. First published in *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963), pp. 78-96.

⁴ See Wright's article, 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith' in the *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978), pp. 61-88.

⁵ Most notably, *The Climax of the Covenant* (London, 1991); 'Romans and the Theology of Paul', in D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson (eds), *Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis), pp. 30-67; and *The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections* (The New Interpreter's Bible, Nashville, 2002, Vol. 10), pp. 393-770.

⁶ Douglas Moo, 'Paul and the Law in the Last Ten Years', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1987), pp. 287-307. The words quoted occur on p. 288.

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correct, Luther and Calvin were profoundly wrong, Protestant theologians have seriously miscued the whole doctrine of salvation and Protestant creeds and pulpits have been preaching a flawed message.

JUDAISM A RELIGION OF GRACE

In the first instance the New Perspective is not so much a new perspective on Paul as a new perspective on Judaism. Here, the lines of battle are clearly drawn. The Old Perspective is that of Martin Luther, who, driven by his 'introspective conscience' drew a sharp contrast between Judaism and Christianity, attributing to the former the worst features of medieval Catholicism. Christianity was a religion of grace; Judaism was a religion of law, proclaiming salvation by works and urging men and women to build up a balance of merit by performing 'works of torah', thus ensuring that their good deeds outweighed their bad deeds.

Sanders rejects this as a travesty of Judaism, and argues the opposite: far from being a legalistic religion of 'works righteousness' Judaism was a religion of grace. Israel's faith was rooted in divine election, and this was a matter of mercy, not of human achievement. You did not earn membership of the covenant people by keeping the Torah. The Torah was for those who were already *in*, by grace. The Law was about 'staying in', not about 'getting in'; and even staying in did not require perfect compliance with the Law. It required, instead, what Sanders called 'covenantal nomism', and one key element of this was that it actually provided for infringements of the Torah. There was a covenant way of dealing with breaches of the Law. You made atonement (through the cultic sacrifices) and you repented.

Sanders was not the first to question Luther's portrayal of Judaism. Thirty years earlier, W. D. Davies had warned against the tendency to contrast Pauline Christianity as a religion of faith and the Spirit with Rabbinic Judaism as 'a religion of obedience and the Torah'.⁷ Davies himself was following in the footsteps of G. F. Moore who, as early as 1927, spoke of the prejudice with which many scholars referred to Judaism and described that prejudice as a Protestant inheritance from Luther's controversy with Catholicism. Moore went on to assert that 'a lot in the world to come' (the closest approximation in Judaism to the Christian idea of salvation) 'is ultimately assured to every Israelite on the ground of the original election of the people by the free grace of God, prompted not by its merits, collective or individual, but solely by God's love.... These facts

⁷ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 3rd edition, 1970 [1st edition 1948]), p. 221.

are ignored when Judaism is set in antithesis to Christianity.... If the one is grace, so is the other.’⁸

We should note, however, that if Luther was driven by an introspective conscience, the modern Christian West has its own problem of conscience: the Jewish Holocaust. There is little doubt that one force driving the New Perspective is real sensitivity to the possibility that Nazi anti-semitism grew on the root of Lutheran anti-Judaism. This is reflected in, for example, N. T. Wright’s approach to Romans 9-11:

If this section is ignored or downplayed, there is an open and often-travelled road towards anti-semitism. A case can be made out, in fact, for saying that the standard Protestant exegesis of Romans, in which Romans 9-11 was marginalized, robbed the church of the best weapon it could have had for identifying and combating some of the worst evils of the Third Reich.... No one who has followed the main movements of modern theology will need reminding how important these issues have been in the post-holocaust re-evaluation of the church’s relationship to Judaism.⁹

Jurgen Moltmann shows a similar sensitivity, although from a different perspective. He is anxious lest his emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ be seen as anti-Judaism: ‘Christian-Jewish dialogue today must be a tentative dialogue – especially in Germany – for it is a dialogue between the sufferers and the guilty.’¹⁰

Yet contrition for the Holocaust cannot by itself offer a total explanation for either the emergence of the New Perspective or the welcome accorded to it. As P. S. Alexander points out, ‘It is surely significant that most of these scholars have either been Christians of

⁸ G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Oxford, 1927-30), Vol. 2, pp. 93, 94, 95.

⁹ *The Climax of the Covenant*, p. 233. Cf. Wright’s later comment: ‘It was not merely neo-paganism, but Christian complicity with neo-paganism, that sent millions of Jews to their deaths in our own century’ (*Ibid.*, p. 253).

¹⁰ J. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (London, 1990), p. xvii. Cf. Stuhlmacher’s comment on the background to the New Perspective: ‘We must also keep in mind the apparent goal of these authors to make a new beginning in Pauline interpretation, so as to free Jewish-Christian dialogue from improper accusations against the Jewish conversation partners’ (P. Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification*, [Downers Grove, 2001], p. 34).

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liberal Protestant background or Jews arguably influenced by liberal Protestant ideas.’¹¹ Such a background would provide little sympathy with classical Lutheranism. Instead, it would predispose them to see their own Liberalism reflected from the bottom of the rabbinic well. It would then be tempting to minimise the differences between Judaism and Christianity and in particular to play down any suggestion that the one faith is superior to the other.

This meshes well with the post-holocaust theme. The psychology of modern European theology sees it as part of our collective repentance to mute our criticism of Jewish theology and to replace ‘mission’ to the Jews with dialogue; and at the same time Liberal Protestantism is happy to see Christianity as no more than a new phase or dispensation of Judaism. Krister Stendahl clearly reflects this when he speaks of Paul’s Damascus Road experience as not a ‘conversion’ but a ‘calling’. Saul of Tarsus did not give up his ancestral faith. He remained a Jew, but one called to engage in mission to the Gentiles; and by the same token his converts, the Gentile Christians, were in reality ‘honorary Jews’.¹²

But not all those who sympathise with the New Perspective share this assessment of the relation between Judaism and Christianity. N. T. Wright, for example, is fully aware that since the holocaust, ‘Shrill voices from all sides’ denounce Christian missions to Jews on the ground that ‘to say that Jesus is the true Messiah for Jews as well as Gentiles is to be implicitly anti-semitic or at least anti-Judaic, hinting that Judaism is somehow incomplete’.¹³ Wright sees this as running exactly counter to Paul’s argument in Romans 9-11, where the apostle’s whole concern is to demonstrate that Gentile Christians have not ‘replaced’ Jews as the true people of God and that the church has not become ‘an exclusively gentile possession’. In fact, Wright sees the anti-missions position as profoundly ironic:

Precisely because the gospel stands athwart all ethnic claims, the church cannot erect a new racial boundary. The irony of this is that the late twentieth century, in order to avoid anti-semitism, has advocated a position

¹¹ From an essay, ‘Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature’, in D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien and M. A. Seifrid (eds), *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, Vol. 1 (Tübingen and Grand Rapids, 2001), p. 271. Besides Sanders, Alexander has in mind such scholars as G. F. Moore, S. Schechter and C. G. Montefiore.

¹² K. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia, 1976) p. 9, p. 37.

¹³ *The Climax of the Covenant*, p. 253.

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(the non-evangelisation of the Jews) which Paul regards precisely as anti-semitic.¹⁴

There is also another balancing factor. As G. F. Moore points out, Judaism itself was a missionary religion and as such extremely successful in securing proselytes. This itself rested on the principle of exclusiveness: if Yahweh was the one true God then Judaism was the one true religion and all others were false. This is the main reason that Judaism posed such a problem to the legislators of the Roman Empire. In that world all sorts of religions existed amicably and respectfully beside each other. The Jews didn't fit into this. They saw Judaism as destined to become the one universal faith and regularly commented scathingly on the idolatry, folly and viciousness of other religions.¹⁵

Nothing can detract from the horror of the Holocaust, and the church cannot lightly absolve itself of responsibility. But we must avoid the opposite error of portraying Judaism as all sweetness and light, free from the stigma of intolerance. Judaism itself could be a persecuting religion: indeed, under such leaders as Saul of Tarsus it came within an ace of destroying Christianity in its cradle. Admittedly, Jews alone were excluded from the universal toleration practised by Rome, but this 'was chiefly because they alone were intolerant'.¹⁶ When it became clear that Christians saw themselves as the true heirs to the covenant, Jesus as the only Lord and faith in Christ as the only way to salvation, they quickly fell victims to this very intolerance.

LUTHER

There can be no denying that Martin Luther saw Judaism as a legalistic religion which encouraged its adherents to believe in salvation by works. In Luther's later years this degenerated into fierce anti-semitism.¹⁷ Yet

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 253. The italics are Wright's.

¹⁵ See, for example, N. T. Wright's observation that in his indictment of paganism in Romans 1:18-32 Paul 'draws extensively on traditional Jewish critiques of the pagan world'. (*The Letter to the Romans*, p. 428).

¹⁶ G.F. Moore. *Judaism*, Vol. 1, p. 323.

¹⁷ On Luther's anti-semitism see G. Keith, *Hated Without a Cause?* (Carlisle, 1997), pp. 149-74. Keith warns against equating Luther's attitude with that of the Third Reich, arguing that the Reformer 'never envisaged attacks on the persons of the Jews'. Nevertheless, Luther did allow himself to write, 'Dear Christian, be on your guard against the Jews, who... are consigned by the wrath of God to the devil, who has not only robbed them of a proper

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there is no reason to think that he ever abandoned his belief (expressed particularly in his Commentary on Romans 11:28) that 'the Jews at the end of the world will return to the faith'.¹⁸ It is notable, too, that his negative comments in the great soteriological commentaries (*Romans and Galatians*) are seldom directed at Judaism as such and certainly not at Judaism exclusively. The real target is the medieval religion of merit, identified with 'the sophists and the scholastics'. Judaism is targeted only by analogy. For example, commenting on Galatians 3:13 he writes, 'no sophist or legalist or Jew or fanatic or anyone else speaks this way'.

In the 'Argument' to the same Commentary he writes:

So it is that the Turks perform different works from the papists, and the papists perform different works from the Jews. And so forth. But although some do works that are more splendid, great and difficult than others, the content remains the same, and only the quality is different. That is, the works vary only in appearance and in name. For they are still works. And those who do them are not Christians; they are hirelings, whether they are called Jews, Mohammedans, papists or sectarians.¹⁹

This same pattern appears in Melancthon's *Loci Communes*, where the real target is not Judaism specifically but 'the godless sophist professors of theology' or 'the common run of sophists'.²⁰ Neither Luther nor Melancthon had any pretensions to being experts on Tannaitic Judaism: they drew with a broad brush. More recent Lutherans have been both better informed and more specific. Bultmann, for example, remarking that the fundamental idea of the Jewish ethic is blind obedience, writes:

understanding of Scripture, but also of ordinary human reason, shame, and sense, and only works mischief with Holy Scripture through them. Therefore, they cannot be trusted and believed in any other matter either' (cited by Keith, p. 159).

¹⁸ Luther's *Works* (Saint Louis, 1972), Vol. 25, p. 429.

¹⁹ *Works*, Vol. 26, p. 10. Cf. Luther's comments in *The Freedom of a Christian*, referring to those who, 'having no faith, boast of, prescribe, and insist upon their ceremonies as means of justification': 'Such were the Jews of old, who were unwilling to learn how to do good. These [the Christian] must resist, do the very opposite, and offend them boldly lest by their impious view they drag many with them into error. In the presence of such men it is good to eat meat, break the fasts, and for the sake of liberty of faith do other things which they regard as the greatest of sins' (*Works*, Vol. 31, p. 373).

²⁰ W. Pauck (ed.), *Melancthon and Bucer* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 74, 89 (Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 19).

Along with this view, belief in the *meritoriousness* of conduct according to the Law easily established itself. In fact the dependence on good works, the pride in good works, evidently played a fatal part in late Judaism. The religious man expects to be able to call God's attention to his merits, he believes that he has a claim on God.²¹

Calvin and Calvinism fully endorsed Luther's doctrine of justification, including its critique of Judaism. For example, commenting on Romans 2:25 Calvin wrote: 'The Jews thought that circumcision was of itself sufficient for the purpose of obtaining righteousness.... With regard to the Pharisees, who are content with making an external pretence of holiness, we need not wonder that they so easily delude themselves.'²²

For the most part, Calvin's dialogue, like Melancthon's, is with 'our opponents', under such soubriquets as 'the schools of Sorbonne'.²³ Yet there were significant differences between Lutheranism and Calvinism. It would be foolhardy to claim that the Reformed churches have never been tainted by anti-semitism, but they have certainly produced a fair number of Judeo-philes. Some of these Judeo-philes have been premillennialists such as Andrew Bonar and Robert McCheyne.²⁴ Others, such as the English Presbyterian, Adolph Saphir, have themselves been of Jewish background. Saphir, who along with Dr Alfred Edersheim was profoundly influenced by Dr John Duncan's mission to Jews in Budapest (1841-43), was particularly careful not to exaggerate the legalism of the Pharisees: 'Do not think that the Pharisees were all hypocrites. They were all in danger of becoming hypocrites, and some of them were hypocrites, but many of them were godly, religious, earnest men, and they truly revered the Scriptures, and had a zeal for God.'²⁵ On the other side of the Atlantic,

²¹ R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (London, 1958), p. 56. A similar modern Lutheran perspective appears in Ernst Kasemann's essay, 'Paul and Israel': 'religion always provides man with his most thorough-going possibility of confusing an illusion with God. Paul sees this possibility realised in the devout Jew: inasmuch as the announcement of God's will in the law is here misunderstood as a summons to human achievement and therefore as a means to a righteousness of one's own' (*New Testament Questions of Today*, London, 1969, p. 184).

²² Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (Carlisle, 1995), p. 55.

²³ Calvin, *Institutes* (J. T. McNeill, ed., Philadelphia, 1960), III.xv.7.

²⁴ See A. A. Bonar and R. M. McCheyne, *Narrative of a Visit to the Holy Land* (Edinburgh, 1842).

²⁵ Adolph Saphir, *The Divine Unity of Scripture* (London, 1892), p. 98.

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Dr J. Gresham Machen was uttering a similar caution: 'Exaggerations certainly should be avoided; there are certainly many noble utterances to be found among the sayings of the Jewish teachers; it is not to be supposed that formalism was unrelieved by any manifestations of goodness of the heart.'²⁶

Such Judaeo-philía has not led to any let-up in anti-pharisaic polemic, but it has certainly limited anti-semitism in countries such as Scotland where the Reformed influence was strong. This has been openly acknowledged by Jews themselves. For example, David Daiches, the son of an Edinburgh rabbi, records his father's warm feelings for Scotland as 'one of the few countries in Europe... where the Jews had never been persecuted', and his constant assumption 'of the closest natural sympathy between Scottish Presbyterians and Jews'.²⁷ But this was not due merely to natural Scottish tolerance. It rested on the deeply held belief that the Jews were still central to God's purpose. They were not his 'ancient people', but, quite simply, his people. This was the impetus behind Presbyterian missions to the Jews. They were not a gesture of hostility towards Judaism, but a commitment to working in harmony with God's plan to save 'all Israel'.²⁸ Whether such a missiology is biblically justified may, of course, be debated, but it is at least a far cry from anti-semitism.

Of far greater theological significance, however, was Calvinism's radically different attitude to the Law. For Lutheranism, the Law had two functions: one civil, the other theological.

The first understanding and use of the law is to restrain the wicked.... The other use of the law is the theological or spiritual one, which serves to increase transgressions. This is the primary purpose of the Law of Moses, that through it sin might grow and be multiplied, especially in the conscience. Paul discusses this magnificently in Rom.7. Therefore the true function and the chief and proper use of the Law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, judgement, and the well-deserved wrath of God. Yet this use of the Law is completely unknown to the hypocrites, the sophists in the

²⁶ J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (Grand Rapids, 1947), p. 178.

²⁷ D. Daiches, *Two Worlds* (Edinburgh, 2nd edition, 1997), p. 97.

²⁸ See, for example, the remark of Bonar and McCheyne (*op. cit.*, p. 322): 'there is no country under heaven to which Christians turn with such a lively interest as Immanuel's land... those who love Israel bear it upon their hearts, because its name is inwoven with the coming conversion of Israel'.

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universities, and to all men who go along in the presumption of the righteousness of the Law or of their own righteousness.²⁹

This is the classic Lutheran understanding of the law as 'the schoolmaster' who leads us to Christ. The law reveals sin, convicts of sin and thus drives us away from all self-righteousness into the arms of the Saviour.³⁰

Calvin fully endorsed these two uses of the law, but he would not have endorsed Luther's protests that the law has nothing to do with Christians.³¹ On the contrary, his doctrine of the 'third use' of the law insists strenuously on its applicability to believers: 'The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns.'³² This is a conscious rejection of the views of those who argue that in respect of believers the law is completely abrogated. Instead, says Calvin, it is the law which shows us on a daily basis what the will of God is; and it is the law which incites us to obedience: 'The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work. Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh the law remains a constant sting that will not let him stand still.'³³

This immediately alerts us to the fact that the Torah may play a far more significant role in Calvinism than it does in Lutheranism. It also creates an instant possibility that Calvinism can assimilate the notion of 'covenantal nomism' in a way that Lutheranism never could: a possibility which requires further exploration.

²⁹ Luther, *Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 308ff. (commenting on Galatians 3:19). Cf. Melancthon (*op. cit.*, p.79): 'the work of the law is to kill and to damn, to reveal the root of our sin, and to perplex us. It mortifies not only avarice and desire, but the root of all evils, our love of self, the judgement of reason, and whatever good our nature seems to possess.'

³⁰ See Luther on Galatians 3:24: 'with its whippings it drives us to Christ, just as a good teacher whips, trains and disciplines his pupils in reading and writing with the purpose of bringing them to a knowledge of the liberal arts and of other good things, so that eventually they may do with pleasure what initially, when they were forced to do it by the teacher, they did involuntarily' (*Works*, Vol. 26, p. 346).

³¹ 'The righteousness of the heart ignores all laws, not only those of the pope but also those of Moses' (*Works*, Vol. 26, p. 226).

³² Calvin, *Institutes*, II.vii.12. This is reflected in the Westminster Confession. Cf. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

³³ *Institutes*, II.vii.12.

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E. P. SANDERS

But despite these qualifications historic Lutheranism and historic Calvinism stand shoulder to shoulder on the core issue: the Judaism confronted by the Apostle Paul was a form of legalism. Has the work of Sanders rendered this view untenable?

We must note, first of all, that Sanders' portrayal of Judaism would serve as an entirely accurate description of Old Testament religion. This was no legalism. It was a faith rooted firmly in election, mercy and grace. This is clearly emphasised in the giving of the Decalogue itself. Israel was not redeemed from Egypt because it had kept the Torah. It would keep the Torah because it had been redeemed: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me' (Exod. 20:2, RSV). Here, the indicatives of salvation take clear precedence over the imperatives of the law. Salvation comes before works.

The same note is sounded in the affirmation of Israel's election in Deuteronomy 7:7-8: 'It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers...'

The piety of Israel clearly grasped this principle. In Psalm 51, for example, the covenant-breaker, David, knows with absolute certainty that there can be no legalistic or cultic atonement for his sin: 'For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldest not be pleased' (Ps. 51:16). Instead, his whole trust is in the mercy of God: 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions' (Ps. 51:1). This explains why Calvin can speak of the Old Testament as established by the free mercy of God and of the Jews as 'those to whom the doctrine of the righteousness of faith was imparted'.³⁴ These sentiments are echoed in the Westminster Confession: 'The justification of believers under the Old Testament was... one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament' (*Westminster Confession*, 11.6). This, of course, is the precise argument which Paul *appears* to be using in Romans 4:1-12 and Galatians 3:6-18. Abraham and David were both justified by faith, apart from works of law.³⁵

³⁴ *Institutes*, II.x.4.

³⁵ This exegesis has been challenged by, for example, N. T. Wright, who categorically dismisses the idea that Romans 4 is 'an Old Testament proof'

The second point to be made is that Sanders has no difficulty finding rabbinic sources from which he can quote statements to the effect, for example, that some rabbis kept the indicatives and the imperatives well balanced and in the right order; that entrance into the covenant was prior to keeping the commandments; that God first chose Israel and only then required her obedience; that disobedience as such did not remove one from the covenant; and that God's justice always gives way to his mercy whenever the two conflict. He can even argue that rabbinic thought is dominated by the idea of God's love rather than by the idea of his justice.

This does not prove, however, that there was no legalism in Jewish thought. Even less does it prove that the Judaisers with whom Paul was in conflict were not legalists. Judaism, like Christianity, embraces a wide range of opinions, and even if the evangelical note was dominant there may well have been other voices much more legalistic in tone. These voices may have been very influential in the circles in which Paul (and Jesus) moved. To some extent, Sanders himself concedes this: 'The possibility cannot be completely excluded that there were Jews accurately hit by the polemic of Matt. 23, who attended only to trivia and neglected the weightier matters. Human nature being what it is, one supposes that there were some such. One must say, however, that the surviving Jewish literature does not reveal them.'³⁶

This last sentence cleverly excludes the Gospels (and possibly Paul) from the body of relevant evidence. Leaving that aside, however, the force of the whole argument is considerably weakened by Sanders' own admission (on the very same page) with regard to the paucity of sources for Judaism prior to 70 AD:

We have not discussed the Pharisees and Sadducees as such, for example, but only the surviving literature. It seems to me quite possible that we not only have no Sadducean literature, but also virtually no Pharisaic literature, apart from fragments embedded in the Rabbinic material. Thus I know a good deal less about Pharisaism than has been 'known' by many investigators.³⁷

Because of these gaps in the literature, our knowledge of Judaism in the time of Paul is, according to Sanders, almost entirely inferential. We have to 'hypothesise' that covenantal nomism was the basic *type* of religion known to Paul and Jesus because it is maintained so consistently in the

of justification by faith. See Wright's essay, 'Romans and the Theology of Paul', in D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson (eds), *Pauline Theology*, p. 39.

³⁶ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 426.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

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sources available from 200 BC to 200 AD. For the same reason we have to say that 'the Judaism of before 70 kept grace and works in the right perspective, did not trivialise the commandments of God and was not especially marked by hypocrisy'.³⁸

At this point, however, Sanders' argument faces two difficulties, not necessarily fatal, but nevertheless significant.

First: is it safe to assume such consistency within Judaism between, for example, the time of Paul and the era of the Tannaim? Certainly, Rabbinic Judaism has remained remarkably consistent since the end of the second century AD. But it may not always have been so. There is some evidence that the 'Common Judaism' of the post-Tannaitic period was preceded by a period when there was 'a conglomeration of many competing Judaisms'.³⁹ Besides, even if there was uniformity in the pre-Tannaite period, we cannot simply assume that the Rabbis reproduced it. Moore asserts, for example, that the task of the Tannaites was 'one of conservation, not of reformation'.⁴⁰ But what impact did the destruction of the Temple have on Judaism? We know that it rendered for ever impossible the offering of piacular sacrifice and thus made imperative the formulation of a doctrine of atonement by repentance alone. This was a paradigm shift, by any standards. What other adjustments followed in its wake?

Then there is the question of the impact which Christianity itself had on Judaism. We know, for example, that in the light of Christian use of the Septuagint the Jews commissioned and adopted the version of Aquila. Were there other changes? In particular, did the Tannaim, in response to the criticisms of Paul, modify their soteriology to give more emphasis to grace and less to the merit of obeying the Torah?

The second difficulty is that it is by no means clear that the post-70 Jewish sources are as uniform as Sanders assumes. To some extent this is a question of methodology. Following G. F. Moore, advocates of the New Perspective wish to give primacy to the official Tannaitic literature. Moore insists that, 'Judaism may properly claim to be represented by the teachers and the writings which it has always regarded as in the line of its catholic

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

³⁹ The phrase is from R. Deines, in Carson *et al* (eds), *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, p. 444. Commenting on the Tannaitic literature, P. S. Alexander makes a similar point: 'It is important to realize at the very outset of our enquiry that these texts do not represent the sum-total of Judaism in the first few centuries of the current era, or even, necessarily, Jewish "orthodoxy" at this time. This literature is the product of one particular party or movement within Judaism' (*Ibid.*, p. 262).

⁴⁰ G. F. Moore, *Judaism*, Vol. 1, p. 131.

tradition.’⁴¹ One problem with this is that this ‘catholic tradition’ was launched only after 70 AD. A second, and more important, problem is that it requires us to discount the numerous other Jewish writings which have come down to us from the very same period, on the ground that they are ignored in the Tannaitic literature and in the Talmud.

This is very convenient for the New Perspective, since some of this literature reflects points of view much closer to Luther’s impression of Judaism. This is particularly true of the literature which has survived from the period immediately following 70 AD: most notably, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse of Baruch and Josephus.⁴² Sanders is aware that these embarrass his central thesis. He virtually ignores the *Apocalypse of Baruch* and he dismisses 4 Ezra with the words, ‘in IV Ezra one sees how Judaism works when it actually does become a religion of individual self-righteousness. In IV Ezra, in short, we see an instance in which covenantal nomism has collapsed. All that is left is legalistic perfectionism.’⁴³

Sanders’ solution is to note that this ‘legalistic perfectionism’ is ‘contrary to the generally prevailing view’. Moore takes a similar line: ‘inasmuch as these writings have never been recognised by Judaism, it is a fallacy of method for the historian to make them a primary source for the eschatology of Judaism, much more to contaminate its theology with them’.⁴⁴ But although the Pseudepigrapha were never incorporated into canonical Judaism as defined by the Tannaim after 70 AD, they may nevertheless have had considerable popular influence. Indeed, Moore himself concedes that, ‘From such books the historian gets glimpses of the religion of the times outside the schools.’⁴⁵ It may have been in precisely such quarters that the opposition to Paul arose, and we have no right to conclude that, prior to 70 AD, it represented only an insignificant minority of Jews.

A moment’s reflection on the history of Christian theology should be sufficient to warn us of the risk involved in arguing that a religious community could not have held certain beliefs or observed certain practices because they are out of keeping with their creed (in the case of Paul and Judaism, a creed 100 years later than the period under review). Christianity

⁴¹ *Judaism*, Vol. 1, p. 127.

⁴² For an informed discussion of the significance of these documents see Simon Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 2002) pp. 136-60.

⁴³ Sanders, *Palestinian Judaism*, p. 409.

⁴⁴ Moore, *Judaism*, Vol. 1, p. 127.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

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prides itself on being a religion of grace and has enshrined that in centuries of hymnody. Yet a recent televised rendering of the great Christmas hymn, *The First Noell*, dared to insert the following:

If we in this life do well
We shall be free from death and hell.

Reformed theology has sometimes suffered similar infiltrations. All its great creeds and all its representative theologians clearly set forth a religion of grace: eternal, unconditional love; justification by faith alone; preservation ('staying in') by divine power. Yet it would be perilous to argue from the mere existence and unanimity of such authorities that legalism never infiltrated the Reformed community; even more perilous to argue that no one could ever have accused it of harbouring legalism because its creeds explicitly disavow it. Nor has that legalism been confined to the usual suspects, such as the Sabbatarians of the Western Isles. Take, for example, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. This is a full-blooded statement of Protestant Theology, contemporaneous with the Westminster Confession of Faith. Yet already there is a clear awareness that legalism has reared its head within the Reformed community. One of Evangelista's dialogue partners is Nomista. His very name and presence are testimony that even as early as 1646 Calvin's doctrine of the Third Use of the Law was being perverted in a way that threatened the evangelical heritage of the Reformation. Nomista speaks as follows:

God requires that every Christian should frame and lead his life according to the rule of the Ten Commandments; the which if he do, then may he expect the blessing of God both upon his own soul and body; and if he do not, then can he expect nothing else but his wrath and course upon both.⁴⁶

The later discussion in the *Marrow* shows that Nomista saw himself as depending for salvation on a Covenant of Works, seeking to please God by 'strict walking according to the law'. It would be vain to argue that Nomista is an impossible caricature on the ground that Reformed theology

⁴⁶ *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, edited, with notes, by Thomas Boston [1726], (Edinburgh, 1818), pp. 27f. Boston's Preface includes a comment from Thomas Halyburton: 'I dread mightily that a rational sort of religion is coming in among us; I mean by it, *a religion that consists in a bare attendance on outward duties and ordinances*' (italics mine).

has been consistently anti-legalistic.⁴⁷ It would also be risky to suppose that the legalistic Calvinist is a rarity or that the Protestant pulpit has always been faithful to Luther's doctrine of justification. Whatever the clarity of the official Protestant doctrine, there can be little doubt that the piety of many Protestants was heavily tainted with a doctrine of justification by works. This is one reason why so many (unlike Luther and Calvinism) had problems with assurance. Whatever their creeds might say, 'grace' suffered from fatal admixtures of self-righteousness. In all probability there was a similar disconformity between Tannaitic teaching and other streams within Judaism.

Sanders might reply, however, that Nomista is a documented figure and that there is no such documented figure within Palestinian Judaism.

Part of the answer to this is that it begs the question. The non-Tannaitic literature of Judaism may provide precisely such documentation. The Gospels and the Pauline epistles may do the same. But there is a more fundamental issue. Can we simply take Sanders' case as proved and henceforth regard it as axiomatic that the religion of the Mishnah, the Midrashim, the Targums and the Talmud was one of grace: that is, one in which eternal life was entirely a matter of divine mercy to the exclusion of works?

That question can be answered only by experts in Tannaitic and later Jewish literature. There can be no denying that the New Perspective currently holds the field, but, as Douglas Moo points out,

further critical assessment of Sanders' covenantal nomism proposal is required. Many of us *Neutestamentler* feel that Sanders' proposal fails to do justice to some important elements in both Paul and Judaism, yet feel incompetent to explore the mass of Jewish material. We eagerly await the work of the next generation of scholarship in Judaism.⁴⁸

One of that new generation is Simon Gathercole, who has subjected Sanders' thesis to detailed scrutiny in *Where Is Boasting: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5*. Gathercole, following F. Avemarie,⁴⁹ is particularly critical of Sanders' use of rabbinic sources,

⁴⁷ For the opposite point of view (that Reformed theology is inherently antinomian) consider James Hog's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Luther's Jew is no more impossible (and perhaps no more typical) than Hog's Calvinist.

⁴⁸ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1987), p. 306.

⁴⁹ F. Avemarie, *Tora und Leben* (Tübingen, 1996). Unfortunately, Avemarie's work has not yet been translated into English. Gathercole's high opinion on

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arguing that far from unambiguously supporting Sanders' key concept, covenantal nomism, they actually create serious difficulties for it. Covenant language is rare in Tannaitic literature and never associated with the hope of life to come. This makes it difficult to use the covenant as an architectonic principle around which one can organise the rest of the Jewish material. But this is what Sanders does, and in the process he falls victim to his own 'systematising tendency'.⁵⁰ The paradigm of covenantal nomism excludes the idea of salvation or damnation by works, and this tempts Sanders into mishandling key elements in the rabbinic material: 'Texts that are problematic for the main thesis are *underinterpreted*, and texts that might just support it are stretched beyond their limits.'⁵¹

Gathercole, following Avemarie, cites as examples Sanders' use of three texts from Rabbi Akiba.⁵² The first asserts that the world is judged by grace, but everything is according to the majority of works. The second declares that God will incline the scale in favour of anyone who has performed just one *mitsvah*. The third lays down that anyone who does *one* of the things specified in Ezekiel 18:5-9 will live.

Sanders' response to assert that these texts provide no ground for the view that 'weighing fulfilments against transgressions constitutes rabbinic soteriology'.⁵³ Neither Gathercole nor Avemarie would dispute this. They point out, however,⁵⁴ that Sanders completely ignores the fact that each of these texts underlines the importance of *deeds* and presupposes that obedience to the commandments is the way to salvation. Indeed, the doctrine of final salvation according to works was 'an integral part of the theology of Palestinian Judaism'⁵⁵ and Sanders' refusal to face this (since there is no place for it in his system) means that his model of rabbinic soteriology is inadequate, particularly in its assessment of the link between obedience to the Torah and life in the age to come.

of it is shared by P. S. Alexander, Professor of Post-Biblical Jewish Literature at the University of Manchester, who speaks of it as 'a highly competent and subtle analysis of the rabbinic texts' (Carson *et al*, eds. *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, p. 273).

⁵⁰ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, p. 155.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.

⁵³ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 138.

⁵⁴ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, p. 152.

⁵⁵ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, p. 160.

WIDER THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

When we move from the rarefied atmosphere of Rabbinical Studies to address wider biblical and theological issues the New Perspective faces further serious difficulties.

What, for example, does Sanders mean by 'legalism'? Moises Silva appreciates the force of some of Sanders' criticism of the Old Perspective, but nevertheless regards Sanders as operating with a definition of legalism which is fuzzy and misleading.⁵⁶ Sanders' touchstone is the so-called medieval merit-system according to which one's sins and one's good deeds were weighed in the divine balance and judgement passed according to which preponderated. This was certainly a caricature of Judaism (and probably also of the medieval theologians). It also misconceived the point at issue at the Reformation. The target of the Protestant polemic was not 'balance', but self-salvation. Legalism is the idea that we win acceptance with God on the basis of something that is true about ourselves. That may be something we have done, something we have experienced, something infused into us or some privilege which distinguishes us from other people. Whatever it is, if it allows us to boast about ourselves before God it is legalism. If we deemed ourselves justified on the basis of national privilege, that would be legalism. If we deemed ourselves justified on the basis of our own covenant-keeping, that would be legalism.

Sanders operates with a much narrower definition unrelated to historical Christian theology. Indeed, according to Silva⁵⁷ he actually quotes in support of his thesis passages from (for example) Ecclesiasticus, which, to Lutheran or Protestant ears, are clearly legalistic. He prefaces these with the remark that, 'Ben Sirach shared the general belief that atonement is possible. Among good deeds, two are singled out which atone for transgression. They are honouring one's father and giving alms.'⁵⁸ He then quotes as follows:

Whoever honours his father atones for sins (*Ecclesiasticus* 3:3).

For kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
and as a substitute for sins it shall be firmly planted;
in the day of your affliction it will be remembered in your favour;
as frost in fair weather, your sins will melt away (3:14-16).

⁵⁶ Moises Silva, 'The Law and Christianity: Dunn's New Synthesis' (*Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), p. 349).

⁵⁷ Silva, *op. cit.*, p.348.

⁵⁸ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 338.

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Water extinguishes a blazing fire:
so almsgiving atones for sin (3:30).

Store up almsgiving in your treasury,
and it will rescue you from all affliction (29:12).

This, surely, brings us within a hairsbreadth of the medieval notion of Penance, with its three elements, confession, contrition and satisfaction. To Ben Sirach, almsgiving and honouring one's father are clearly potent satisfactions.

When, later, Sanders came to focus more specifically on Paul, his fuzzy understanding of legalism betrayed him yet again, although the aberration was more pardonable. One of the subtler elements in the Protestant doctrine of justification was the insistence that faith is not the *ground* of our acceptance with God. We are justified *through* faith, not *on account of* it. The latter point of view (known as Neonomianism) is represented by Neomista in the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* and, more formally, by Richard Baxter.⁵⁹ It is firmly repudiated in the Westminster Confession (11:1): 'Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth... not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness.' This refinement is not known to Sanders, who writes, for example,

God righteouses the uncircumcised and the circumcised on the same basis,
faith (33)

and again,

Abraham was not in fact righteoused by works... works would not count towards righteousness, since God counts only faith.⁶⁰

Here is the very point Protestant orthodoxy sought to avoid: the portrayal of faith itself as a meritorious work. Were Baxter's position correct, it would land us in the absurd position of putting our faith in faith itself.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See Baxter's *Imputative Righteousness Truly Stated* (London, 1679); *contra*, R. Traill, *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine of Justification*, in Traill, *Works* (reprinted Edinburgh, 1975), Vol. 1, pp. 252-96.

⁶⁰ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (London, 1983), p. 33.

⁶¹ Cf. Traill: 'this faith, in the office of justification, is neither condition, nor qualification, nor our gospel-righteousness, but in its very act a renouncing of all such pretences'.

THE PROPHETS' CRITIQUE OF OLD TESTAMENT RELIGION

But there is another infinitely more serious problem facing the New Perspective: the Old Testament prophets often spoke of the religion of their contemporaries in terms that fully match Luther's strictures on Judaism. The prophets focus on the nation's self-satisfaction, its sense of special privilege and its reliance on formal, routine performance of the less exacting demands of the Law.

Take, for example, the expression of Yahweh's displeasure in Isaiah 1:10-20, reminiscent in many ways of Paul's indictment of the Gentiles in Romans 1:18-32. The people have been indulging in useless religion: sacrifices, incense, festivals and solemn assemblies. 'I have had enough of burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts,' cries the Lord. 'I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of rams, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly' (Isa. 1:11-13). Instead, he says, 'cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow' (Isa. 1:17).

Amos sounded a similar note: 'I hate, I despise, your feasts, and take no delight in your solemn assemblies' (Amos 5:1). These so-called worshippers are the very people who are 'at ease in Sion' (6:1), enjoying the luxury of their ill-gotten gain while at the same time paying mere lip-service to the Law:

Hear this, you who trample upon the needy, and bring the poor of the land to an end, saying, 'When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the *ephah* small and the shekel great, and deal deceitfully with false balances, that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and sell the refuse of the wheat?' (Amos 8:4-6).

In Jeremiah the point of attack is Israel's sense of her own special status: she was secure because she had the temple (Jer. 7:4). The prophet warns: 'Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are delivered!"?' (Jer. 7:9f.). Yahweh will have none of it: 'therefore will I do to the house which is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh' (Jer. 7:14).

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Such passages surely raise the interesting possibility that Luther drew the inspiration for his portrayal of Judaism not from his own introspective conscience, but from the Old Testament prophets. We have to bear in mind, too, that these prophetic criticisms were not aimed at peripheral minorities in Israel and Judah. On the contrary, it was those who loved Yahweh and obeyed the voice of his servants (Isa. 50:10) who were the minority. This is Paul's 'remnant according to the election of grace', described so movingly by Zephaniah: 'I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord... they shall pasture and lie down, and none shall make them afraid' (Zeph. 3:12).

The question is, Did post-exilic Judaism undergo such a revolution that those proportions were reversed, the minority becoming the majority and securing such influence that it was the theology of the Remnant that ultimately came to be encapsulated in the so-called Common Judaism of the Tannaitic literature? That is what the New Perspective requires us to believe.

THE BAPTIST'S 'WARNING-ORACLES'

When we turn to the New Testament the first voice we hear is that of resumed prophecy in the person of John the Baptist. The critique has lost none of its edge:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming towards him, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire' (Matt. 3:7-10).

N. T. Wright asserts (twice) that such a critique is no sign that one is being 'anti-Jewish'⁶² and this is, of course, true, as is his further comment that John's 'warning-oracles' were 'a sign of deep loyalty to Israel's true God and true vocation'.⁶³ But although John was not anti-Jewish, he was certainly anti-Pharisaic and this is of real significance for the New Perspective. After the fall of Jerusalem the Sadducees became irrelevant to Judaism. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were the custodians of the oral

⁶² *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London, 1996), p. 323, fn., p. 324.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

tradition and it was that tradition which, under the Tannaim, became the core of Common Judaism. We have no reason to believe that the Gospels misrepresent them. Indeed, quite the opposite, according to G. F. Moore: 'The gospels themselves are the best witness to the religious and moral teaching of the synagogue in the middle forty years of the first century, and the not infrequent references, with approval or dissent, to the current Halakah are evidence of the rules approved in the schools of the Law and taught to the people.'⁶⁴

We are entitled, then, to take John's warnings as directed not against the Pharisees personally, but against the 'type' of religion they represented. They are the people who 'made the mistake of thinking that physical descent from Abraham granted them an automatic immunity from God's eschatological wrath'.⁶⁵ It would be hard to exaggerate the severity of John's warning. These men, the custodians and champions of what was later enshrined in the Mishnah, the Midrashim and the Talmud, were 'a brood of vipers'; and because of them, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. The axe, of course, is the axe of divine judgement, to be expressed historically in the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. The trees, however, are not merely the Pharisees, but the whole Jewish people. To return to Wright: what drove John's ministry was 'deep distress at the corruption which seemed endemic in the national life'.⁶⁶ To John, that corruption was encapsulated in Pharisaism; and it was that corruption, linked to reliance on descent from Abraham and focused on the oral tradition rather than on the written Torah, which would bring the whole nation under the judgement of God: 'Jerusalem, under its present regime, had become Babylon.'⁶⁷ If, as Sanders argues, the theology of the Pharisees was homogeneous with the 'covenantal nomism' codified by the Tannaim then we have to reckon seriously with the possibility that it was the religion bred by that very theology which, in the Baptist's judgement, exposed the nation to retribution and ruin.

JESUS AND THE PHARISEES

The tradition of prophetic critique continues unabated in the ministry of Jesus. One of his most dramatic portrayals of the Pharisees is in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14). We must be

⁶⁴ Moore, *Judaism*, Vol. 1, p. 137.

⁶⁵ D. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas, 1993), p. 50.

⁶⁶ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 324.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

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cautious, of course, in using the parables to construct a portrait of Judaism: Jesus may have drawn eccentric rather than typical figures. However, as Gathercole points out, 'the parables can embody in a *character* what theological discourse can only do with difficulty: that is, to capture the spirit of what Jesus perceived himself to be "up against"'.⁶⁸ The Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14 is one such character. In all probability Jesus had in mind a real person and although he may not necessarily have been a typical Pharisee he is at least a reminder that such Pharisees existed; and a reminder, too, that Jesus regarded them as so dangerous that he felt justified in making them the subject of a solemn warning. They were a group of religionists who trusted in their own righteousness and regarded others with contempt.

Both points are clearly emphasised in the story. The Pharisee looks God in the eye and appeals with total confidence to his own record, betraying no sense of the need for mercy and grace. On the contrary, he has complete confidence in his own righteousness. Indeed, he is a living commentary on Paul's description of his own Pharisaic days (Phil. 3:5f.): as to righteousness in terms of the law, he is blameless. He fasts twice a week and he tithes everything he buys. In both of these claims, of course, the Pharisee was going beyond the requirements of the Old Testament (the written Torah), performing what were almost exact counterparts of medieval works of supererogation. The Torah required only one annual fast (*yom kippur*): he fasted twice a week. It required tithing, but not of all purchases (such commodities as corn, wine and oil had already been tithed by the producer). The Pharisee tithed everything.

The other plank in the Pharisee's platform was his superiority to his fellow human beings and even to his fellow Jews: 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even like this tax-collector.' It would be hazardous to assume that this is an isolated instance of Pharisaic self-righteousness. Jeremias cites a similar prayer from the Talmud:

I thank thee, O Lord, my God, that thou hast given me my lot with those who sit in the house of learning, and not with those who sit at the street-corners; for I am early to work, and they are early to work; I am early to work on the words of the Torah, and they are early to work on things of no moment. I weary myself, and they weary themselves; I weary myself and profit thereby, and they weary themselves to no profit. I run, and they run; I

⁶⁸ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, p. 120.

run towards the life of the age to come, and they run towards the pit of destruction.⁶⁹

We have to remember, of course, that such humbug is not confined to Pharisaic Judaism. It is endemic to all human religion. Who can forget 'Holy Willie's Prayer':

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
 When thousands thou has left in night,
 That I am here before thy sight,
 For gifts an' grace
 A burning and a shining light
 To a' this place.

...

O Lord, thou kens what zeal I bear,
 When drinkers drink, an' swearers swear,
 And singin' there, and dancin' here,
 Wi' great an' sma';
 For I am keepit by thy fear
 Free frae them a'.

If Burns spoke a grain of truth, so, too, did Jesus (and Luther).

It is sometimes said that the point of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is that even tax-collectors are accepted by God.⁷⁰ That is, of course, a valid inference from the story. But the real focus of the parable, as Luke's editorial link makes clear, is the Pharisee as the representative of self-righteousness. The tax-collector is a foil. Yet, as Moses Silva points out, his prayer poses a real challenge to the New Perspective. The sentiment, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!' is *not* a recurring theme in the very literature that Sanders so extensively surveyed.⁷¹

In Matthew 15:1-20 (and its parallel, Mark 7:1-23) we have an account of a direct confrontation between the Pharisees and Jesus on the precise question of his relation to the oral tradition. It is noteworthy that it was they who took the initiative: 'Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem.' The religious authorities were clearly conscious of a tension between Jesus' teaching and their own. The account turns on a sharp antithesis between 'the tradition of the elders' and 'the word of God'. Jesus' disciples ate their meals without first attending to the prescribed ceremonial

⁶⁹ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London, 1963), p. 142.

⁷⁰ See, for example, I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter, 1978), p. 677.

⁷¹ 'The Law and Christianity: Dunn's New Synthesis', p. 350.

washing of the hands. This was not a requirement laid down anywhere in the Old Testament, but it was clearly laid down in the oral tradition, apparently because the Pharisees sought to apply to the ordinary domestic situation the levels of ritualistic purity required of the priests when attending to their temple duties.⁷² Since the priests were required to wash their hands (and their feet) the Pharisees wanted all Jews to do the same before eating a meal (another instance of supererogation?).

Jesus' disciples didn't, and as their rabbi he was responsible. He says nothing to rebut the charge. Instead, he makes a counter-charge: the Pharisees transgress the commandment of God for the sake of their tradition (Matt. 18:3). He cites as a specific example the Fifth Commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother.' Part of this honouring was that children had financial responsibilities towards their parents. It was possible to evade these, however, by declaring your property to be *korban* (Mark 7:11), that is, dedicated to God. According to the scribes, such a vow was absolutely binding, taking precedence over even obligations to parents. But it had one striking advantage: 'This convenient declaration apparently left the property actually still at the disposal of the one who made the vow, but deprived his parents of any right to it.'⁷³

Jesus' indictment of this 'tradition' could not have been more severe: it was nothing less than a violation of the Torah itself. They were setting tradition above the Word of God and rendering the latter utterly void (Mark 7:13).

In Matthew 23:23, the charge is not that the scribes and Pharisees evaded the law, but that they trivialised it. They tithed mint, dill and cummin, but neglected justice, mercy and faithfulness. Here again, the Pharisees seemed to be more rigorous than the Torah itself, which had required (Deut. 14:22f.) the tithing of grain, wine and oil, but had said nothing about tithing garden herbs. Jesus did not condemn such

⁷² See Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

⁷³ R. T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Leicester, 1985), p. 243. France concedes that 'later Rabbinic legislation allowed for such an oath to be waived in favour of obedience to the fifth commandment', but 'clearly it was not always waived in Jesus' day' (p. 243).

C. E. B. Cranfield (*The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, Cambridge, 1959, p. 238) offers an alternative view of the way that scribal interpretation of the law of *korban* affected compliance with the Fifth Commandment. Someone who had rashly vowed away his property, later regretted it and now wanted to use it for the benefit of his parents was prevented from doing so by the scribes' rigid interpretation of the binding nature of oaths.

scrupulosity in itself. He says, instead, 'Tithe these if you wish, but don't neglect the weightier matters of the law.' This, in his judgement, is exactly what the Pharisees were doing. Scrupulous in minor ritualistic and ceremonial detail, they were neglecting justice, mercy and faithfulness (a summary of the Law reminiscent of Micah 6:8, which defines the 'good' as acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God). These, and not the tithing of parsley, were the things that really mattered, and in view of their cavalier attitude towards them the Pharisees, in Jesus view, were no more than blind guides. He drives the point home with biting irony in verse 24. They were so punctilious in their attention to minor details that they would strain the tiniest gnat out of their drinks and yet they would swallow a camel (an animal not only large, but unclean). In other words, they would lose sleep over the slightest ritualistic irregularity, but none at all over serious acts of injustice or cruelty. Luther never said anything more scathing than that.

This has an important bearing on the question of legalism. As J. G. Machen pointed out, 'A low view of law leads to legalism in religion; a high view of law makes a man a seeker after grace.'⁷⁴ The easier we make it to keep the law the easier it becomes to delude ourselves that we have complied with it and therefore have no need of divine grace. This is what provides the impetus towards relaxing the divine standard. If we judge ourselves by whether we have acted justly, loved mercy and walked humbly before God, we shall find little ground for satisfaction. But if the criterion is whether we have tithed our mint, it is easy to produce a warm glow. The problem is by no means confined to the Pharisees. Many a Protestant reduces righteousness to wearing a hat, not using Sunday transport, being punctilious about 'quiet times' or going mechanically through prayer-notes.

If there is a Christian 'covenantal nomism' then its terms are spelt out by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, negatively in Matthew 5:20 and positively in Matthew 7:21. According to the former passage, our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. According to the latter, we must do the will of our Father who is in heaven.

Jesus leaves us in no doubt as to his attitude to the Torah. It will last as long as the universe itself; and his personal mission is not to destroy it, but to fulfil it. Matthew's account makes this point so emphatically that we can scarcely avoid the impression that rumours were current that Jesus was disrespectful to the Law. He rebuts these rumours vigorously, but even from his rebuttal it is easy to see how they could arise. The Six

⁷⁴ J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, p. 179.

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Antitheses (Matt. 5:14-48) make plain that at the very least Jesus and the Pharisees disagreed about the *interpretation* of the Torah. But at no point does he suggest either the abrogation or the relaxation of the Law. From this point of view, as Davies emphasises, the teaching of Jesus was no revolutionary or radically new phenomenon:

The Law remains in force.... To interpret on the side of stringency is not to annul the Law, but to change it in accordance with its own intention. From this point of view, we cannot speak of the Law being annulled in the antitheses, but only of its being intensified in its demand, or interpreted in a higher key.⁷⁵

Yet even in the Antitheses there is a strong under-current of anti-Pharisaism. They condemned murder, but not hate; adultery, but not lust. They loved their neighbour, but hated their enemy. It is hard to stand before such facts and draw the conclusion that the Pharisees were crypto-Christians, or Christians honorary Pharisees. Whether Christians lived up to their Lord's expectations is, of course, another matter. But his expectations were clear enough: a righteousness which exceeded that of scribes and Pharisees.

Finally, there is the case of Nicodemus, central to the whole argument yet curiously neglected. It throws into sharp and dramatic focus Jesus' view of the relationship between the Pharisees and the kingdom of God.

The story derives its force from Nicodemus' impeccable credentials. He was a Jew, of course, a member of God's elect people, chosen by divine grace and mercy. That itself would have been enough in the eyes of many to secure his participation in the kingdom. As Carson points out (citing the Mishnah), 'Predominant religious thought in Jesus' day affirmed that all Jews would be admitted to that kingdom apart from those guilty of deliberate apostasy and extraordinary wickedness.'⁷⁶ This probably explains why 'we find virtually no individual quest for salvation in Jewish literature. The question is whether or not one is an Israelite in good standing.'⁷⁷

⁷⁵ W. D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 29.

⁷⁶ D. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, 1991), p. 189.

⁷⁷ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 237. Sanders does add, however, that 'simple heredity did not ensure salvation. That came to all those Israelites who were faithful.' But this does not detract from the fact that they were born 'in'. The 'faithfulness' related to 'staying in'. Even here there is an implicit legalism. Salvation was the reward of faithfulness, but faithfulness to what? To the Torah?

But Nicodemus was not merely an Israelite. He was a Pharisee, 'the strictest party of our religion' (Acts 26:5); he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme ruling council of Judaism; and he was a teacher of Israel. Indeed, if we give the definite article its full force, he was *the* teacher of Israel: its most highly regarded theologian. As such, he was the expert when it came to defining the entry requirements for the kingdom of God.

And yet he himself does not belong to the kingdom. Jesus is almost brutally blunt. Here is someone who by all the received standards of the day had complied fully with the stipulations of covenantal nomism. To 'get in', he had to do nothing: he was born 'in'. To 'stay in', he had to accept the yoke of the Torah, repent when he failed and make appropriate cultic atonement. He had met these conditions and, by the time he went to see Jesus, no doubt as to his own spiritual security had ever troubled his mind. But that night he had doubts, not about himself, but about Jesus: for all that men were saying about him, perhaps he was, after all, 'from God'. The signs certainly pointed that way. No man could do the things that Jesus did unless God were with him.

He went, therefore, to give Jesus his endorsement. It was the beginning of a spiritual pilgrimage which would eventually lead to fully committed, risk-taking discipleship. But Jesus ignored his endorsement. Instead, he immediately changed the subject: 'Let's talk about you!' He told the great man that being a fully paid-up member of the covenant community (an Israelite, a Pharisee, a Ruler and a Teacher) was no guarantee of membership of the kingdom of God. He had to be born again, be re-created, regenerated, receive a new heart and become a new man. You entered the kingdom not as a Great One (*a rabbi*), but as a little child. 'You've never entered the kingdom!' Jesus said. 'You can't even see the kingdom! You are the Teacher of Israel ('the Reverend Professor Doctor'⁷⁸) and yet you don't know the most basic truths about entry into the kingdom.' These truths had been clearly taught by the Old Testament, particularly in such passages as Ezekiel 36:26, 'A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.' Even the *Pseudepigrapha* had sounded a similar note: 'I shall create for them a holy spirit, and I shall purify them so that they will not turn away from following me from that day and forever' (*Jubilees*, 1:23).⁷⁹ Yet here was a teacher of outstanding reputation, an expert in 'heavenly things', who was completely nonplussed by the notion

⁷⁸ Carson, *op. cit.*, p.198.

⁷⁹ J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York, 1985), Vol. 2, p. 54.

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of the new birth and sincerely believed that if you were a Jew you were 'in' (and, presumably, that if you were a Gentile you were 'out').

In effect, Jesus put Nicodemus and his fellow rabbis in the same class as the Gentiles later described by Paul: the natural (*psychikos*) man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Instead, they are folly to him (1 Cor. 2:14). Nicodemus, great rabbi and great teacher though he was, was still a 'natural' man, afflicted with fatal spiritual blindness. His only hope was that the Spirit who gave the universe its beginning (Ps. 30:6) would infuse his soul with the life of God. Little did Nicodemus suspect, then, that participation in the kingdom would mean Jesus living for ever in his heart.

CONCLUSION

Sanders was right to place question marks against Luther's account of Judaism. It could not be equated simplistically with legalism or dismissed as proto-Scholasticism. But neither was Judaism the crypto-Lutheranism or implicit Christianity that the New Perspective suggests. The tendency to self-righteousness is endemic to human nature and this makes it easy for the doctrine of self-salvation to suck all religions into its vortex. Medieval Christianity disappeared into it and so, later, did dysfunctional Protestantism. In Luther's perception the religion of the Jews had suffered the same fate, and, being who he was, he had to tell it as he saw it. In his telling, he drew his inspiration from the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist and Jesus. Modern academic discourse has higher standards of courtesy and accuracy than prevailed in Luther's day, and our greater knowledge of Tannaitic literature demands considerable fine-tuning of Luther's perspective. But this does not detract from the fact that anyone who comes from the New Testament to the Mishnah or the Talmud finds herself in a foreign world. The one is a world of *halakhah*, laying down meticulous instructions and promising life on the basis of obedience. Compared with the Old Testament, it leaves the theology untouched, but vastly expands the ethics. The other is a world of *kerygma* and *didache*, leaving the ethics untouched, but vastly expanding the theology. Above all else, the New Testament expanded the doctrine of justification, placing it in the brilliant light of incarnation and vicarious atonement. The only alternative to self-righteousness is *imputed* righteousness; and where could that be found except in a Last Adam? Judaism has none such. Every man must be his own saviour. That has bred its own moments of towering heroism and overflowing humanity. It has not brought hope to the ungodly.

MORE ON OPEN THEISM

STEPHEN WILLIAMS, UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, BELFAST

Do we need more on Open Theism?¹ A recently published exchange between Christopher Hall and John Sanders urges us to adopt a correct frame of mind in discussing this matter, for the debate has too frequently failed to display it.² It comes with commendations on this score from a broad group of theologians, commendations we must surely take to heart. In the course of this exchange, Sanders occasionally refers to the reactions he has encountered to his advocacy of OT and if his account of things is correct – which I have no reason to doubt – it is sad indeed. Important things are surely at stake in this debate, but I am not persuaded that they have always been correctly identified. What follows involves a revisit, which may appear to be a tedious re-covering of old ground. Nevertheless, I hope that it is of use. While I am myself critical of OT, I am also critical of standard criticisms, so after picking my way through those features of OT that are germane to the point that I am trying to make, I briefly turn to two of its leading critics. Finally, I suggest an agenda for future discussion.

GOD: THE PORTRAIT

It was in 1994 that a group of five authors, headed up by Clark Pinnock, published *The Openness of God*. It began:

¹ Henceforth, OT. This paper is substantially the one presented to the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society in spring, 2003 and published by request. I mention this because a piece by Iain D. Campbell, 'Open Thoughts on Open Theism', which had not appeared then, has now appeared in *SBET* 21.1 (2003). My general response to it is implicit in what I say about Bruce Ware and John Frame below.

² Christopher A. Hall and John Sanders, *Does God Have a Future? A Debate on Divine Providence* (Grand Rapids, 2003). I myself have been deemed guilty on this score: see Alan Padgett's letter in *Books & Culture* 6.1 (2000), pp. 6f. This number contains a response by John Sanders to my piece on his book, *The God Who Risks*, in the previous number of the same journal (5.6, 1999). I sought to remove misunderstandings of it in 6.2 (2000), pp. 6-8.

This book presents an understanding of God's nature and relationship with his creatures, which we call the openness of God.... God, in grace, grants humans significant freedom to cooperate with or work against God's will for their lives, and he enters into dynamic, give-and-take relationships with us. The Christian life involves a genuine interaction between God and human beings. We respond to God's gracious initiatives and God responds to our responses.... God takes risks in this give-and-take relationship, yet he is endlessly resourceful and competent in working toward his ultimate goals. Sometimes God alone decides how to accomplish these goals. On other occasions, God works with human decisions, adapting his own plans to fit the changing situation. God does not control everything that happens. Rather, he is open to receiving input from his creatures. In loving dialogue, God invites us to participate with him to bring the future into being.³

Publishing his Didsbury Lectures, delivered six years later, Pinnock expressed surprise at the furore that this book had caused, and described some of the reactions.⁴ In a robust book-length riposte to *The Openness of God*, which came out the year before these were published, Bruce Ware documented the troubles caused in the train of OT for the Baptist General Conference (USA), contrasting the doings of the Conference with the relevant responses of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵ At the time of writing, OT is and has been the subject of ongoing deliberation, at formal level, in the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS).

Two questions are apparently at stake. The first is substantive: what should we affirm about God? The second concerns the boundaries of evangelicalism: what are they? I shall not be dealing directly with the latter question here. And I shall be concentrating more on what should not than on what should be affirmed on the former question. Why that is, and why I often risk substituting assertion for argumentation, and then the interrogative for the assertive, will emerge as we go along.

In his essay on 'A Philosophical Perspective' in that original controversial volume, William Hasker referred back to the previous essay, written by Clark Pinnock. 'Any reader who does not find that picture of

³ *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois/Carlisle, 1994), p. 7. From now on, page references to volumes considered will usually be found in the text of the article.

⁴ Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids/Carlisle, 2001), 'Preface'.

⁵ Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, Illinois, 2000), pp. 21ff.

God attractive is unlikely to be convinced by any of the arguments offered in this book' (p. 150). Two things are important about this statement. The first is the distinction between picture and argument; the second the appeal to what attracts us in a particular doctrinal direction. It is the first of these that we take up here. Arguments over OT are standardly arguments over concepts. In OT, against complete divine foreordination, it is claimed that God does not ordain or control everything: there is free will and an open future. Against exhaustive divine foreknowledge, it is argued that the future, inasmuch as it is open, is not known to God, though there is much that he does know about the future. Against divine immutability, it is averred that God changes his mind. And against divine infallibility, it is contended that God not only changes his mind, but is capable of mistaken beliefs. In all this, what is most arresting about OT is the *picture* of God yielded by the vocabulary used to describe him and I believe that William Hasker was right to imply that initial or fundamental responses to that will steer our engagement with the detailed argumentation. A picture can look right or wrong (or it can attract or turn us away) before we examine the elements that compose it. Clearly, we can not distinguish sharply between picture and concept and I shall not try to do so. But I shall be initially steering away from a certain kind of conceptual approach and towards a certain kind of pictorial approach.⁶

So what is the picture? In his contribution to that first volume on *The Openness of God*, Richard Rice discusses the passage in Exodus 32 where Moses entreats God to spare the people punishment, to the point where 'the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened' (v.14).⁷ 'A number of Bible scholars', says Rice, 'do see this dramatic passage as a clear indication that God underwent a real and important change.... Moses begs God to repent, using the very same word that the prophets employed in their appeals to backsliding Israel, to change his plan to destroy Israel and so to remain loyal to the great revelation of himself in which he promised to be with them.' As Fretheim rightly notes, 'Moses genuinely influenced God's final decision', which was pending thereto. God has effectively asked Moses to contribute to his

⁶ Nothing in my argument hinges on whether or not this distinction is felicitously offered. It can be ignored by any reader who doesn't think that it works. An adumbration of the distinction would obviously require a separate discussion.

⁷ 'Biblical Support for a New Perspective'. Ware notes that Rice had published a volume originally entitled *The Openness of God*, back in 1980 (*op. cit.*, 31, n.1). For what follows, see pp. 28f.

deliberations, which Moses does by appealing to 'God's reasonableness and reputation', reminding 'God of his own promise' and evoking an immediate change of mind from God.

Why repeat phrases from Rice's decade-old essay which themselves appear simply to repeat, paraphrase or obviously draw out what is manifestly in the passage itself? It is because, on this reading, the following seems to be a faithful rendering of how God could have closed the interview. I.e., it is an entirely appropriate rendering of the state of affairs which, as far as I can tell, involves no caricature:

Moses – I am so grateful to you. You know, in a burst of outraged anger, I'd really lost it. I really got things out of perspective. Now I think of it, you're right. If I had destroyed this people, it would have gone against everything I've been working for. Moses, my friend, thanks for helping me work through my anger. My word – if you hadn't got up this morning and had your head screwed on right, can you imagine what I might have ended up doing? I'd have cut off the Hebrew Bible at Exodus 32.

Is there anything wrong with that, including the sense (if not the form) of its final rhetorical flourish? I presume that Rice finds nothing seriously wrong with this account. Now I am not trying to survey even a small fraction of the literature by open theists, but, even if they are not agreed on everything, I presume that they can not take *serious* exception to this rendering of things and regard this portrayal as an enormity. Others will feel the opposite, regarding it as a vindication of the hermeneutical conviction that some sort of 'accommodation' is going on in this passage.⁸

Let us note some other descriptive words and phrases that have gone into the portrayal of God.⁹ For Rice, God 'is deeply sensitive and responsive to human experience' (p. 43). He is, Sanders says in the next essay, 'resourceful' and 'creative' (p. 97). Pinnock, in the essay to which Hasker alluded, speaks of God as 'flexible', as one who 'does not insist on doing things his way. God', in fact, 'will adjust his own plans because he is sensitive to what humans think and do' (p. 116). Moreover, we find him 'delighting in a universe which he does not totally control' (p. 117); he 'learns things and (I would add) enjoys learning them' (p. 123). And David Basinger, in the essay after Pinnock's, says that petitionary prayer is a

⁸ I do not have in mind a particular theory of accommodation nor does anything hang on the use of this word.

⁹ These words or phrases are in themselves familiar enough, e.g., in Process theology. What interests us here is their use in the context of an evangelical proposal.

'means whereby we grant God the permission to influence our non-cognitive states of mind...' (p. 162). He adds: 'We as Christians do not only believe it is important that we share our thoughts and concerns with God. We also want God to share his thoughts and concerns with us.' He also says: 'God is often as disappointed as we are that someone's earthly existence has ended at an early stage or that someone is experiencing severe depression or that someone is being tortured' (p. 170). Although I am just describing here, a comment on these last words is in order. No one should ever experience disappointment that anyone is being tortured, experiencing depression or has died young. 'Disappointment' is hardly the word for it, and even less God's word for it. These are not semantic *trivia*. Is it not clear that, God aside, there is considerable trivialisation of human suffering going on? I refer, of course, to this particular example, not to what all other open theists say.

Between *The Openness of God* and *Most Moved Mover*, the two principal works advocating OT were those of John Sanders and Gregory Boyd.¹⁰ I select one passage from each to illustrate the characterisation of God to which I want to draw attention. Sanders discusses thus how some prophetic predictions are explicable. They may be

statements about what will happen based on God's exhaustive knowledge of the past and present. In other words, given the depth and breadth of God's knowledge of the present situation, God forecasts what he thinks will happen. In this regard God is the consummate social scientist predicting what will happen. God's ability to predict the future in this way is far more accurate than any human forecaster's, however, since God has exhaustive access to all past and present knowledge (p. 131).

Then, in order to show how we might understand a divine determination which is limited and not comprehensive, Boyd has a short discussion of 'Freedom and Determinism in Science and Life'. He says:

The balance between predictable and unpredictable aspects of reality is illustrated in many areas of our everyday lives. For example, though insurance and advertising agencies make money by utilizing statistics to predict general group behavior, they are still incapable of predicting individual behavior.... In this light, it should not be difficult to understand how God could predestine the crucifixion without predestining or

¹⁰ John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1998); Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids, 2000).

foreknowing who, specifically, would carry it out. To put the matter crudely, God would simply have to possess a perfect version of what insurance and advertising agencies possess (p. 46).¹¹

In *Most Moved Mover*, we get the following. In the incident of the golden calf, 'God became exasperated and threatened to give up on Israel altogether' (p. 43). God himself 'is wise, resourceful and can cope with all contingencies' (p. 52). 'To work with a history where the outcomes are predetermined and with creatures that are able to resist him is a challenge and, no doubt, a source of great delight even for God' (p. 95). (Comment: resistance, we must remember, is sin, so delight is apparently taken in our ability to sin.) 'God is a highly resourceful and capable person' (p. 100). 'God is a wise and resourceful person' (p. 102). He has to be 'resourceful, competent and innovative' to carry something out (p. 102). That 'something' is his world-project and '[i]t takes wisdom to do that if things do not go well. God has to think about how to bring his purposes to completion. I see this in Romans 9-11 where God wants to have mercy upon Jew and Gentile alike, but faces the problem of Israel's unbelief. Paul explains how God is working on it' (p. 103). Finally, 'God is a flexible and effective worker' (p. 139).

Rattling off this catena of quotations enables us to see the portrayal of God that backgrounds Gregory Boyd's now fairly familiar story about Suzanne.¹² It should be read fully, but the gist is that she entered prayerfully, thoughtfully and with appropriate support from pastor and friends, into a marriage that appeared clearly to have God's blessing. She and her husband trained for the mission field, but he became repeatedly unfaithful and also violent towards her. He eventually left her for his lover, and left Suzanne pregnant. In the midst of it all, 'Suzanne could not fathom how the Lord could respond to her lifelong prayers' (for the story goes further back than I have indicated) 'by setting her up with a man he *knew* would do this to her and her child.' For, on her theology, this is what God had done. Gregory Boyd could only get through to her when he 'suggested to her that God felt as much regret over the confirmation he had given Suzanne as he did about his decision to make Saul king of Israel...'. God's confirmation was understandable, for the prospects for Suzanne and

¹¹ I want to give due weight to the fact that Boyd is somewhat modifying his description by 'put[ting] the matter crudely' and, indeed, that Sanders is saying that God is such '*in this regard*' (my italics).

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 103ff. I am thinking of the background in terms of characteristic descriptions, not literature produced by open theists.

husband were good, but he got it wrong all the same and came to see that he had got it wrong.

I am somewhat loth to relay this story again, and make theological capital out of it, since our first reaction should be of sadness on account of Suzanne's suffering. Certainly, we do not want a slick pastoral response. On this score, there is much to ponder. Indeed, my own conviction is that systematic theology has suffered greatly by being done outside a pastoral context.¹³ In this case, pastoral theology and practice needs to take at least two things into account. The first is that God does not usually give some guarantees that some particular event will not befall us and had the theological question ever come up before Suzanne was married, it should have been pointed out that the Christian life must be lived in the knowledge that there is little, if anything, of this nature against which he promises us immunity.¹⁴ The second is whether the problem would have been the same or different had Suzanne's husband remained faithful to her, but died within a week of entering the mission field.

The fact, however, remains that it would have been far better for Boyd to have said that he did not know what to say, than to say what he did. Consider the situation, on the OT – or Boyd's – view of things. Here is God, who has been around for thousands and thousands of years. He has seen everything that there is to see. He knows every single state of affairs that there has ever been including, sadly, many similar ones to this. He has learned voluminous amounts about the human condition. Not only so, but he knows everything about the human heart right now. Every flicker of motivation, every rustle of intention, every germ of a tendency, is known to him. This is what open theists maintain. *And he still gets it wrong.* He gave Suzanne confirmation, on the basis of this experience, and he blew it. He now deeply regrets his own misjudgement. For myself, I have to say that if God could do that after all these millennia I, personally, could hardly trust him for any wisdom again. There is no reason to trust his confirmation or guidance, on any given occasion, though one might hope that God had got it right much of the time. The least I should have expected God to do was to say to himself: 'I've got it wrong before, plenty of times, despite my vast experience. So I shall *not* give Suzanne the kind of confirmation that I shall afterwards regret having given.' At least, such a

¹³ One of the abiding contributions of the Puritans lies in the fusion of systematic and pastoral sensitivities.

¹⁴ I have to be cryptic here and, amongst other things, assume the situation that currently prevails to a large extent in Western Christianity and Western churches. Even this assumption has to be stated cryptically!

God would display a little self-knowledge. The strongest statement Christopher Hall makes, in his exchange with Sanders, is that he finds 'the possibility of divine error to be terribly problematic and its implications, theologically and pastorally horrific'.¹⁵

I do not know what all open theists think of this tale. But, even if some are very unhappy with it, it does not obviously or badly misfit the kind of descriptions of God which I have listed. And even if not all open theists use the same descriptives, the ones to whom I have referred, do they radically and unqualifiedly distance themselves from those that I have mentioned, when not using them themselves? Actually, I am not clear how to interpret the distinction as it is drawn in some of the literature of OT, between literal and metaphorical predications of God. Though religious language is dubbed metaphorical, the logic of the predications appears to be the logic of the literal. God is literally competent and resourceful, ignorant, liable to make mistakes *etc.* Language here is being used univocally or at least with extremely close analogy. We are not to reduce the kind of language about God we find in Exodus 32, for example, to anthropomorphism of an accommodationist kind. God is not other than we find him represented in the narrative, at least in terms of ignorance or relenting. I am not saying that there is incoherence in the OT line on literal and metaphorical usage, just that I find the accounts incomplete in those specific works that I have mentioned. Be this as it may, the *picture* of God in OT is one that many of us find completely different from the biblical portrayal of God, when the Old Testament is read as a whole, or when read in light of the New. All I do for the moment is make the stark statement that we differ, by focussing on the portrayal. But if we now go beyond picture and statement to argument, the pivotal questions are surely hermeneutical.

HERMENEUTICS

Enquiring about how we are to 'detect the presence' of anthropomorphisms, Henri Blocher remarks that '[c]ontradiction with other statements, if taken literally, is evidence which corresponds to the standard method with metaphors. Any hint of a metalinguistic kind, in the text, may also help. The tone and style of the context will increase or lessen

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, 132. Not in the combative interests of comparison, but lest I give the impression of unremitting hostility to OT (which I do not in the least feel) I should say that I believe that Sanders is much the more convincing in this exchange.

probabilities, especially if we can ascertain the writer's intent or *scopus*.¹⁶ I quote him particularly because he sums up by saying: 'We shall do well, however, to leave a wide margin for doubt.' This is surely the case. I am not proposing complete hermeneutical mastery as a condition for assessing OT. But at least four hermeneutical considerations are important.

1. *Literary genre*

What I miss in the principal advocacies of OT is a consideration of how biblical language, especially biblical Hebrew, works. For example, we need to study the relevance of the kinds of things that George Caird was laying bare many years ago.¹⁷ If '[h]yperbole and parataxis go readily in double harness' in biblical Hebrew, what does that do to the way OT uses the biblical text to secure its positions?¹⁸ When Caird characterises the language of Ezekiel 1:26-28 ('the likeness of the appearance of the glory of God') as 'a triple guard against literality', how apt is that?¹⁹ If it is, does this inform us about our reading of Pentateuchal and historical narratives? Does language in the Old Testament evolve from the metaphorical to the literal?²⁰ If so, what are the hermeneutical implications and implications for a broad biblical theology? These are scarcely novel questions, but I do not myself see how OT can advance its case persuasively without detailed attention to issues of this kind.²¹

2. *Progressive revelation*

I miss a discussion of this as well. Are not Genesis and Exodus to be read in the light of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel? If not, why not? Does not God emerge into gradually greater light as the Scriptures develop? I am not trying to foreclose the question, as though OT could not in principle maintain its position on a strong progressivist position, just to note its hermeneutical importance and its hermeneutical neglect.

3. *The christological principle*

How does the Old Testament language about God square with the revelation of God in Christ? Here he is, the one who 'knew what was in a

¹⁶ 'Divine Immutability', in Nigel M. Cameron (ed.), *The Power and Weakness of God* (Edinburgh, 1990), p. 5.

¹⁷ G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London, 1980).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁰ Not that Caird, in this volume, sees things quite as simply as this.

²¹ Although they draw on the work of biblical scholars, the openness theologians that I discuss do not attend to these issues in their proposals.

man' (John 2.25), and so knew, as someone put it, what was in the man in front of him. And this is the incarnate Jesus subject, we may suppose, to practical limitations of knowledge and experience compared with the Father. Does the figure who moves through the pages of the Gospels appear even remotely like someone who might apologise for having given unwise confirmation, with devastating consequences, which he later regrets having given? And are we not to read the Pentateuchal or historical narratives about God in the company and in the light of Jesus?

In relation to christology, Sanders is forced to christological compromise in order to make good his argument that the death of Jesus was not foreordained. He claims that, rather, Father and Son come together to see that there is no other way.²² It is crucial, of course, that OT sets itself up as an *evangelical* theology, respecting better than classical theism, the actual text of Scripture. 'How are the predictions that Jesus himself made to be explained, since these are sometimes understood as implying exhaustive foreknowledge?' Sanders asks, as he contends against this implication. In response, he accedes to Raymond Brown's speculation: '...One may also wonder if the original predictions were as exact as they have now come to us'. There is nothing at all startling about this position, in the light of centuries of biblical scholarship. However, in the present context, it is surely revealing. The text of Scripture is taken, we are told, more seriously than classical theists take it. In this case, where the text fails to deliver, it apparently becomes subject to the kind of standard critical procedure whose presuppositions 'evangelicals' have (traditionally) routinely sought to challenge.²³ Granted, evangelicals may differ on such things and I am only giving a single example from a single author. It is a telling one, nevertheless, for a theological constraint appears to be dictating a critical conclusion. As a matter of general principle, some will procedurally defend that. What is significant is the move made in the context of an enterprise that emphasises its optimal handling of the actual texts in Scripture as they stand.

²² *The God Who Risks*, pp. 134f.

²³ I am thinking of the evangelicalism which, *inter alia*, open theists want to persuade. Someone like James Denney, for example, had an approach to critical questions that led to what I am sorry to say was a dishonest editing of his work in the standard R. V. G. Tasker edition of *The Death of Christ* (London; 1951).

4. *Logical entailments*

We must ask about the strict entailments of a 'literal' reading of the text, as we decide on whether or not it is 'anthropomorphic'. For example, it is often argued that the book of Jonah plainly reveals that God changed his course of action, having changed his mind (Jonah 3:10). Now comparison with a text like Jeremiah 18:1-10 shows us that what can look like the vocabulary of strict determination, is not that at all: it is a conditional warning. But my point here concerns the hermeneutical necessity of working on entailments. Are we to take Jonah as telling God, in effect: 'I knew all along that you would probably do what you are now doing'? On a standard open theist reading – if that is not an unfair generalisation – Jonah understood God better than God understood himself. For God, genuinely thinking that he would destroy Nineveh, genuinely changed his mind, whereas Jonah, knowing that God was prone to such merciful agendas, strongly suspected what God seems not to have suspected, namely that God would end up proving merciful. He then turns out to be right, and to be more perceptive than was God. Such an entailment should rule out the reading of Jonah that yields it. Open theists do, of course, enquire about the logical implications of texts. But their enquiry seems, at points such as this, not to be rigorously integrated into a sustained hermeneutical exercise for the detection of anthropomorphism.²⁴

Much more might be considered here, including the old chestnut of the difference between doctrinal statement and narrative description. But we move on here because, essential to the argument of this paper is that major responses to OT are also open to criticism. Two are particularly telling: Bruce Ware's work, to which I have already alluded, and John Frame's volume, *No Other God*.²⁵ If I deal with these relatively briefly, it is because OT itself is the focus of this article.

CHALLENGES

After sketching the open theist proposal and its 'perceived benefits', Bruce Ware devotes the second, and major, part of his book to an assessment of 'open theism's denial of exhaustive divine foreknowledge' and a defence of the claim that Scripture affirms what OT denies. He believes that a great deal is at stake in all this, concluding this part with a chapter titled: 'The

²⁴ As a matter of fact, I am not sure whether the argument over the text in Jonah, for example, is best characterised in terms of 'anthropomorphism', but that is not especially important at this juncture.

²⁵ John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (New Jersey, 2001).

God Who Risks and the Assault on God's Wisdom'. But in the third part, when he shifts to the handling of the question of suffering and evil in light of his view that God not only foreknows, but also controls, the future, he appears oblivious to the problems in his own account. And the problem of evil is one of the big motors – if not the biggest – driving open theism.²⁶

God, says Ware, 'never helplessly watches while some tragedy occurs, wishing it were different. Rather, God is at work to bring about good. He is altogether active in all the events of our lives, never merely passively – and certainly not helplessly – watching' (p. 193). But the obvious question to ask is this. If God is not helpless, does he wish it were different? And what are the implications of answering either 'yes' or 'no'? And what of his activity in relation to unbelievers' suffering, if believers have access to divine comfort? These are standard questions but, I am afraid, blithely overlooked by Ware. He criticises OT's disavowal of God's promises to bring good out of evil, but subjects his own position on the matter to no such scrutiny. '...God is fully just and righteous in causing, ultimately, all the suffering Job has experienced' (p. 202) – so Ware says, as though this presented no difficulty. Does God, then, justly cause all the suffering that there is? '*God is in absolute control, and God is absolutely good. On these twin truths we find rest, comfort, hope*' (p. 207). But it is precisely the difficulty of making consistent these beliefs in light of evil and suffering that drives people to alternatives to classical theism, if not away from God altogether. Ware frequently points out that, on the open theist position, there is just as great a problem of suffering as on the classical view. Perhaps so, but an open theist can respond that Ware is just as little able to address it successfully as he alleges that open theists are.²⁷ 'God ordains evil', says Ware, without pausing to address the obvious and enormous problem with that (p. 212). Is it better, he asks, for God to be in control, or not, when there is evil and suffering? But he does not ask what theological sense we are to make of the claim that he controls it by ordaining it. He consistently ignores the *tu quoque* riposte to his own arguments, while often deploying it against OT.

What, then, of John Frame's *No Other God*? Frame identifies the problem with OT as one rooted in its belief in human libertarian freedom. Its logic is the logic of Arminianism taken to its extreme. Consequently, he attacks the notion of libertarian freedom. But, in insisting on playing

²⁶ See the very first paragraph of Sanders' book. It suffices for now just to recognise that it is one of the big issues.

²⁷ Christopher Hall's persistent refusal to respond to John Sanders on this point is one of the weaknesses in his discussion.

on this field, he lands us back with the traditional difficulties many Arminians face with Calvinism and, indeed, back with a failure to reckon on the difficulties of his own Calvinism. The question: 'Does God Know Everything in Advance?' is asked in chapter 12, but the governing interest is revealed in the titles of preceding chapters: 'Is God's Will the Ultimate Explanation of Everything?', 'How Do Open Theists Reply?', 'Is God's Will Irresistible?' and 'Do We Have Genuine Freedom?'. In the first of these ('Is God's Will the Ultimate Explanation of Everything?') he quotes Genesis 50:20: 'God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives', the passage where Joseph is referring to the outcome of his exile to Egypt. Responding to Sanders, Frame says that Sanders

insists that 'the text does not say that God caused or necessitated these events', despite the word 'intended'. Rather, in Sanders's view, the text says only that God brought good out of evil. But Sanders offers no argument for his interpretation, which contradicts not only the straightforward meaning of the text, but the sustained contextual emphasis on divine agency (p. 60, n.3).

This is a touch ironic, for Frame's own appeal to the 'straightforward meaning of the text' skips over hermeneutical issues which he insists on raising when Sanders appeals to the straightforward meaning of texts. Possibly, this criticism needs modification, as Frame has attempted to set out certain hermeneutical principles earlier, albeit briefly. What matters more is the unblushing assertion that God causes evil. No awareness is shown, even if it is felt, of the problem this raises.²⁸ 'God,' he says a few pages later, 'who forms the purposes of our heart, also decided the steps we will take to carry out those purposes', quoting Proverbs 16:9: 'In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps' (p. 65). But he practises here exactly what he accuses Sanders of practising, namely, reading the text against what it is itself saying. For the text suggests that it is precisely *not* God who forms the purposes of the heart. The exegetical mistake compounds a consistent failure to take on board the difficulties with affirming God's detailed ordaining control.

²⁸ It is a pity that Frame did not distance himself more emphatically from Jay Adams on the question of evil, in Frame's very helpful study of *Apologetics to the Glory of God: an introduction* (Phillipsburg, 1994), Appendix B. Adams seems to think that evil exists because God is internally wrathful, and brings evil into existence in order to express that. This is a sad perversion of the Christian view of God.

In my view, the volumes by Ware and Frame, whatever their merits in rebutting OT, take the debate in an unfortunate direction. Issues become concentrated on the Calvinist view that God ordains everything, including evil acts. Now, much in *Most Moved Mover*, for example, and *God who Risks* are, indeed, a response to the claim that God actively controls everything. But what is distinctive in OT is not its repudiation of Calvinism. It is the non- (traditionally) Arminian portrayal of God. Surely, it is mistaken to concentrate on reading OT as a variant of Arminianism, even as Arminianism taken to its logical conclusion. To the extent that both Calvinists and open theists make much of the logical difficulties of traditional Arminianism, we are being distracted from theologically fruitful discussion. I shall try to illustrate this.

Both OT and Calvinism regard as mistaken the traditional Arminian belief that divine foreknowledge and human freedom are compatible. OT wants to resolve the business by curtailing foreknowledge, Calvinists by curtailing freedom. The alleged logical difficulty with it is roughly this. Supposing I say that I am free at time *t* to drink coffee or to drink cocoa. Suppose God foreknows that I shall drink coffee. I can not do what God foreknows that I shall not do, for this falsifies God's knowledge, which is impossible. Therefore, I can not drink cocoa. And therefore, if I drink the coffee, I do so without doing so freely.

Consider a response to this. To say that God foreknows that I shall drink coffee is an incomplete description of what is foreknown. What God foreknows is that I shall freely drink coffee. What must come about now is not my drinking of coffee, *simpliciter*, but my freely drinking coffee. 'Necessarily, I shall drink coffee' means: 'God foreknows that I shall drink coffee, so it is necessarily the case that I shall drink it', not: 'I shall drink coffee necessarily rather than freely'. So am I free to drink cocoa? Yes. So am I free to do what God knows I shall not do? Yes: I am free in the sense that I have the power at *t*. But I certainly shall not drink tea. It is not that I *can* not do what God knows I shall not do. It is, rather, that I never *shall* do what God knows I shall not do. In this scenario, God knows the future as we know the past, as a *fait accompli*, but by so knowing it, he no more robs freedom of its place than he does by virtue of his knowing the past.

This is a compressed argument for the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and the relevant sort of human freedom. What is the point of going into it? This: I should not want to build a theology on the supposed logical incoherence of this defence of the compatibility of foreknowledge and freedom. The argument may certainly turn out to be unsound, but that does not matter. What matters is that its defence or its dismantling involve logical operations which are too detailed and

susceptible to error to be made the secure basis of theological conviction. If there are theological grounds for denying either exhaustive foreknowledge, or libertarian freedom, that is important for the formation of our substantive convictions. The same is the case if there is some *manifest* and manifestly *conclusive* logical or philosophical difficulty in any argument for the compatibility of foreknowledge and freedom.²⁹ But nothing should be made to hang on the supposed logical incoherence of the argument that I have spelled out. Nor, I should add, should anything be made to hang on a logical defence of its coherence.³⁰

The point is that a discussion of the internal logic of Arminianism in the midst of the OT debate surely complicates the issue from both sides. More broadly, before we re-open the Calvinist-Arminian debate in the context of OT, we surely need to attend to what seems to me an OT *distinctive*, namely its portrayal of God in an avowedly evangelical tradition.³¹ My problem is that the reiteration by Ware and Frame of Calvinist convictions in *this* context, constitutes a strong element of distraction, if we want to get at the fundamental issues. What, then, of the OT critique of Calvinism? Open theists strengthen their position if they are able to say, as Ware and Frame help them to say, that the debate over OT is a debate with Calvinism. This may seem extraordinarily arrogant on my part, as though open theists were not free to decide what they want to say the debate is about! But, obviously, that is not my point. If they want to rehearse the difficulties of Calvinism, that is one thing, wherever our theological sympathies lie. And they may well be justified in trying to press Arminianism along a more logical path, though, as I say, it seems to me difficult to settle anything important here by an examination of the logical compatibility of foreknowledge and freedom. But the heart of the matter is surely the picture of God that is offered by OT, the accuracy, or otherwise, of that representation of the biblical portrayal of God and the concepts tied to that picture in particular.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to pontificate from a position of safety, bravely calling a plague on both your houses from the spectator stand. Of course, I have my views

²⁹ Granted that what counts as manifest will differ from person to person.

³⁰ It should be added that it might be as important to establish that something is not demonstrably incoherent as to demonstrate its coherence.

³¹ 'Distinctive' need not mean 'absolutely original'. The historical and theological dimensions of the question: what counts as 'evangelical' does not directly interest me here.

on this or that particular question in the more detailed theological discussion generated by OT. These do not matter here; it is more profitable, I trust, to suggest an agenda for the debate. Five items are suggested here, arising from the discussion but going beyond it. Most of them are, in one respect, loosely connected to the debate, but OT is among those things that should force evangelical attention on the nature of the theological task. In the spirit of the book of Proverbs, there are five, yea six, points made, to the sixth of which I give disproportionate space, and bring us back particularly to theological method in connection with OT.

1. Obviously, the hermeneutical question is important. We need to keep thinking about the relation of systematic theology to the way that biblical Hebrew works and the habits of Greek philosophical enquiry, as they have come down to us in the West. Some of us suspect that much in the systematic enterprise needs to be completely rethought in light of the increasing awareness in the twentieth century of the Jewishness of the entire Christian Scriptures.

2. Has an excessive familiarity with God and language about God, fostered in the pages of journals in philosophical theology, enabled us the more easily to slide into ways of thinking about God that are unworthy and wrong? When God is regularly treated as 'a person' who does this or can not do that, have we led the way into the kind of anthropomorphism that OT embraces, whereby the distance between God and ourselves is reduced?³²

3. What bearing does the problem of evil and suffering, in particular, have on the enterprise of systematic theology? Some of us find the question of theodicy in salient respects intractable. Is this a sign that all-round confidence in a widespread type of systematic construction should be diminished, that we should be content with fewer convictions, but a firmer tenancy upon them?

4. Do we need to practise systematically, in theology, the distinction between rules and moves? In a game (chess, for example) rules are prescribed, but not moves. Systematic theology usually proceeds by constructing the right moves. But should it be more modest, while equally

³² Talk of God as 'a person' regularly risks collision with the trinitarian belief that God is three persons.

rigorous, starting not with moves but rules of theological thought discourse, allowing a diversity of moves within parameters?³³

5. Have we excessively tended to ask how one proposition connects with another proposition on the propositional level, rather than taking our cue from Scripture, where this doctrine or that is tied in to the Christian life, but the doctrines are not necessarily tied in to each other? Should we, therefore, tie them into each other only inasmuch as we tie them into existence; must existence, that is, be the prism through which doctrines pass before they are inter-related? We can tie this question to that of the fusion of systematic and pastoral concerns, mentioned earlier.

6. Finally, is there any role for theological intuitions? If so, what are they supposed to include? Where and when do they kick in? I depicted OT in the way that I did, with virtually no reference to any of its proponents' arguments for their conclusions, and with little counter-argument of my own. This was both in order to highlight the portrayal of God in question, and to engage intuitive responses to it. The word 'intuition' is philosophically loaded, and what we are talking about when we talk about theological intuitions can only be made clear by a proper conceptual analysis. Roughly what I have in mind is this. Exposure to Scripture means that things often strike us as true or untrue, appropriate or inappropriate to say about God, prior to considering the arguments advanced on their behalf. Intuitions presumably grow sounder with increasing immersion in Scripture. They are not independent of what can subsequently be offered in the way of argument, at least they are not necessarily so. And they can be compared with philosophical ones. Intuitions are regularly at the root of the most rigorous philosophical arguments. For if an argument for a proposition fails, by virtue of one false step in a technical maze, what do we characteristically do? Answer: we reformulate the argument. Why? It is because our conviction does not come by argument in the first place, or at least not by the kind of argument that we are now advancing in defence of it. That conviction often has a kind of intuition or a philosophically undemonstrated belief at the root of it. It is fallible, ought to be scrutinised, can be dislodged. But it is there. What should we say of it?

³³ Historically, issues arise here all the way from discussion of fundamental articles in religion to the proposals of George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia, 1984), though we can transplant the problematic out of the particular context in which Lindbeck introduces it.

How should we respond to a scenario like the following? A lad from a non-religious home was jailed for drug offences some time ago and, during his time in the clink, he became a Christian. He was resolved and succeeded in his resolution to put all that behind him. His parents were delighted and looked forward to receiving him back into their home. To their dismay, he told them on his release that he could not return, because Jesus said that we must hate our parents. His parents said that they just didn't know enough about the Bible, or could not interpret it expertly enough, to know what to say about the verse their son had in mind. They were not sure what Jesus meant, but surely he could not have meant that? Intuitively, they felt that there was a misfit between the boy's interpretation and the portrayal of Jesus. Such intuitions are doubtless becoming less common as the post-Christian years roll on, and less trustworthy the longer we live in an intellectual and moral vacuum or free-for-all. Intuitions differ anyway, and may be dead wrong. But will we deny an element of positive significance for biblical interpretation in the responses of the lad's parents? And, *a fortiori*, will we deny it in the Church?

What I have sought to do in this essay is to portray God as he is portrayed by open theists, at least in respect of those things that are controversial, firming up the lines of that portrait, by showing what must be being depicted or being said of God. The weight of my case has been placed on the rhetorical question: 'Are you *really* telling me that you think that this is an evangelically faithful portrayal of God?' But what am I objecting to? It is not to Arminianism, against Calvinism. It is not to ascriptions of temporality or even mutability. Neither am I endorsing, where I am not objecting. Nor am I denying that my objection may entail things in regard to temporality, mutability and related concepts. The objection is to the depiction of a God who *genuinely* has to be *reminded* by Moses of what he had *forgotten* or *overlooked* in his *outrage*; of a God who *genuinely* understood himself less well than did Jonah, at least in one important respect; of a God who *really* got it wrong as regards Suzanne and bitterly reproached himself for that, as I presume that he did. If I am told that my objections on these fronts demonstrate a refusal to take the biblical text at face value, my response is that when I take the biblical text as a whole, I do not see how I can possibly read it as open theists do. Reasons can, of course, be given for this supposition. They not only can, they must, be. But do intuitive resistances count for anything? The God of OT seems to me much as humans are, a super-human, indeed conditioned by our culture, where the portrayal of God which I am compelled to view after reading Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel alongside Genesis and Exodus and the one who 'made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6), is not as we are.³⁴ And this seems basic. But is it sheer dogmatic prejudice on my part to think that this is or should be perspicuous?

Gregory Boyd quotes from Major Jones' work, where he says that those in the African tradition 'believe human actions to be truly free' and divine foreknowledge of future free actions incomplete. 'Jones forcefully argues that an African-American experience of oppression has enabled them to seize a dimension of the biblical portrait of God (including the openness of God) that the classical Western tradition missed...'.³⁵ Well, here is an appeal to experience. What is the relation of experience to intuition? Conceptually, they are separable, but are my intuitions about biblical teaching formed out of tacit, unacknowledged experience? Many of us in the West have long learned that our reading of the Bible is prejudiced (as can the reading of the Bible be anywhere else). But does that mean the suspension of intuitions and strict reliance on the outcome of detailed exegesis, hermeneutical deliberation and the exercise of logical deduction? Perhaps – but do we then have nothing in common with philosophers who reformulate arguments because of an undemonstrated conviction that something is right? For agenda purposes, never mind the soundness or errancy of my personal views or intuitions; what epistemic weight, if any, does intuition carry?

An open theist, reading this piece, may find here an expression of hopeless and purblind dogmatism. I hope it neither is, nor is judged to be, that. I hope, rather, that there will be one of two responses. (1) I have mistaken and done injustice to the open theist portrayal of God. I should naturally be glad if this were the case. (2) I have rightly drawn out its bold line, and OT must be rethought, because the portrayal of God in OT is theologically unacceptable. Obviously, there is a third possibility, namely, that I have badly failed to grasp the reality of the living God as revealed to us in Scripture. To that, one can only say that Christian growth in the knowledge of God is growth in knowledge of how far God outstrips our most elevated and highest thoughts of him. That should certainly make us all humble.

³⁴ I can not demonstrate the cultural point here. What is said in OT about love, response, and vulnerability appears to me to echo a widespread experience and perception of what is valuable in human relationships. That does not necessarily make it wrong, for we may have learned to appreciate things which enable us to understand Scripture better. But the question always arises of whether we are imposing on Scripture conceptual connections foreign to the material itself. That if, of course, equally a question for those who oppose OT.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 172, n.3.

HOPE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE: A THEOLOGY OF THE LAND

IVOR MACDONALD, STAFFIN, ISLE OF SKYE

Within the next five years it is forecast that for the first time in our world's history more people will live in the town than in the country.¹ This phenomenal growth in global urbanisation presents a challenge to contemporary Christian reflection. In the past Christian writers have tended to a negative view of the city. William Cowper (1731-1800) in his poem 'The Task' (1785) characterises enlarging London as the epitome of vice. He concludes, 'God made the country, and man made the town.'

IS THE FUTURE URBAN?

Today many people would take issue with Cowper's conclusion. Confident in the benign hand of global market forces, many believe that the movement from the land, entailing the concentration of food production in fewer hands, is both inevitable and good. The only problem is finding new uses for the surplus rural population. Indeed many city dwellers believe that we would be doing farmers a favour by releasing them from their struggle with the land and relocating them in the towns. Urbanisation is equated with progress.

The same argument can be made from a theological perspective. Some writers in the Reformed tradition have recently argued that urbanisation is a trend which should be celebrated rather than lamented and that it is in line with God's purposes for his world. For example Meredith Kline argues,

The city is not to be regarded as an evil invention of ungodly fallen man.... The ultimate goal set before humanity at the very beginning was that human culture should take city form... there should be an urban structuring of human historical existence. The cultural mandate given at creation was a mandate to build the city. Now, after the Fall the city is still a benefit, serving humanity as a refuge from the howling wilderness condition into which the fallen human race, exiled from paradise has been driven.... The

¹ D. Hinrichsen,
<http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=1054§ion=5>

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

common grace city has remedial benefits even in a fallen world. It becomes the drawing together of resources, strength and talent no longer just for mutual complementation in the task of developing the resources of the created world, but now a pooling of power for defence against attack, and as an administrative community of welfare for the relief of those destitute by reason of the cursing of the ground.²

Tim Keller, pastor to the Presbyterian Church in America's Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York, is a keen apologist for urban life, arguing that if we are to evangelise our civilisation effectively we must love the city and view it in positive terms rather than negative ones. He too sees the city as part of God's design and sees the progress of redemption as leading to the realisation of an urban ideal.

God's future redeemed world and universe is depicted as a 'city'. Abraham sought the city whose 'builder and maker is God' (Hebrews 11:10). Revelation 21 describes and depicts the apex of God's redemption as a city! His redemption is building us a city – the New Jerusalem.

...We began in a garden but will end in a city; God's purpose for humanity is urban! Why? The city is God's invention and design, not just a sociological phenomenon or invention of humankind.³

It is possible, however, to trace a very different line of development in the Bible from creation through fall, redemption and restoration in which man's relationship with the land is a central concern. Eden sees man in harmony with the land as its ruler and guardian, the Fall involves alienation between man and the land, redemption brings substantial healing of man's attitude towards his environment and the restoration at the consummation is a renewal of Eden.

ORIENTATION

There is always the danger of Christian reflection being anthropocentric. We begin by considering some crisis facing man (such as the social and environmental degradation of the countryside) and we look for proof texts to justify our activism. In the biblical theology of land that follows I will seek to make the starting point a consideration of God as Creator, his

² M. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton, MA, 1981).

³ T. Keller, 'A Biblical Theology of the City', *Evangelicals Now* (July 2002), pp. 14-15.

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creation of all things as good and his purpose in Christ to reverse the effects of the Fall. As all true biblical theology should be Christological, God's act in Christ must be the interpretive centre of the land motif. As all true biblical theology should be doxological, our reflection on God's eternal purpose for the land should issue in praise to him.

IN THE BEGINNING: CREATION

Our relationship to the earth is imaged on God's

The Bible testifies to the fact that we have been made in the image of God. The *imago dei* is a subject that has engaged generations of theologians in debate. But it is true at least to say that man has been made in such a way that he reflects in a creaturely way the nature of God. Thus if we want to get under the surface and ask questions of our design we need to begin not with the character of man but with the character of God. As Calvin wrote 'it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face'.⁴

In the Bible God's relation with the world is represented as both transcendent and immanent.

God is transcendent. The Genesis account of creation makes that abundantly clear. Before there was anything else, there is God. God calls the creation into being by the power of his word. He does not depend on the creation. The creation depends on him.

But God is also immanent. That is to say he does not remain aloof from creation. Psalm 104, for example, portrays a God who is met through his creation. Creation is charged with his presence. 'He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.'

We would expect therefore that if man reflects God in a creaturely way (images God) that he would bear a relation to creation which is both transcendent and immanent and that is indeed what we find.

Transcendence

The Genesis narrative exegetes image first of all in terms of transcendence. 'Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground' (Gen. 1:26). This rule is later dramatised by the naming ritual that takes place in

⁴ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (J. T. McNeill, ed., Philadelphia, 1960), I.i.2.

chapter 2. This notion of man ruling and dominating creation has come in for a lot of criticism in recent decades but for the moment it is enough to note that it is merely one pole of the relationship between man and the land. This biblical understanding of man's relationship to his environment distinguishes the Christian position from, for example, the extreme animal rights position of Princeton philosopher Peter Singer⁵ who characterises human transcendence as 'speciesism', as well as from the pantheistic environmentalism of the New Age movement.

Immanence

On the other hand man's relation to the earth is immanent. God's act of creation was both immediate, the creation of the universe without pre-existent matter, and mediate, the creation of animals and man from material God had already created. Thus Genesis 1:24: 'And God said *let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground and wild animals, each according to its kind*' (italics added). When it comes to the creation of man his creation is likewise mediate but this mediate creation is described in different terms from that of the animal kingdom. 'Now the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature' (Gen. 2:8). Not only do we thus share a connection with the land itself in the most ultimate sense but also with the animal kingdom that was also formed out of the ground (Gen. 2:19).

This mediate creation has a parallel in the creation of Eve from the body of Adam. Once again it would have been no problem for God to create Eve independently but his manner of creation stresses the deep unity between man and woman. It is reasonable for us to infer that Genesis also wishes to teach that built in to man is the need to enjoy a relationship with the earth and with the livestock. Modern scientific thinking is beginning to reflect this biblical insight. Eco-theologian Sally McFague writes,

One of the most important revelations from post-modern science is the continuum between matter and energy (or, more precisely, the unified matter/energy field) which overturns traditional hierarchical dualisms such as living/nonliving, flesh/spirit, nature/human being.⁶

⁵ P. Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York, 1975).

⁶ S. McFague, *The Body of God* (Minneapolis, MN, 1993), p. 16.

The creation as a work of the Trinity also argues for the deep interconnectedness (*perichoresis*) of the Trinity to be reflected in relations between the animate and inanimate creation also.⁷

Significantly man is described as having humble origins, from the dust of the earth, but his life comes directly from God who breathes life into him. Man's connection with the dust/soil is something that will be determinative of his future existence. His life will be 'anchored' in the soil. He will find fulfilment in the tilling of the soil. Even after the Fall he will continue to live out his life in relation to the soil (Gen. 3:18) although now with frustration built in to his labours. Clearly something of the deep instinct that rural people have for the land, that visceral attachment which goes beyond any sense of vocation or material reward, derives from the manner of our creation.

LIFE ON THE FARM

The command to till the ground is interesting. Eden was full of amazingly productive trees, both ornamental and food producing, but man was set there not as a spectator but as a worker. He was to 'work it and take care of it'. Several points are worth making in relation to this instruction.

The sanctity of labour

Calvin comments, 'Moses now adds that the earth was given to man, with this condition, that he should occupy himself in its cultivation. Whence it follows that men were created to employ themselves in some work and not to lie down in inactivity and idleness. This labour, truly, was pleasant, full of delight, entirely exempt from all trouble and weariness; since, however, God ordained that man should be exercised in the culture of the ground, he condemned in his person, all indolent repose.'⁸

But the text would seem to go beyond the idea that work is simply good in itself. Our labour can also be presented to God as part of our worship (Rom. 12:1, 2). The specific instruction to Adam in relation to his duties in the garden of Eden is 'to work it and take care of it'. The words used here: serve/till and keep/guard have a religious significance. Serve/till is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g. Deut. 4:19). It is used, for example, of the tabernacle duties of the Levites (Num. 3:7-8) *etc.* To guard/keep, as well as having the secular sense of guarding,

⁷ D. T. Williams, 'Trinitarian Ecology', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 18 (2000), p. 150.

⁸ J. Calvin, *Commentary upon the Book of Genesis* (London, 1965), p. 125.

is also used in contexts where it means to observe God's commands and carry out duties God has given. An example would be the command given to the Levites to 'guard' the tabernacle from intruders.⁹

In contrast to Mesopotamian myths, which spoke of man being created to work in order to relieve the gods, there is no question of God unburdening himself of labour. Labour is given to man as an opportunity to render it up as part of his worship of God.

The elemental nature of agriculture

But, secondly, it must surely be significant that this labour of love given to man is specifically the working of the land. Some of the most obvious features of Genesis are most easily overlooked. When God created Adam and Eve he set them to work as cultivators. They were not set in a builder's yard, a cottage factory or even a theological seminary, but in an 'enclosed area for cultivation'.¹⁰ This priority does not suggest that agriculture is more worshipful than the other callings and trades which develop from Genesis 4 onwards (as though God were more pleased with a well-managed farm than the work of a Christian office worker, film maker or refuse collector). It does however suggest, along with other considerations already noted, a certain elemental, fundamental nature to agriculture.¹¹ God is the divine workman who is always at work (John 5:17) and our need to work derives from our being made in his image. At the very core of this created instinct is a sense of our need to fulfil our destiny in relation to the land. Cultivating the earth is so emblematic of God's purpose for us that it cannot be considered as simply another activity. A society may not be traumatised if there are no opportunities to

⁹ G. Wenham, 'Genesis 1-15', *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, 1987), p. 67.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹¹ Benjamin Franklin, from a rather different perspective wrote: 'There seem to be but three ways for a nation to acquire wealth: the first is by war, as the Romans did, in plundering their conquered neighbors – this is robbery; the second by commerce, which is generally cheating; the third by agriculture, the only honest way, wherein man received a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground, in a kind of continual miracle, wrought by the hand of God in his favor, as a reward for his innocent life and his virtuous industry.' (Benjamin Franklin, 'Positions to be Examined Concerning National Health', April 4, 1769.)

work with metal. But sever completely a community's ties with the land and something fundamental is lost.

The harmony of husbandry and conservation

Thirdly, the activity on the land that is prescribed by God includes both the working of the land and its conservation.

In the first place there is a specific mandate to harness the fruitfulness of the earth by exerting effort. In a paradise in which food might have been thought to spring spontaneously from the earth, man is nevertheless commanded to work the ground. Land is to be harnessed by man. In an environment in which labour, worship and pleasure were all interconnected, the tilling of the earth was a central activity.

In exerting mastery over the land and the creatures man is imaging God as king over creation. But the same *imago dei* that calls upon man to rule on God's behalf also qualifies the nature of that rule. To rule (*radah*, Gen. 1:26, 28) is to rule as Yahweh rules. Yahweh's rule is not exploitative, aggressive or thoughtless. It is a rule which is directed towards his own glory but in which the one ruled finds blessing. Thus, for example, in Ezekiel 34:4 the priests of the day who were in a position of responsibility and leadership were condemned because their rule (*radah*) did not reflect God, but rather was harsh and brutal. Thus the cultural mandate to rule/have dominion is not a license to abuse the earth. (*Contra*, for example, Lynn Whyte's accusation that Christianity drives a wedge between God and nature and so legitimises the exploitation of the latter.¹²) By contrast we might say that when man is functioning as God's vice regent the land should experience the kind of blessing in its encounter with man which man experiences in encounter with God, his regent. Thus in Genesis 2:15 man's vice regency of the land is expressed as 'to work it and take care of it'. Here we find not only a mirror of God's rule of man but of the loving headship of Christ for the church and the husband for the wife (Eph. 5:25-28).

Thus Adam is called to be a farmer/conservationist. In his subduing of the earth he fulfils his calling to reflect God. At the same time he is expected to be a conservationist who guards the land rather than exploits it. There are limits even in Eden to the ways in which Adam may benefit from the soil. His farming activities are circumscribed by the need to consider the well-being of the land itself. In contrast to modern compartmentalised ways of thinking in which planners zone certain

¹² L. White Jr, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', *Science* 155 (1967), p. 1205.

districts for National Parkland, wilderness areas *etc.* whilst other areas are exposed to the full blast of modern agribusiness, God's 'development plan' for Eden involved the hand-in-hand partnership of cultivation and conservation.

Man's involvement in Eden challenges the idea that nature is only truly encountered before man has had an involvement in it. The original goodness of nature is located for us by the Bible at any rate, not in its virgin condition but in encounter with man the cultivator.

People of the land

These opening chapters of Genesis are full of information about the way God has constituted us as humans and positioned us in relation to our natural environment. Made in the image of God we share both his transcendence and his immanence. In our transcendence as rulers of the land we are to harness the earth's bounty for our good. That explains the urge in man not only to tame the wilderness, to reclaim and plough, but also to explore, to hunt, to manufacture and to engage in scientific endeavour. It explains the satisfaction the gardener finds in surveying his newly dug allotment as much as the pride the farmer has in his productive acres. These reactions are not the result of social conditioning. They reflect the way that God has 'wired' us.

In our immanence as creatures of the dust we *belong* to the earth in a deep sense. We are made for a relationship with the land arising from our derivation from it. Our rule of the earth must be tempered by the fact that we are *of the earth*. We do not stand over and against the earth, outside of any relationship with it. This would appear to be a part of our fundamental orientation as creatures, and economic and social forces that would break that relationship must be questioned.

FALL

Adam and Eve are given dominion over the garden but they are not given absolute dominion. They are to be mindful of their creatureliness and so God sets a limit on the scope of their activities. They are not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Even in a condition of sinlessness mankind has had to live with limits.

Hubris

Adam's sin was an act of rebellion against God, a grasping for spiritual and moral autonomy. This rebellion rooted in unbelief is at the heart of many of the ills of today's countryside. When we consider the drive towards

globalisation, the ascendancy of agribusiness over agriculture, the dilemmas posed by bioengineering, the desertification caused by extending cultivation beyond reasonable limits, and many other problems, we see Adam's hubris at work in his children. The call of God on humanity to work within creaturely limits must be articulated by the church as she addresses the complex issues facing agriculture today.

Alienation

Following the Fall the land becomes a focus of the fallout arising from the alienation between man and God. As a result of a broken relationship between man and his maker, Adam and his progeny will find that their relationship with the soil is also affected. 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your brow.' Clearly it is not the work involved in farming which is itself the curse but the hardship and frustration that attends the work that constitutes the curse. The land is now encumbered with factors that disrupt man's enjoyment of working it. To the thorns and thistles mentioned in Genesis we could add soil erosion, desertification, pollution, collapsing markets, corporate domination, BSE and Foot and Mouth Disease to name but a few of modern agriculture's ills. 'The man's [punishment] strikes at the innermost nerve of his life: his work, his activity, and provision for sustenance.'¹³

Noah and covenanted hope for the land

The account of Noah in Genesis 7 is instructive. In visiting judgement upon the earth God is careful to preserve the non-rational creatures. Noah becomes the first conservationist. The covenant with Noah and his descendants is also made with the creation: 'I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth' (Gen. 9:9, 10). The covenant embraces the promise made earlier, which makes particular mention of man's agricultural activities: 'As long as the earth endures seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease' (Gen. 8:22). God promises that the seasonal rhythms of nature on which farming depends will be maintained by his providential care. The earth is still under the curse. Indeed the disruption of man's relationship with the creatures which was expressed in 3:15 is amplified here: 'the fear

¹³ G. von Rad, *Genesis* (London, 1972), p. 94.

and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth', indicates an enmity between man and the animal kingdom which was lacking in the original mandate 'have dominion over them' (9:2; cf. 1:26).¹⁴ But here is the first note of hope for the earth. God covenants to bless man's stewardship of the earth. Agriculture is not going to be overcome by the results of the Fall. The curse that has resulted in man's alienation from the land must be read within the context of the creation and God's covenant with Noah. The prophets of doom do not present the full picture. God has not abandoned his earth to terminal decline. Noah's first act on quitting the ark is to worship God. His second act flows from his belief in the covenant promise of God. 'Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard' (Gen. 9:20).

Urban hubris

In terms of God's purpose post-Eden, it is made clear from the start that his desire was that the whole earth should be settled. Genesis 1:28: 'God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." A settled countryside ensured that wilderness, which post-Eden would always encroach, would be kept at bay. In the countryside, continually reminded of the limitations of his labours, man would be encouraged to depend on God.

Against this background the building of the city and tower of Babel is an act of outright rebellion against God. The city builders have three objectives. Firstly they wish to build a tower that will reach to the heavens. This tower is the first skyscraper but it represents more than an ambitious building project. Genesis views the act as sacrilege suggesting that the aim is to reach God's dwelling in another human effort to become like God. Secondly they wish to 'make a name for ourselves' (10:4). In the Scripture it is God alone who makes a name for himself (Isa. 63:12). Here mankind's overvaulting ambition surfaces yet again in an effort to take to themselves a prerogative of God's. Thirdly the people wish to congregate in order that they might 'not be scattered over the face of the whole earth'. This is clearly in direct opposition to God's wish that they should spread out and settle the earth/countryside.

The city is not, of course, seen in an exclusively negative light in the Bible. Jerusalem becomes a symbol of God's presence on earth. Nevertheless we see in Babel how the city can become a powerful opposition to God's purposes. The city with its concentration of human

¹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 207.

energies breeds more than any place else a sense of autonomy. The skyscrapers of today's cities are potent reminders of the hubris that was judged at Babel. The impulse to concentrate and centralise power in cities remains a threat to the divine decree that the earth should be well settled:

The fact of the city is at the center of the land crisis. It was so in ancient Israel and it is so in our farm crisis because the city is not simply a place, the city is a way of thinking about social reality. The city is a place of monopoly where everything important and valued is gathered and stored and administered and owned. The city exists by the concentration of what is valued in the hands of a few. Indeed, the city exists for the sake of concentration.

The concentration of wealth and value is the cause of the city and the city is the result of that concentration. When the city is healthy it exists in a respectful coming and going with the country. But when the city arrives at a pathological self-importance and an imagined self-sufficiency, it fails to respect the country. When there is no coming and going, no giving and taking, but only taking, there comes death.¹⁵

Promised land

With Abraham the theme of land comes again into prominence. Now an earlier feature reappears – the notion of bounded territory where God will be present with a people and where blessing will be found. The Promised Land will be a return to Eden and once more priestly service and the godly use of the land will be required.

Abram is called out of Ur to leave his home and travel as a sojourner in Canaan. In this he might be seen as a rootless wanderer. However in Genesis 12:1-9 he is pictured as obeying God's call and traversing the land of promise, taking possession of it by symbolically lingering in holy places where he calls on the name of the Lord. Abraham receives the promises to God's people of a land where they will be rooted. When Abraham buys a field from Ephron the Hittite in Machpelah near Mamre it is an act of hope. Canaan will provide for Abraham's descendents a sense of identity and it will orientate them even when they are away from the land in exile in Egypt and later in Babylon. Abraham's response to the covenant promise of land includes a willingness to dwell in the land. Lot

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, speaking to a U.S. National Council of Churches conference on the urban/rural land connection in November, 1986.

on the other hand drifts into the city with serious consequences for the spiritual and physical well-being of himself and his family.

Settling the land – blessing through dependence

When Israel finally takes possession of the Promised Land under Joshua she is promised a land which is agriculturally productive, 'a land flowing with milk and honey'. However, Israel's tenure of the land must go hand in hand with her worship of God. The land is contrasted with Egypt where there was an ample provision of water for irrigation from the Nile. Here they must live as agriculturalists in dependence on God. 'The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land that drinks rain from heaven. It is land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today – to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and soul – then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle and you will eat and be satisfied.' The gift of land to Israel was to function for them in a sacramental way, ministering grace to them through the discipline of their dependence upon God. Thus in observing God's commands they would receive 'rest' in the land (Deut. 3:20, 12:9).

Canaan's farmers would be heavily dependent on God sending rain. The summer drought lasted for six months and was broken first by the 'early rains'. As soon as the sun-baked earth could be tilled (late November or December) the seed was usually broadcast and then ploughed under. Occasionally ploughing preceded sowing. The heavy winter rains permitted germination and early growth but the 'latter rains' of March and April were needed to fill the grain.

In addition to lack of rain limiting cropping, many hill slopes are naturally stony and stone clearance was a preliminary to planting vineyards. 'My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug the soil, cleared it of stones and planted choice vines in it' (Isa. 5:1-2). The heavy summer dews and the water in the subsoil permitted the growing of grapes, cucumbers and melons. These were often invaluable crops because they acted as stores of water at a time when no rain fell and many streams dried up.

Divorced from this dependence on God the land itself could become a source of temptation for the people. In good years with bumper harvests

there would be the temptation to a spirit of self-sufficiency. 'When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God.'

The earth is the Lord's

Deuteronomy underlines again and again the sovereignty of God over land. Land is a gift from Yahweh, Israel's king (Deut. 1:8, 35). Technically the land is conferred by way of a conditional land grant.¹⁶ The Mount Ebal ceremonies in Deuteronomy 27 reflect the elements of a land grant ceremony which would take place within the wider structure of a treaty. The stones, the land gift, the witnesses and the curses are all typical of the grants that give legal title to the new occupants of land. Retaining these grants is conditional on keeping the law of the land written on the stones marking the grant. Land itself is secondary to allegiance. Allegiance to Yahweh is primary. A key word in the Deuteronomic passages concerning the gift of land is the word *nahalah*. It is usually translated as inheritance. But Jon Dybdahl¹⁷ has shown that inheritance is a misleading translation. The word does not usually carry the idea of land being handed down from one generation to the next. The idea is of an entitlement to the land by a recognised social custom or (as in the case of Israel) by divine charter. Words such as portion, entitlement, and allocation more nearly express the idea. Leviticus 25 spells out clearly the relationship between God, people and land: 'the land must not be sold permanently, because *the land is mine* and you are but aliens and my tenants' (Lev. 25:23, italics added). The close connection between land and worship is highlighted again in the Sabbath provisions. The main focus in the Leviticus 25 legislation for a Sabbath year is the Lord and not the tenants. It is not ultimately for the sake of the poor or dispossessed although they are beneficiaries. It is for the Lord. The place of the Levites who are not given land but whose *nahalah* is the Lord also shows that there is a higher concern in Deuteronomy than land.

¹⁶ Andrew Hill, 'The Ebal ceremony as Hebrew Land Grant' *JETS* 31 (1988), pp. 399-406.

¹⁷ J. Dybdahl, *Israelite Village Land Tenure: Settlement to Exile*, PhD dissertation (Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981).

The pattern of land tenure that was adopted at the conquest was laid down in the Deuteronomic law code. By farming according to God's law the people would engage in worship and the land would be blessed. The law laid down stipulations regarding the care of threshing oxen, dangerous oxen and fallow years. There was provision made for meeting the needs of those who were landless. The book of Ruth gives a valuable insight into how such laws worked for the benefit of the alien. Fields were not to be reaped to the edges in order that there might be a form of poor aid.

At the conquest the land was divided with equity. 'To the large in number you are to give a large area of land, to the small in number a small area... the dividing of the land is however to be done by lot' (Num. 26:54-55). In the years to follow there was provision made against the concentration of land ownership. Every forty-nine years there was a Jubilee at which time purchased land was to revert to the original owning family; land purchase, in effect, bought its use for a given number of years. In the meantime a relative of the seller had the right to redeem it or buy it back into the family (Lev. 25:23-28).

Failure in the land – the prophetic era

Israel was thus called to model Eden to the world – a bounded territory peopled by 'working priests' in which the earth would be settled and worked and guarded in a spirit of creaturely dependence and done as part of the worship of God. The land would serve as a model farm, showing to the world principles of justice, compassion and perspective.

But in a fallen, sin cursed world, the law serves to point up the need for redemption (Rom. 5:20). The prophets inveigh against the abuse of God's land. Elijah condemns King Ahab for the violation of Naboth's rights as a smallholder (1 Kgs 21). Isaiah cried out against those who accumulated land in defiance of jubilee principles, 'Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field until everywhere belongs to them and they are the sole inhabitants of the land' (Isa. 5:8). Amos denounced the robber barons of his day,

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, 'When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?' – skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals (Amos 8:4-6).

The sin of the people was said to have a result – the land was polluted by their idolatry until the time came when God removed them and they went

into exile. Then the land was said to enjoy its Sabbath rests (2 Chron. 36:21).

REDEMPTION

Is the land a continuing concern in the new covenant?

The coming of Christ and particularly his death and resurrection is the hinge of salvation history, the great event that interprets Old Testament teaching on such subjects as the land. At first sight it appears that the Old Testament interest in the land is lost or is spiritualised in the new covenant. Christopher Wright¹⁸ has argued for three levels of application of Old Testament teachings under the new covenant: typological, eschatological and paradigmatic. Typologically interpreted, the land of Palestine no longer has the theological significance it once had. The coming of Christ fulfils the promises of land. His coming is fulfilment in the sense of fulfilling so as to bring to completeness and so to do away. Christ fulfils the promise of bounded land. He is the antitype of Israel. He is the 'gift' of rest (Matt. 11:28, 29) and life. Just as his coming does away with Israel's role as the exclusive people of God and brings in the fullness of the Gentiles so also his coming does away with the uniqueness of Israel as bounded territory. Jesus and not the land of Israel is the axis between earth and heaven (John 1:51, cf. Gen. 28:11-15). 'Life in Christ replaces life "in the land" as the highest blessing so that the traditional Jewish doctrine of the unseverability of land, people and God is not upheld.'¹⁹ But, as Wright has argued, the fulfilment of the Old Testament teaching on land by Christ does not empty it of its contemporary application. The Old Testament socio-economic teaching on land may not be lifted wholesale and applied in a literal manner today but it nevertheless serves as a model for contemporary application of gospel ethics.

What God did with Israel in their land functions for us as a model or paradigm from which we draw principles and objectives for our socio-ethical endeavour in secular society. The fact that Israel was a redeemed community and their land a gift that betokened that status does not invalidate this approach. For the purpose of redemption is the ultimate

¹⁸ C. J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God* (Leicester, 1983).

¹⁹ W. D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (London, 1982), p. 132.

restoration of God's ideals and plans in creation, ideals which have been polluted and frustrated by the fall.²⁰

The cosmic Christ

Jesus comes to bring in a salvation that has repercussions for the whole created order. He comes to bring in the reconciliation of all that is alienated from God (Col. 1:20). A key text is Romans 8:18-22 where Paul writes,

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.²¹

'Frustration' or 'vanity' is interpreted by John Murray as 'the lack of vitality which inhibits the order of nature and the frustration which the forces of nature meet with in achieving their proper ends.'²² Murray continues,²³

The creation is to share, therefore, in the glory that will be bestowed upon the children of God. It can only participate in that glory, however, in a way that is compatible with its nature as non-rational. Yet the glory of God is one that comprises the creation also and must not be conceived of apart

²⁰ C. J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land* (Carlisle, 1997), p. 176.

²¹ Certain scholars have denied a connection between Paul's description of a creation travailing in frustration and the Fall. C. H. Dodd for example claims that the frustration is traced not 'as in some *contemporary* theories to the sin of Adam for whose sake the earth was believed to have been cursed, but vaguely to the will of God, i.e. it is in the nature of things as they are, though not of necessity permanent' (C. H. Dodd, *The Meaning of Paul for Today*, London, 1958, p. 61, italics added). Such a reinterpretation, however, chooses to ignore the movement from fall to redemption to future glory that lies on the surface of the text in Romans 8 and elsewhere (e.g. Romans 5). The concept of nature being caught up in the Fall stresses the close organic connection between the rational and non-rational creation and entails that the latter also shares in the hope of glory. It is hardly 'arrogantly anthropocentric' (cf. I. Brady, *God is Green*, London, 1990, p. 62).

²² J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1968), p. 303.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

HOPE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

from the cosmic regeneration – the glory of the people of God will be in the context of the restitution of all things (*cf.* Acts 3:21).

Indications of this ‘cosmic regeneration’ are given early on in the Gospel records. Christ’s nativity in a stable with the sheep and oxen looking on has been understood by generations of children as indicative of a special relationship between the Son of God and nature.

Jesus’ parables were full of illustrative material drawn from rural and agricultural life. From the sower going out to sow to the shepherd and his concern for his sheep to the field of wheat growing with weeds mixed amongst it. It is often pointed out that these parables were masterful ways of conveying truth to a population that was overwhelmingly rural. But the fact remains that the preacher of the Word continues to proclaim divine truth through the images of harvest and flock even to city dwellers. And the reason lies in the fact that these land based images work not simply because they connect with people for whom they are familiar but they represent a deep affinity with a spiritual order. Jonathan Edwards claimed that in the workings of nature we see ‘shadows of the divine’. The natural world is beautiful because it reflects the grace and beauty of God.

How much a resemblance is there of every grace in the fields covered with plants and flowers, when the sun shines serenely and undisturbedly upon them. How a resemblance, I say, of every grace and beautiful disposition of mind; of an inferior towards a superior cause, preserver, benevolent benefactor, and a fountain of happiness.²⁴

As the drama of atonement draws to its climax we are once again drawn into a garden. In the garden of Gethsemane Christ wrestles with temptation and emerges victorious. The Lord of glory will now submit himself to death in order to reconcile the world to God. The emblems of Eden are everywhere. Once more a tree is at the centre of the drama. This time it is the means of reconciliation. The second Adam goes into death crowned with thorns, the symbol of a cursed earth (Gen. 3:18), and he is laid in the dust of death (Gen. 3:19). Christ will rise, the first of a new generation, in a garden.

In the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb. From that tomb the new Man rose lifting from its bondage the whole body of things as well as of men. True Nature was re-established.

²⁴ J. Edwards, ‘The Beauty of the World’, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven, 1995), p. 14.

Man in Christ is made the heir once more of a new earth. No wonder Mary, on the Resurrection morning thought he was the gardener for indeed he was – the new Adam and the New Man; the restored co-operation.²⁵

The land and redemption

Redemption therefore has implications for creation and this is not confined to the future. Redemption is a process as Murray himself indicates. ‘The groaning is complemented by the expectation of that which will bring the *process of redemption* to its completion.’²⁶ It is in this ‘already-not yet’ redemption that the creation finds itself caught up. The coming of Christ has already made a difference to the creation. The presence of the kingdom of God on earth should and does have an impact on the well-being of the created order. That is why Isaac Watt’s Christmas hymn, ‘Joy to the world’ is so perceptive. He wrote (in a verse that is often omitted from our hymn books), ‘No more may sin and sorrow roam or thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessings known, Where’er the curse is found.’

Francis Schaeffer has shown us that because the kingdom is present partially but not fully we are to expect substantial healing of the ravages of sin in all areas of life.²⁷ The caveat of substantial warns us not to have utopian expectations but also encourages us to make an impact on our culture now. The land and her people, today groaning through abuses caused by human greed, the abuse of technology and economic hubris, will only be fully renewed when Jesus comes again. Yet already we look for discernible healing brought through the presence of the kingdom now.²⁸ In the Old Testament especially we are given working models to guide us in our aspirations for the land.

The healing of the land – two illustrations

The institution of the Jubilee serves as an example of how the substantial healing of the earth is to be sought by Christians.

An empty countryside?

The Jubilee law guarded against the concentration of land in the hands of the few and underlined the importance of families maintaining their connection with the land. It thus serves as a moral paradigm that

²⁵ G. F. MacLeod, *Only One Way Left* (Glasgow, 1956), p. 31.

²⁶ J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Roman*, p. 307 (italics added).

²⁷ F. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Carol Stream, Ill., 1971), p. 134.

²⁸ On this view of the nature of the presence of the kingdom see, for example, H. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 36-60.

challenges the evacuation of the countryside by industrialised agribusiness. A Christian land ethic must maintain that it is God's will for the ownership and management of the land to be as widely and equitably spread as possible. In the nineteenth-century Scottish Highlands the displacement of people from the land and the concentration of ownership was opposed by the Highland Land League whose membership card quoted Ecclesiastes 5:9 'The profit of the earth is for all.'²⁹ In the nineteenth century the 'Clearances' were also described as 'Improvements'. Today the process of concentrating ownership is euphemistically described as 'restructuring'.

Roots?

The Jubilee laws served to commit Israel's families to the original allocation of land at the conquest. Whilst families might be forced by economic circumstances to remove themselves from this particular location their connection to place and the certainty of return was enshrined by law. Using the Jubilee once more as an ethical paradigm we see how the Bible challenges the hypermobility of modern society, demonstrating that roots in place are important for individual, family and social relationships.³⁰

RESTORATION

Why care for a throwaway earth?

In keeping with this line of Pauline teaching about the redemption of creation there is strong evidence in the Bible pointing to a very physical future for our environment. Both 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1 speak of a new heaven and a new earth. The authors have the choice of two Greek words: one, *neos*, meaning new in time or origin and the other, *kainos*, meaning new in nature or quality. In both instances the authors choose the latter word. The implication is that the new heaven and earth (signifying the new cosmos) will not be totally disconnected from this one (a new beginning after the annihilation of the former heaven and earth) but a renewal of the present environment and one that is in continuity with it. Scholars³¹ have pointed out the parallel with the resurrection in which the

²⁹ D. Meek, 'The Land Question Answered from the Bible: The Land Issue and the Development of a Highland Theology of Liberation', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 103:2 (1987), pp. 84-9.

³⁰ M. Schluter, 'Roots: Biblical Norm or Cultural Anachronism?' (Cambridge, 1995).

³¹ E.g. A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, 1979), pp. 251, 252, 280.

resurrection body has continuity with our present bodily existence (as the seed has to the wheat plant in Paul's analogy in 1 Corinthians 15).

Thus Hendrikus Berkhof points to the many biblical images which point to a continuity between this present world and the one to come.

The Bible presents the relationship now and later as that of sowing and reaping, ripening and harvest, kernel and ear. Paul states that a man can build upon Christ, the foundation with gold or silver, so that his work will remain in the consummation and he will receive reward (1 Cor. 3:14). The book of Revelation mentions the works which will follow the believers in the consummation (14:13), and twice it is said in the description of the new Jerusalem that the glory of the kings of the earth (21:24) and of the nations (21:26) will be brought into it. For us who must choose and labour in history it is of great importance to try to understand more clearly the meaning of this figurative language which speaks so plainly about a continuity between present and future.³²

One writer who has written boldly on this subject is Edward Thurneysen:

The world into which we shall enter in the Parousia of Jesus Christ is therefore not another world; it is this world, this heaven, this earth; both, however passed away and renewed. It is these forests, these fields, these cities, these streets, these people, that will be the scene of redemption. At present they are battlefields, full of the strife and sorrow of the not yet accomplished consummation; then they will be fields of victory, fields of harvest, where out of seed that was sown with tears, the everlasting sheaves will be reaped and brought home³³

The Book of Revelation seems to indicate that the new earth will be a kind of restored Eden. Eden was situated on a mountain (the heads of four rivers flowed downwards from it). Likewise the new environment will be a holy mountain. And once more we encounter the tree of life and we are told that men will serve God there. The shalom that was lost in Eden will at last be restored in the new Eden.

The knowledge that our future environment will not be completely non-physical and will have some connection with what we now experience ought to make a great deal of difference to our attitude to issues such as the well-being of the countryside. As we seek to follow Christ, the growth of his kingdom in our lives, individually and collectively, will have benefit

³² H. Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 189.

³³ E. Thurneysen, *Eternal Hope*, translated by Harold Knight (London, 1954), p. 204.

for this world and also for the world to come. That applies to our vision for a renewed countryside.

CONCLUSION

Recent years have seen evangelicals articulating a biblical environmentalism.³⁴ They have rightly spoken out against what might be termed an urban model in which man's needs are dominant and there is little concern for the creation. There is, however, danger in espousing a wilderness model in which 'nature's needs predominate and people are excluded in the search for the holy grail of a 'natural' environment. The more biblical model, which could be termed a Jubilee model, would give greater stress to the need to maintain the human component of the countryside.

The Jubilee model would be one in which man dwells in a stable, protective relationship with the land, ruling it in a way that reflects God's rule of man. It is not to be imagined that true nature is present only where human activity has been absent. Furthermore, proper earth care is only feasible when the land is well settled by families who have an intimate knowledge of their environment. The assumption that agriculture must inevitably progress by involving fewer families should be challenged, and alternative models that stress the interconnectedness of land, food and social relationships should be developed.

Ultimately the call to be concerned for the land and its people is based on the fact that God is concerned for the land and its people. A renewed countryside is part of that eternal purpose of God in which Eden will be restored in the new earth. Christians renewed by grace are privileged to be involved in that plan.

³⁴ See, for example, *The Care of Creation*, ed. R. J. Berry (Leicester, 2000).

JUSTIFIED BY CHRIST'S RESURRECTION: A NEGLECTED ASPECT OF PAUL'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION*

MICHAEL F. BIRD, UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

INTRODUCTION

Since the Reformation, Protestant theology has emphasised the cross as the immediate basis of justification. Accordingly, theologians have located justification as occurring primarily through the atoning and redemptive death of Christ. The consequence of this is that Protestant Christianity has concerned itself with developing a *theologia crucis*.¹ The cross becomes the interpretive centre of Paul and the entire New Testament. Indeed, the absolute centrality of the cross in Paul's thought can hardly be disputed. Paul considered his ministry, message and mission all in light of the cross (Gal. 2:19-20; 6:14; 1 Cor. 1:18, 23; 2:2). Furthermore, in passages such as Romans 3:24; 5:9 Paul unequivocally anchors justification firmly in the cross of Christ. By stressing this fact, however, it has led to a lopsided view of the means of salvation as Markus Barth and Verne H. Fletcher spell out:

Western theological thought, while affirming that 'on the third day he rose again from the dead,' has nonetheless given relatively more weight to the crucifixion as the primary expression of the Christ event.²

* I would like to thank Dr Rick Strelan (University of Queensland) and Dr Richard K. Moore (Baptist Theological College of Western Australia) for advice in the preparation of this paper. Special thanks are also due to my on-line Pauline sparring partner Mr Joshua Jipp, an MDiv student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Of course, any remaining errors are strictly my own.

¹ For a defence of a *theologia crucis* over against a theology of the resurrection see the arguments in Ernst Käsemann, 'The Saving Significance of Jesus' Death in Paul', in *Perspectives on Paul* (London, 1971), pp. 47-8, 54-9.

² Markus Barth & Verne H. Fletcher, *Acquittal by Resurrection* (New York, 1964), p. v.

The problem is that Paul's gospel knows of no divorce between the cross and the resurrection and their ensuing effect. The resurrection figures equally prominently in Paul's most concise summaries of the gospel (cf. Rom. 1:3-4; 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:3-8; 2 Tim. 2:8). The tendency in the Protestant tradition to view the crucifixion in isolation and as a thing in itself apart from the resurrection represents a failure to grapple with Paul's view of the indissoluble connection between the cross and the resurrection (cf. 1 Thes. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:3-8; 2 Cor. 5:15; Rom. 4:25).³ This unfortunately has had a negative effect as Richard B. Gaffin states, 'in this dominating preoccupation with the death of Christ, the doctrinal or soteriological significance of his resurrection has been largely overlooked'.⁴ Yet, the moment one acknowledges an inseparable relationship between the cross and the resurrection it raises the question of exactly how the cross and resurrection relate together in the salvation event. Walter Künneth aptly summarises the issue, 'the question arises whether the resurrection of Jesus has a soteriological determination and if so of what kind, and what relation the cross of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus bear to each other'.⁵

If a solution is to afford the resurrection a due place in an outline of Paul's soteriology we may well ask what impact, if any, the resurrection has upon justification. The proximity and relation of these two concepts is not immediately obvious and only ever cryptically stated. Even on their own, resurrection and justification constitute momentous topics of discussion, let alone their intertwining relationship. Moreover, it is in Paul that they both find their most succinct expression and union. Normatively it has been asserted that the relationship between Christ's resurrection and the believer's justification is that the resurrection vindicates the redemptive death of Christ and proves that it was effective in securing the justification of believers. John Stott provides a typical summary, 'what the resurrection did was to vindicate the Jesus whom men had rejected, to declare with power that he is the Son of God, and publicly to confirm that his sin-bearing death had been effective for the forgiveness of sins'.⁶

³ James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (London, 1951), pp. 72-3.

⁴ Richard B. Gaffin, Jr, 'Redemption and Resurrection: An Exercise in Biblical-Systematic Theology', *Themelios* 27 (2002), pp. 17-18.

⁵ Walter Künneth, *The Theology of the Resurrection* (London, 1965), p. 150. A similar question is posed by Brian McNeil ('Raised for Our Justification', *ITQ* 42 [1975], p. 48), 'How do the cross and the resurrection belong together in the plan of our salvation?'

⁶ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester, 1986), p. 238.

There can be little doubt that the resurrection vindicates the message, person and death of Christ. The resurrection unambiguously announces the perfect obedience of Christ to the Father, his declared sonship and affirms the reality of his death as a sacrifice for sins.⁷ Furthermore, it removes any misunderstanding of Jesus' death solely in terms of a martyr theology. Despite this, in reading the Pauline epistles one is struck with the suspicion that the resurrection is far more intrinsic to justification than merely comprising an authentication that our justification has taken place at the cross.⁸

There have been several attempts to demonstrate the effect that the resurrection has upon justification and it is illuminating to outline some of the major contributions.⁹

The German scholar Walter Künneth wrote a significant book on the resurrection which posed an alternative to the existential and 'history-of-

⁷ The vindication theme can be found in Acts 2:24, 32-33, 36, 3:15, 4:10-12; 5:30-31; Rom. 1:3-4; Phil. 2:5-11; Eph. 1:20-21; Col. 2:8-15; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:21-22.

⁸ In interpreting key passages, some commentators take this line, e.g. F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols; Edinburgh, 1881), vol. 1, p. 311; Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (Peabody, MA, 1995), pp. 117-18; Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Hants, 1983), pp. 75, 165; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Pillar; Grand Rapids, MI, 1988), 215-16; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), p. 244.

⁹ In addition to the works examined the following contributions should also be noted: B. Vawter, 'Resurrection and Redemption', *CBQ* 15 (1953), pp. 11-23; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols; NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI, 1959-65), vol. 1, pp. 156-7; Brian McNeil, 'Raised for Our Justification', *ITQ* 42 (1975), pp. 45-8; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester, 1981), pp. 503-4; Peter Stuhlmacher, 'Jesus' Resurrection and the View of Righteousness in the Pre-Pauline Mission Congregations', in *Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia, 1986), pp. 50-65; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL, 2001), pp. 28-9, 53-9; Peter Head, 'Jesus' Resurrection in Pauline Thought: A Study in the Epistle to the Romans', in *Proclaiming the Resurrection: Papers from the First Oak Hill College Annual School of Theology* (ed. P. M. Head; Carlisle, 1998), pp. 58-80; Morna D. Hooker, 'Raised for our Acquittal (Rom 4,25)', in *Resurrection in the New Testament* (eds R. Bieringer, V. Koperski & B. Lataire; FS J. Lambrecht; Leuven, 2002), pp. 321-41.

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religion' approaches dominant in his own day. Künneth also criticises traditional Protestant/Lutheran theology with its *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) as it fails to appropriate the role of the resurrection in the New Testament message of salvation. Instead, the cross and resurrection belong together in 'indissoluble' and 'innermost' unity. The cross is the presupposition to the resurrection, but the resurrection gives the cross its meaning.¹⁰

Regarding Paul, Künneth goes so far as to say that the raising of Christ may produce a unifying core to Paul's theology. The resurrection may even provide a crucial nexus between other elements of Paul's thought. He writes:

In light of the resurrection the seemingly tangled lines of Paul's thought will unite to form a meaningful systematic whole, a grandiose unified 'worldview', in which the truths that research has discovered about eschatology, anthropology, about spirit, ethics and law, find their place, in light of the resurrection now no longer inexplicable but illumined anew.¹¹

Coming to the topic of justification, Künneth asserts that Jesus' entry into death marks him out as *peccator* or the one who bears the sin of the world. Yet in the raising of the crucified it is revealed that the *peccator* (sinful-one) can at the same time be *iustus* (righteous-one). God deals with death and sin on the cross and overcomes them through new life and new righteousness. Consequently, it is the resurrection that establishes the economy whereby God can acquit the sinner.¹²

God justifies the sinner because of the new situation of being reconciled and justified which is created by the raising of the Crucified. In this situation, sinful man, in so far as he participates in it through Christ, is qualified as just before God.¹³

Künneth attempts to find a middle ground between a conception of justification that is synthetic (justifying verdict derives from a righteousness that is added to the believer) or analytic (justifying verdict analyses the righteousness that is within the believer).¹⁴ Justification is

¹⁰ Künneth, *The Theology of the Resurrection*, pp. 150-52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8.

synthetic insofar as it does not stem from any quality in the sinner, but is exclusively an act of God. Yet the analytic approach possesses due merit since the Risen One embodies the new reality of justification. The sinner is declared just and made just simultaneously since Christ is both forgiver and renewer.¹⁵

Künneth makes a forthright attempt to restore the resurrection to the forefront of New Testament soteriology. What detracts from his thesis is the insistence that by connecting the resurrection to justification one therefore removes the distinction between justification and sanctification classically ingrained in reformed theology. Certainly, justification and sanctification derive from the same reality of union with Christ, and any absolute bifurcation between them runs amiss, but it is another thing to say that the risen Christ produces in them a righteousness that is at once declared as well as existential and 'objectively real'.¹⁶

Catholic scholar David Michael Stanley wrote one of the first significant monographs on Christ's resurrection in Pauline theology. Although he did not compose a specific section on 'resurrection and justification', his studious survey of the resurrection in the Pauline corpus contains several comments on the relationship between the two themes. Stanley comments on Romans 4:25, 'If the verse means anything, it witnesses to a theological conception of the atonement in which Christ's resurrection plays a role, with respect to man's justification, that is in the same category of causality as his death, with respect to man's forgiveness.'¹⁷ The key word there is 'causality' signifying that justification is not exclusively a function of Christ's death. Stanley avers that Paul sees Christ constituted as the second Adam through his resurrection. In view of such a role, Christ has solidarity with believers as their glorified representative, in which case the resurrection is not only Christ's personal reward but is considered a benefit applied to believers in their justification.¹⁸ Furthermore, Stanley advocates that the entire Pauline conception of redemption is permeated by the theme of Christ's resurrection. According to Stanley, although there is a future dimension to redemption (e.g. Eph. 4:30; Rom. 8:23) there is another sense in which redemption for Paul is already an accomplished reality since it is embodied in the glorified humanity of the risen Christ. When discussing I

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

¹⁷ David Michael Stanley, *Christ's Resurrection In Pauline Soteriology* (Rome, 1961), p. 173.

¹⁸ Stanley, *Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 274-5.

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Corinthians 1:30 he draws the conclusion, 'In other words, it is by his death *and* resurrection that Christ has become redemption incarnate.'¹⁹ However, Paul's view of redemption exploits a different string of values than popular views of Christ's death as a satisfaction for sin, as meritorious and eclipses the significance of a 'juridical notion' of Christ's death. Rather, redemption ensues because of the glorification of Christ's humanity, which becomes the perfect instrument of justification and finally of eschatological salvation.²⁰

The most serious problem I have with Stanley's presentation is that he basically equates 'our state of justice' with the 'risen Christ's presence within us'.²¹ There can be little doubt that redemption stems from union with the risen Christ (*cf.* Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7, 14), but Stanley has not properly shown how the vivifying work of Christ in taking believers from death to life relates specifically to the justifying verdict which is executed in Christ's death and resurrection. Likewise, to abandon the substitutionary and meritorious understanding of Christ's death robs justification of its very justice.

Markus Barth, son of the great Swiss theologian Karl Barth, made his own unique contribution to the topic in a short work entitled, *Acquittal by Resurrection*. Barth states at the beginning of the book that, 'The theme of this book is the resurrection of Jesus Christ understood as the foundation of righteousness and justice.'²² The purpose of the study is to counteract a theological western tradition that has not given adequate attention to the resurrection.

When dealing with the question of justification Barth asks, how does God justify the wicked? What is at stake is nothing less than the wisdom and justice of God as judge.²³ This leads Barth to spell out the grounds of justification in negative terms. First, it is not to be found in works for Paul excluded any boasting based on meritorious works. Neither can it be found in faith itself, which would reduce justification to a 'psychic disposition'. Faith is an appropriation – never the basis – of justification. Nor is the ground of justification God's sheer mercy, for this would interfere with his impartiality.²⁴ Instead Barth advocates:

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 270-71, 108-11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 271-2.

²² Barth & Fletcher, *Acquittal by Resurrection*, p. v.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4.

The legal ground of justification – and the reason to praise God as the justifier of the wicked lies in Jesus Christ exclusively.... It lies in his death and resurrection, not in his teaching, or in our obedience to it. Man's faith has a part in that legal ground only in as much as it is faith in *Jesus Christ*.²⁵

Consequently the link between justification and resurrection is: (i) Resurrection is the enthronement and exaltation of the divinely appointed mediator for sinners; (ii) The resurrection ratifies the ministry of Christ; (iii) The resurrection proclaims the accomplishment of Christ's work in life and death; and (iv) Resurrection provides the grounds of certainty and trust in the final victory over sin and death.²⁶ According to Barth, Paul demonstrates that, 'the resurrection is the end of our unrighteousness and the triumph of God's righteousness – even here on earth where we live and struggle and hope'.²⁷ In a wider context the resurrection of Christ turns out to be the justification of 'the faithful God, the obedient Christ, and sinful man'.²⁸ Therefore, justification is simultaneously a theocentric, christocentric and anthropocentric act.

It is tragic that Barth's work has not received wider attention; however, the impression I gained is that he downplays the subjective role of faith in justification in favour of Christ's resurrection as the objective grounds of justification. It is probably more accurate to speak of justification *through* faith *in* Christ which gives appropriate weight to the subjective and objective elements in justification.

Richard Gaffin, in his treatment of the resurrection in Pauline soteriology, asks 'How does Paul relate the resurrection of Jesus to the realisation of redemption in the life history of the believer?'²⁹ That properly entails trying to comprehend how Paul applies the categories of justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification to the believer. Gaffin points out that to omit the resurrection from a study of redemption has inherent shortcomings.

A soteriology structured so that it moves directly from the death of Christ to the application of others of the benefits purchased by that death, substantially short-circuits Paul's own point of view. For him the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

²⁹ Richard B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Baker Biblical Monograph; Grand Rapids, MI, 1978), p. 77.

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accomplishment of redemption is only first definitely realized in the application to Christ himself (by the Father through the Spirit) at the resurrection in the benefits purchased by his own obedience unto death.³⁰

In discussing how Christ's resurrection relates to justification, Gaffin contends that the resurrection is the eradication of the sentence of death and the removal of the verdict of condemnation against believers. The resurrection is Christ's justification in which believers participate by faith. In short, an unjustified Messiah means an unjustified believer, making justification directly contingent upon Christ's resurrection.³¹ After surveying the relevant passage in the Pauline epistles, Gaffin concludes

that the enlivening of Christ is judicially declarative not only, as we saw earlier, in connection with his messianic status as son, his adoption, but also with respect to his (adamic) status as righteous. The constitutive, transforming action of resurrection is specifically forensic in character. It is Christ's justification.³²

The conclusion that Gaffin draws is that, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification are not separate acts but are different facets of the one event of Christ being raised.³³

The strength of Gaffin's work is that he questions the value of rigidly constructing Paul's theology along the lines of an *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) which is problematic considering Paul's eschatological framework as well as the overarching significance of union with Christ.³⁴ A slight drawback is that Gaffin confines his interaction exclusively to scholars of a reformed confessional stance and he also, in my mind, fails to explicate the relationship between an imputed and participative righteousness which believers partake of.

Mark A. Seifrid has written two influential monographs on justification and his work accentuates the significance of the resurrection in relationship to justification to a greater extent than most other treatments. Seifrid contends justification by faith is Paul's primary expression of the gospel and the gospel itself centres upon the resurrection of Christ (Rom.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 124.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 137-43.

1:3-4; 1:16-17).³⁵ By localising the 'righteousness of God' in 'the gospel' Paul is employing biblical language in order to convey the idea that God's righteousness is his vindicating act of raising Christ from the dead for believers.³⁶ Seifrid states, 'Just as our sin brought Christ's condemnation and death, so his resurrection announces our justification.'³⁷ Christ's death and resurrection contain a verdict – condemnation and vindication. The verdicts are present, but they are there as 'enacted' or 'executed' verdicts which amount to vindication.³⁸ The death and resurrection of Christ is God's verdict against the ungodly, and simultaneously his vindication of them. Significantly, an intimate relationship between justification and resurrection is implied. Justification is not only a function of the cross but occurs in Christ incarnate, crucified and risen.³⁹ A future resurrection of believers is the immediate effect of justification as it secures the end of the future wrath and represents the fullness of God's vindication wrought in the believer.⁴⁰ Seifrid writes, 'In Christ's death God has passed judgment upon sin, and has bought his contention with fallen humanity to its end. In Christ's resurrection God has granted righteousness and life to those who believe.'⁴¹

Seifrid's ability to draw both the resurrection and the cross together as integral components of Paul's understanding of justification is highly commendable and, as will be evident later, has strongly influenced my own view. Sometimes, however, he strains a little to import resurrection into a given text. For example, when discussing 2 Corinthians 5:21 Seifrid argues that God's action of making Christ 'sin' comprises a reference to his crucifixion whilst God's making believers 'the righteousness of God' refers to the resurrection from the dead.⁴² Although somewhat appealing, this is not entirely convincing.

In view of these works the purpose of this study will be to clarify further the relationship between justification and resurrection in Pauline theology in order to elucidate a neglected aspect of Paul's doctrine of

³⁵ Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: the Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden, 1992), p. 210; *idem.*, *Christ, our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (NSBT; Downers Grove, IL, 2000), pp. 47, 65.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2, 82, 86, 174-5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

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justification. A brief survey of several texts and themes in Paul's letters serve this very purpose.

I CORINTHIANS 15:17

In I Corinthians 15 Paul is arguing against the view that there is no future resurrection and that the resurrection constitutes a dispensable aspect of his gospel proclamation. The rejection of a physical resurrection by a faction, if not all, of those in Corinth is perhaps attributable to: (i) The idea of a corporeal existence beyond death was revolting to Greek philosophy; and (ii) Some of the more wealthy class may have felt unsettled about a future resurrection which would imply a re-ordering of power. In response Paul appeals to their experience of salvation as inaugurated by the risen Christ. The apostle reasons that a denial of a future resurrection of the dead is a denial of any prior resurrection from the dead. But if there is no resurrection then Christ has not been raised as he is the first fruits of the general resurrection. Consequently, 'if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins' (1 Cor. 15:17). But this conflicts with both the gospel that the Corinthians received and with their experience of having their sins forgiven. Paul asserts that the forgiveness of sins is itself contingent upon the resurrection of Christ, demonstrating from the Corinthians' own experience that Christ must have been raised. And if Christ was raised there awaits a future resurrection of all believers.⁴³ Elsewhere forgiveness of sins is conceptually correlated with justification in Rom. 4:6-8 and Acts 13:38-39. 1 Corinthians 15:17 confirms that, according to Thiselton, 'without the resurrection of Christ, Christ's death alone has no atoning, redemptive, or liberating effect in relation to human sin'.⁴⁴ The problem is that Paul does not specify exactly how. Yet the overall point to be taken away is that without the resurrection of Christ there is neither forgiveness of sins nor justification.

ROMANS 1-5

On the role of resurrection in Romans, N. T. Wright states, 'Romans is suffused with resurrection. Squeeze this letter at any point, and resurrection spills out; hold it up to the light, and you can see Easter sparkling all the

⁴³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI, 1987), pp. 743-4.

⁴⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids/Carlisle, 2000), p. 1220.

way through.⁴⁵ In Romans 1:17 Paul states that in the gospel is revealed the 'righteousness of God'. The gospel Paul has previously stated in Romans 1:3-4 centres largely upon the resurrection of Christ. Thus close to the hub of the 'righteousness of God' lies the resurrection of Christ. What this righteousness achieves is spelled out by Paul in his appeal to Habakkuk 2:4 that the 'righteous shall live by faith'. The righteousness of God, his saving activity with its creational and covenantal framework, has eschatological life as its goal. The Jewish notion of God's once-for-all act of vindication included God's great act of vivification, since it is life that is the tangible evidence of one's justification (*cf.* Rom. 5:18, 21; 8:11).⁴⁶ Accordingly, God *vindicates* and *vivifies* the one who believes in the crucified and risen Christ. Significantly, when Paul discusses justification in Romans 3:21-26, it is dominated by allusions to the cross and sacrificial imagery with no direct recourse to Christ's resurrection. Yet as Seifrid observes, elsewhere Paul can speak of redemption from being in 'bondage' to sin and death (Rom. 6:17-23; 7:14-25) from which the resurrection delivers believers (*cf.* Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30).⁴⁷ In other contexts, God's righteousness is closely associated with the new status granted to believers in view of their union with the risen Christ (*cf.* Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:17; Phil. 3:9-10).

God's justifying action and its proximate theme of re-creating life is reiterated in the example of Abraham, who for Paul is largely a typology for believers. Abraham had faith in the creator, in his promises and gave glory to God (the antithesis to 1:18-32).⁴⁸ More precisely, just as Abraham exercised faith in God's life-creating power to bring life to Sarah's dead womb (Rom. 4:17), so too are Paul's readers exhorted to have a similar faith in the gospel, which focuses upon the resurrection of the crucified Christ (Rom. 1:3-4; 10:9-10). Paul endeavours to draw a tangible connection between the act of faith, the object of faith and the result of faith from Abraham to his readers. The theme of God's righteousness

⁴⁵ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (COQG 3; Minneapolis, 2003), p. 241.

⁴⁶ The Old Testament provides several examples of the link between life and vindication. Job experiences a period of suffering, is declared to be righteous by God and then enjoys longevity (Job 42:7-17). The Suffering Servant of Isaiah undergoes tribulation, is declared just and then sees the 'light of life' (Isa. 53:11). In Daniel 7 the Saints of the Most High endure persecution but are vindicated by receiving an eternal kingdom. See also Jer. 26:12-15; 1 Kgs 19:14-18; Isa. 52:13.

⁴⁷ Seifrid, *Christ, our righteousness*, pp. 64-5.

⁴⁸ Peter M. Head, 'Jesus' Resurrection in Pauline Thought', p. 66.

comes to a head in Romans 4:25 where it is affirmed that sin brought Christ's condemnation and death, but his resurrection announces and enacts our justification.⁴⁹ This brings us to Romans 4:25 where commentators differ as to whether the preposition *dia* in the second clause should be translated retrospectively 'He was raised *because* of our justification' (NASB) or prospectively 'He was raised *for* (i.e. with a view to) our justification' (NIV, NRSV, NEB, REB, GNB, NJB, ESV).⁵⁰ The question before us is, does the resurrection vindicate the justification that occurred at the cross or does the resurrection genuinely cause justification?⁵¹ Here, I contend for a prospective or causal translation for several reasons: (i) Although it is better to translate the *dia* in the first clause retrospectively, 'He was handed over *because* of our sins', in spite of the parallelism there is no stipulation that the *dia* in the second clause be taken as the same way as in the first.⁵² It is by no means certain that the poetic parallelism requires a further parallelism in meaning.⁵³ (ii) The prospective meaning of the second clause can also be defended based on the fact that *dia* with the accusative can have a prospective meaning as it does in Matthew 24:22; Mark 2:27; John 11:42; 12:30; 1 Corinthians 11:9.⁵⁴ Additionally, in vv. 23-24 a retrospective and prospective contrast is found where Paul writes 'these things were not written (*dia*) *because* of him only' (retrospective) and in v.24 he states 'but also (*dia*) *for* us' (prospective).⁵⁵ (iii) The verb *dikaiosis* ('justification') stresses the *process* of justification in addition to the *result*.⁵⁶ By process I

⁴⁹ Seifrid, *Christ, our Righteousness*, p. 47.

⁵⁰ N. T. Wright (*Resurrection of the Son of God*, pp. 247-48) offers a translation of 'he was given up *because* of our sins and he was raised *because* of [God's plan for] our justification.' I find that this is an over translation and a failed attempt to reconcile grammar and theology. All the same, the concept possesses some truth to it.

⁵¹ What follows constitutes a revision of my article, 'Raised for our Justification: A Fresh Look at Romans 4:25', *Colloquium* 35 (2003), pp. 31-46.

⁵² Pace Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, p. 118.

⁵³ G. Schrenk, '*dikaiosis*', *TDNT* vol. 2, pp. 223-5; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (London, 1980), p. 129; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC; Dallas, 1988), p. 225.

⁵⁴ BDAG, '*dia*', 225; BDF § 222, p. 119; Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1963), vol. 3, p. 268; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 55.

⁵⁵ William Hendriksen, *Romans 1-8* (NTC; Grand Rapids, MI, 1980), p. 161.

⁵⁶ BDAG, '*dikaiosis*', p. 250; *pace* Stanley (*Christ's Resurrection*, p. 173) who argues that *dikaiosis* is a synonym for *dikaioisune* and is imported 'without any appreciable change of meaning'. Although both words derive

am not suggesting a process of becoming just, rather, the eschatological nature of justification means that the verdict declared looks forward to the coming eschaton where the resurrection of believers is the implementation of their justification. This implies that the resurrection is essential to the operation of God's declarative justice that is manifested in Christ, both 'now' (cf. Rom. 3:21) and in the future judgement (Rom. 8:33-34).⁵⁷ (iv) An important question is whether the differentiation between the effect of Christ's death and the effect of Christ's resurrection is purely rhetorical. The juxtaposition of Christ's death and resurrection are elements of antithetical Hebrew parallelism. This potentially makes any dissimilarity between the result of Christ's death and resurrection rhetorical rather than logical.⁵⁸ Whilst maintaining the essential unity of Christ's death and resurrection, we may propose a concord of effect despite a diversity of function. Death and resurrection in tandem *effect* justification although their respective *functions* in doing so are not identical. Or in the words of Stanley, Christ's death and resurrection are 'conceived as two movements of the single redemptive act'.⁵⁹ The retributive justice of God, his verdict so to speak, is discharged in the death of Christ. The wrath of God has been propitiated with such finality and such perfection that none remains for the believer. In the resurrection, God's declaration of vindication and the enactment of it are manifested in the resurrection of Christ.⁶⁰

The significance of the resurrection as constituting a prime element of God's justifying verdict is continued in Romans 5:1-21. In Romans 5:9 Paul reasons that since God has justified believers by the blood of Christ (a hard thing) then how much more is it true that the future wrath has also been averted against the justified by Christ (an easier thing). The propositional phrase *dia autou* ('through him') makes the risen Christ the

from the same *dik-* word group, they do differ slightly in their semantic range.

⁵⁷ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 75.

⁵⁸ So also C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (MNTC; London/Glasgow, 1960), p. 92; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London, 1991), p. 100; F. F. Bruce, *Romans* (TNTC; London, 1985), p. 113; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 129; J. A. T. Robinson, *Wrestling with Romans* (London, 1979), p. 55; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 225; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York, 1993), p. 389; Douglas J. Moo, *Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), pp. 289-90.

⁵⁹ Stanley, *Christ's Resurrection*, p. 175; cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 389.

⁶⁰ Seifrid, *Christ, our Righteousness*, p. 71.

instrument of eschatological salvation (though without saying how). Once more, in Romans 5:10 the contrast between *tou thanatou tou huiou autou* ('the death of his Son') and *zoe autou* ('his life'), much like Romans 4:25, differentiates the function of Christ's death and resurrection. Reconciliation is wholly dependent upon the cross, but the continuing life of the risen Christ is what secures a favourable outcome at the eschatological judgement. In fact, Romans 5:18 contains a similar pattern to the cause/result model of Romans 4:25 since the *paraptomatos* ('transgression') of Adam resulted in the *katakrima* ('condemnation') of all men, whereas the *dikaïomatos* ('righteous act') of Christ led to *dikaïosin zoes* ('justifying life') for all men.⁶¹ It should also be noted that in Romans 5:12-21, it is Christ as the second Adam (a status he holds only by virtue of his resurrection) that effects justification and breaks the bonds of sin and death. Finally, the later chapters of Romans also illuminate the salvific significance of Christ's resurrection. For example, in Romans 6 dying and rising with Christ transfers believers from the old age of sin and death to the new age of righteousness and obedience. Likewise Romans 7:4 sets forth the resurrection of Christ as having the principal effect of transforming believers to bear fruit to God. From Romans 8:10-11 it is apparent that the mystical union is set to come to an eschatological climax where the same spirit that raised Christ will one day raise believers due to the presence of the spirit in their bodies and *resulting in* righteousness (*dia dikaïosune*).⁶² Romans 8:34 asserts that it is the priestly intercession of the resurrected Christ that ensures the application of the justifying verdict for which he died. The Apostle affirms in Romans 10:9-10 that it is confession of Jesus as the risen Lord that comprises the grounds of eschatological justification. One observes in Romans 11:15 that the final restoration of Israel will be a miracle on par with 'life from the dead'. Later in Romans 14:9 the purpose of Christ's death and resurrection is to extend his saving Lordship over the entire Christian community, whilst in Romans 15:12 Paul implies that the risen Christ is the instrument of the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's salvific purposes.

I TIMOTHY 3:16

The Christ hymn of 1 Timothy 3:16 lies arguably at the heart of the theology of the Pastoral Epistles and exposits the meaning of the

⁶¹ Hooker, 'Raised for our Acquittal', pp. 324-5.

⁶² Cf. Hooker, 'Raised for our Acquittal', p. 335.

incarnation as well as its application for Christian behaviour.⁶³ What is implicit in several texts elsewhere is made explicit here, viz., that Jesus' resurrection constitutes his justification by God.

Of immediate interest to the study is the meaning of the second line *edikaiothe en pneumati* ('justified in the Spirit'). In its context, Christ's manifestation *en sarki* ('in flesh') is juxtaposed with his being *edikaiothe en pneumati* ('justified in the Spirit'). A fundamental question is whether *edikaiothe* should be translated as 'vindicated' (RSV; NEB; NIV; NRSV; NASB; ESV) or 'justified' (KJV; NKJV; NJB). On the one hand there is only a minor semantic distinction between the English words 'justify' and 'vindicate'. Both refer to a sense of being 'proved/shown right' (cf. GNB; NLT) and the only difference is whether the demonstration is forensic (i.e. a juridical verdict) or pragmatic (i.e. an action that proves rightfulness). It is doubtful that such a semantic distinction is present in the word *dikaioo* where both declaring and showing right are implied.⁶⁴ William Mounce contends that, 'Since the line most probably refers to the resurrection and what it effected, the translation "justified" can be placed aside.'⁶⁵ This however is problematic because, firstly, the normative lexical meaning of *dikaioo* is forensic, most notable in the Pauline corpus.⁶⁶ Hence, Richard Gaffin writes:

Nothing warrants a different sense for the verb than its virtually uniform meaning elsewhere in Paul. Its demonstrative force here is so close to the usual strictly declarative usage that a substantial difference can hardly be insisted upon. The declarative significance of the resurrection in Romans 1:4 (cf. 8:23; Phil 2:9) supports this indirectly. Certainly its use here is no less forensic, so that the translation 'vindicated,' if adopted to eliminate the usual forensic, declarative meaning, is wrong.⁶⁷

Wright is similar, 'It is likely that "he was justified" (*edikaiothe*) is an oblique way of referring to the resurrection: Jesus was "vindicated" by the living God – not least as Messiah – after being condemned and killed.'⁶⁸ Mounce supposes that since Paul is not the author of the hymn it does not

⁶³ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC; Nashville, TN, 2000), p. 214.

⁶⁴ One might say that justification presupposes a vindication, but an act of vindication does necessarily have to be juridical.

⁶⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 227.

⁶⁶ Rom. 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor. 4:4; 6:11; Gal. 3:16-17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:5; Tit. 3:7.

⁶⁷ Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, p. 121.

⁶⁸ Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, p. 270.

conflict with his normal use of the word.⁶⁹ Yet this only serves to push the question back a step further as we must now ask why has a pre-Pauline author used a meaning for *dikaioo* altogether different from its regular usage? Secondly, Mounce also assumes that the resurrection possesses no direct relation to justification. The justification signified here is not in terms of forgiveness of sins but rather in context of the Jewish suffering-vindication motif.⁷⁰ The hymn encapsulates a narrative theology of Christ's Incarnation and Glorification that presents Christ entering into the spiritual realm and the subsequent declaration of his exalted status before the world.

We may speculate that the idea of Christ's resurrection comprising his justification appears to be based on Christological reflection of Isaiah 53:11.

After the suffering of his soul
 he will see the light and be satisfied;
 by his knowledge the righteous one, my servant, will justify many,
 and he shall bear their iniquities.

In the climax of Isaiah 52-53 the suffering of the servant is vindicated by seeing 'the light'. In Jewish literature 'light' can refer to the immortality of the soul, but on some occasions it arguably denotes resurrection.⁷¹ In Isaiah the Servant is the representative of Israel and what is played out in the narrative is that through the suffering and the vindication/vivification of the Servant many will be justified, i.e., restored to their position in the covenant. In this sense justification is through representation as it is the Servant who expiates their sins and is justified for God's people. It functions largely as a metaphor for the political renewal of the nation and their reconciliation to God. This is arguably a pattern or typology that lies behind texts such as Romans 4:25b and 1 Timothy 3:16 which suggest that this same motif was merged together in the primitive Christian reflection of Christ's death and resurrection.⁷² Just as Christ's resurrection

⁶⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 227.

⁷⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1999), p. 525; Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, p. 120.

⁷¹ For the idea of resurrection as 'light' see Job 33:28, 30; Ps. 49:19; *1 Enoch* 58:3; 92:3-5; 108:12-13; *Pss. of Sol.* 3:12; cf. John 8:12; 1 Clem. 16:9-10; *Sib. Or.* 1.379.

⁷² On the Isaiah 53 background see the discussion in Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, pp. 251-2; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (3 vols; EKKNT;

was understood as the first fruits of the general resurrection (*cf.* Rom. 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 15: 20-22; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5) so too his justification-vindication is the protological enactment of the justification of believers. Consequently, in Jesus' resurrection the eschatological verdict of the final day has dawned. This entails that since Christ's resurrection is his justification, others are justified in so far as Christ's justification is distributed to them. Indeed, this interpretation of Isaiah 53:11 is no novelty but is found in 1 Clem. 16:12 where it says, 'And the Lord desires to take away the torment of his soul, to show him light and to form him with understanding, to justify a Just One who is a good servant to many. And he will bear their sins.' Making a similar point is Richard Gaffin, 'The unexpressed assumption is that Jesus' resurrection is his justification. His resurrection is his justification as the last Adam, the justification of the "first fruits." This and nothing less is the bond between his resurrection and our justification.'⁷³

Consequently, union with Christ is union with the justified Messiah and the now Righteous One. Jesus by fact of his resurrection is the locus of righteousness and redemption (*cf.* 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:17) and believers are justified only because they have been united with the justified Messiah. Whereas believers formerly shared the verdict of condemnation pronounced on Adam, now they partake of the verdict of justification pronounced on Christ.⁷⁴ Believers pass through the eschatological judgement by virtue of their association with Christ in his death and are co-quickened into the eschatological life through his resurrection. The union is symbolised through baptism but the conduit is, as always for Paul, through faith (*cf.* Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; Eph. 3:17). It is union with Christ in his death *and* resurrection that constitutes the material cause of justification. Hence, we find ourselves in agreement with Calvin when he wrote:

Neukirchen/Vluyt, 1978-81), vol. 1, pp. 279-80; Käsemann *Commentary on Romans*, pp. 128-9; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 225; Barth & Fletcher, *Acquittal by Resurrection*, p. 52.

⁷³ Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, p. 123. Similarly is Markus Barth (*Acquittal by Resurrection*, p. 36) when commenting on 1 Tim. 3:16, 'Jesus Christ was justified by God.' Ulrich Wilckens (*Resurrection* [Atlanta, 1977], p. 129) states, 'For Jesus himself was so essentially, so completely at one with his message that his own justification in heaven was simultaneously the justification of his proclamation.' *Cf.* Seifrid, *Christ, our Righteousness*, p. 91.

⁷⁴ Hooker, 'Raised for our Acquittal', p. 326.

JUSTIFIED BY CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

For though God alone is the fountain of righteousness, and the only way in which we are righteous is by participation in him, yet as by our unhappy revolt we are alienated from his righteousness, it is necessary to descend to this lower remedy, that Christ may justify us by the power of his death and resurrection.⁷⁵

RESURRECTION AND FUTURE JUDGEMENT

In several places Paul suggests that what guarantees a favourable verdict at the final judgement is the resurrection of Christ (cf. 1 Thes. 1:10; Rom. 5:10; 8:34). The risen Christ is both the present saviour and is the appointed future judge at the last day (cf. Rom. 2:16; 14:9; Acts 17:31; John 5:22-23). At this point we must maintain the eschatological tension of the 'now' and the 'not yet' in Paul's theology. Justification is both a present reality (Rom. 3:24; 5:1, 9, 17, 8:30; 9:30; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:21) and yet awaits a future consummation (Rom. 2:12-13; 3:30; 5:19; Gal. 5:5). Just as the initial reception of salvation is through the blood of the cross (cf. Rom. 3:25; Col. 1:20) the final locus of salvation is ultimately 'through him' and specifically relates to 'his life' denoting in particular the resurrection (Rom. 5:9-10; 8:11).⁷⁶ In Romans 8:34 the Christ who was raised is continuing his justifying work by 'interceding' to the Father (cf. Eph. 1:18; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). The exaltation of Christ as God's vice-regent is further proof that the justifying verdict for which he died will be applied to believers at the final judgement.⁷⁷ The resurrected and exalted Christ remains the grounds for the continuing favour of God upon all believers. Peter Stuhlmacher writes:

For our justification Christ was raised from the dead, and now he intercedes for us before God. Taken together, Rom 4:25 and 8:34 give a wide eschatological span to Christology: On Good Friday Christ was delivered up to death by God, and since Easter he makes his death effective before God's judgment throne on behalf of all those who confess him as Lord (cf. Rom 10:9-11). If they remain true to him, he remains their advocate until the final judgment so that nothing can separate them from the love of God shown them in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 8:38-39). Jesus Christ is the living guarantor of believers' justification from Easter until the end of this world.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.xi.8 (italics added).

⁷⁶ Moo, *Romans*, p. 311; N. T. Wright, 'Romans', in *New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville, 2002), vol. 10, p. 520.

⁷⁷ Moo, *Romans*, p. 542.

⁷⁸ Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification*, pp. 58-9.

In the end it is the presence of the risen Jesus in the courtroom of heaven that demonstrates that there is no further basis for condemnation of the believer.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is safe to say that, 'Paul decisively grounds the doctrine of justification upon Christ's resurrection'⁷⁹ and that 'The importance of the resurrection of Christ for Paul's doctrine of justification cannot be exaggerated.'⁸⁰ The purpose of this essay has been to demonstrate just how.

Justification flows not only from the cross but also from its kerygmatic sequel in the resurrection. Jesus' death and resurrection should be regarded as being inseparably part of the one redemptive event. The cross without the resurrection is sheer martyrdom, an act of solidarity with the persecuted nation. Conversely, the resurrection without the cross is a miraculous intrusion into history and a salvation-historical enigma. Together they constitute the fulcrum of God's righteousness in handing over Jesus to the cross and raising him for our justification. This highlights that the justifying death of Christ is not efficacious without the resurrection.

Thus the overall point we are confronted with is that Christ's death and resurrection are both basic to the believer's justification, albeit in different ways. Christ's death constitutes the verdict against sin for justification to proceed whilst resurrection transposes the verdict into vindication both now and in the future. For God's justice to be complete it must exercise its verdict, pronounce its vindication and vivify those dead in sin. It is through the death and resurrection of Christ that God's righteousness transfers believers from the realm of sin and death and into the sphere of righteousness and life. It is exclusively in the death and resurrection of Christ, as appropriated by faith, that God's declarative justice becomes operative *for* the believer and at the final resurrection it is manifested *in* the believer.

There are several pertinent implications that can be drawn out from this study. First, by locating justification as occurring through the death and resurrection of Christ, it posits a tenable connection between the juridical and participationist categories in Paul's thought. For it is quite possible that the juridical and participationist descriptions are themselves

⁷⁹ L. M. Kreitzer, 'Resurrection', in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, & Daniel G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downers Grove, IL, 1993), p. 806.

⁸⁰ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, p. 504.

umbilically linked. For union with Christ is itself juridical since believers are justified only in so far they have been united to the justified Messiah.

Second, if the proposed thesis is correct then we must explain why Paul can speak of justification and salvation as occurring through the cross without ever mentioning the resurrection. It must be remembered that the link between the resurrection of Christ and the justification of believers was *already embedded in the pre-Pauline confessions and hymns*. The earliest kerygma saw the resurrection of Christ as the climactic moment of Israel's history which was now embracing the whole world.⁸¹ In this sense by paying so much attention to the cross Paul has 'staurocised' the gospel – though not in a negative way or so to diminish the significance of the resurrection. Perhaps the reason for his emphasis on the cross emerged from pastoral concerns; for a theology of the cross would be a graphic symbol of the price of Christian liberty in the face of Torah-centred Jewish Christians (Galatians), comprise an apt and penetrating way of refuting a naïve spiritual triumphalism that the resurrection could imply (1 Corinthians), or else provide a rallying point for a potentially fractious cosmopolitan community (Romans). Thus Paul retains the essential connection between the death and resurrection of Christ as the salvation event, but he is prepared on occasions to use 'cross-talk' to facilitate his pastoral and theological purposes.

Third, justification is supremely christological. Christ is not purely passive in the event of justification by being only a sin-bearer and the object of justifying faith. It is Christ's active obedience and faith to the point of death upon a cross (*cf.* Phil. 2:5-11) that constitute the basis of his justification and, by consequence, the basis of the justification of others. Thus, although justification can be conceived as the imputation of an alien righteousness it must also be understood via a representative Christology.

Fourth, an impact may be seen in how one preaches justification. To a Christian culture that is becoming increasingly biblically illiterate the very notion of 'being justified' is virtually foreign. To a dot-com generation, their idea of 'justify' is more likely to relate to what a computer does to a paragraph than to a manifestation of divine justice. Even so, when justification by faith is preached and that preaching is faithful to Paul's own view, it should be remembered that justification is anchored in both the death *and* resurrection of Christ. It is God who justifies men and women through the crucified and risen Christ and it is the risen Christ who is the object of justifying faith (*cf.* Rom. 4:24; 8:34; 10:9-10).

⁸¹ *Cf.* Rom. 1:3-4; 4:25; 10:9-10; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:8-13; Acts 2:22-36; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30-32; 10:39-40; 13:26-37.

CHURCH PLANTING IN TODAY'S SCOTLAND: A THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

DAVID STRAIN, COLE ABBEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LONDON

This article aims to provide a theological rationale for church planting in today's Scotland. At the outset, a number of basic convictions that inform what follows should be noted. The first is a fundamental commitment to evangelical theology in its classical reformed form, and the second is a conviction that rigorous and meaningful theological enterprise must take into account both the contours of the Christian theological tradition and the cultural context into which that tradition must speak; in this case, postmodern Scotland.

All too often among conservative evangelicals church planting is regarded with scepticism at best. By many it is viewed as the a-theological hobby horse of evangelical pragmatists. We are attempting here to show that careful reflection on the cultural context of contemporary Scotland, coupled with a close reading of the biblical plot-line, will provide us with a robust theological rationale for the establishment of new congregations throughout Scotland.

THE CULTURE AND CHURCHES OF CONTEMPORARY SCOTLAND: 'MARRIED TO MODERNITY'

Any discussion of the cultural and ecclesiastical landscape of contemporary Scotland must first of all reckon with the simple reality of a Scottish population increasingly living apart from the Christian Church.¹ In 1956 46% of all Scots had a live church connection. By 1984 only 17% of the adult population actually attended the churches. 'If', says Dr John Highet, '17% of the entire Scottish adult population attend church, clearly 83% –

¹ For a survey of the statistical decline in Scottish churches see P. Brierley & F. MacDonald, *Prospects for Scotland* (National Bible Society for Scotland with MARC Europe, 1985); Brierley & Macdonald, *Prospects for Scotland 2000* (United Bible Societies of Scotland with Christian Research, 1995); P. Brierley, 'UK Christian Handbook', *Religious Trends 1998/99*, No.1 (Cumbria, 1999).

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almost 4,200,000 – do not.’² Brown suggests that if the current rate of decline is sustained, ‘the proportion of Scots with a church connection will fall below... a fifth in 2012, and below a tenth in 2053’.³ The fall off of church attendance and commitment in Scotland in the post-war years must be seen as indicative of a revolution in religious perspectives as significant and far reaching as the Reformation itself. A *new* reformation has taken place in Scotland since the 1950s with the result that the populace is flocking *away* from the churches in their thousands. What can account for this phenomenon? Summarising the Scottish situation, John Drane answers,

Previous generations had done a good job of contextualising the gospel into the culture of their day, but we somehow seem to have become disconnected from their vision and enthusiasm. Whether by accident or by design, my generation has seen a living faith become petrified and moribund to such an extent that some of our churches have, quite literally, become museum pieces, while those that remain are increasingly conscious of the fact that their survival can no longer be taken for granted.⁴

Indeed, in most of the churches of Scotland, their structural and missiological emphases reflect a modernist mindset:

In this post-modern world, people no longer join institutions or give their loyalties to religions, ideologies or employers for life. In the now notorious pick and mix culture of personal believing without corporate belonging, and in a post-mass production economy, the Church of Scotland (*and we include almost all the Scottish churches*) is struggling on as a characteristically modern institution, with its central bureaucracy, heavy investment in buildings and low investment in the education and training of its membership and dependence upon professional ministry.⁵

Scotland’s churches still reflect patterns of theological reflection and missiological activity which correspond to the assumptions and concerns of modernity. The phenomenon of societal change in religious conviction however is symptomatic of a revolution in the *worldview* assumptions of

² Brierley & MacDonald, *Prospects* (1985), p. 12.

³ C. Brown, ‘Religion in Scotland since 1707’ (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 158.

⁴ J. Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church* (London, 2000), Foreword.

⁵ W. Storrar, ‘From Braveheart to Faintheart, Worship and Culture in Post-Modern Scotland’, *To Glorify God*, B. Spinks and I. Torrance, eds (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 78.

most Scots.⁶ People believe, but will not belong to a religious institution, thus securing the validity of their own chosen belief structures. Believing without belonging preserves belief from the need to conform to the norm of the community. The profound change in the approach increasingly taken to questions of truth, meaning, and identity, indicates that a basic epistemological shift has taken place in Scotland. Possibly the greatest reason for the decline of the Scottish churches therefore is due to the nature of the worldview clash in which they are engaged. Worldview confrontation is basic to Christian evangelism. The problem is that, 'For the best missiological reasons', the Church has 'married modernity'.⁷ The worldview conflict in which the Church is engaged is one in which the Church's modernity is being directly challenged by Scotland's postmodernity. It is our argument that, rejecting modernity and postmodernity alike, the Church must return to the *biblical* metanarrative, and, constructing a worldview that interprets reality through *this* lens, proclaim to a postmodern Scotland the gospel alternative. This will lead the churches at times to affirm some of the critiques of modernity offered by postmodern Scots, and at others to stand in prophetic challenge to postmodern vagaries. The planting of churches in contemporary Scotland must be seen as a basic vehicle in a process of worldview confrontation along more radical lines than the Scottish churches have so far allowed.

Nevertheless we must not deduce from the fact of *numerical* decline, any decline in *belief* or in *spirituality* among twenty-first-century Scots. Rather, the picture is one of the *transposition* of belief. The concept of transposition is defined by William Storrar as the acceptance of basic Christian beliefs and values as self-evident elements of the 'common ethical currency of Western cultures'. In post-Disruption Scotland this body of transposed values was so complete that he can speak of the 'secular vision' which replaced the 'Godly vision' of the Reformation as a 'third form of the Christian vision, a successor to the Catholic and Calvinist

⁶ A fuller analysis would require an evaluation of the impact of the Second World War, the 'New Morality' of post-1950s Britain, the increased mobility and access to disposable income enjoyed by many Scots, the transition to a service/information driven economy, and the continued processes and effects of urbanisation in a Scottish context. Suffice it to say that all of these together contribute to the 'postmodern condition' in which freedom of choice in all areas of life, moral, social, and economic is increasingly central.

⁷ Storrar, 'From Braveheart to Faintheart', in *To Glorify God*, p. 78.

visions'.⁸ He goes on to show that that vision could retain its potency only while the corresponding Christian institutions existed in parallel to it. In today's Scotland the statistical death knell of those institutions is sounding. Remnants of the Christian vision are all that is left, persisting in various forms among the superstitions and folk religions of Scotland. Belief survives the overthrow of traditional forms of expression and commitment. Thus for example, in 1999, 60% of the UK population believed in a personal God, with a further 15% believing in a Higher Power. Thus, 75% believed in some kind of God. That belief now finds expression in countless alternative practices and communities, both explicitly religious and secular in character, within which the last vestiges of the collective cultural memory of the Christian spiritual quest continue to find voice. In its European context, postmodern Scottish society at the turn of the twentieth century was, according to Donald Smith, 'characterised by spiritual search and by existential emptiness amidst material plenty'.⁹ What is clear is that Scottish society, in common with the rest of the UK, is absorbed in a pattern of what Davie has called, 'Believing without Belonging'.¹⁰

Believing without belonging

The process of 'secularisation' notwithstanding, Scotland in the new millennium is not really a secular society. Its people are no less spiritual than at any other time. The catalogue of alternative spiritualities/lifestyles on offer addresses a basic ongoing search for the 'noumenal' in Scottish life. We continue to be a nation of seekers, yet that search increasingly finds unconventional expressions and forms that no longer correspond to the 'received wisdom' of Scotland's Churches,

There is a vast array of religious or quasi-religious beliefs present in the population: superstition, belief in the supernatural, and indeed belief in a God, which is held by probably four out of five adults.... Religious belief has been considerably shorn of Christian theology, and even when residual

⁸ W. Storrar, *Scottish Identity: A Christian Vision* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 62-3.

⁹ D. Smith, 'Mission and Reform', *The Realm of Reform*, ed. R. D. Kernohan (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 86.

¹⁰ G. Davie, *Religion in Britain* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 75ff. She comments earlier: 'The crucial point to grasp is that some sort of religiosity persists despite the obvious drop in practice. The sacred does not disappear – indeed in many ways it is becoming more rather than less prevalent in contemporary society' (p. 43).

understanding remains of church teachings learnt as a child, adult concepts of the unanswerable questions about life, death and the life hereafter tend to stray from ecclesiastical wisdom.¹¹

The people of today's Scotland still seek spiritual answers to life's ultimate questions. Yet the notion of commitment to those institutions which have been, and which continue to view themselves as, the guardians and repositories of those answers, is an option generally rejected, if it is considered at all. It is not simply that Scots do not want to 'do religion' the Kirk's way anymore. Rather it is that 'religion' is rejected altogether in favour of 'spirituality'. Authentic 'spiritual *doing*' proceeds, not from *belonging* to a religious institution, but from *being* a spiritual person. They 'frequently claim that leaving the church is actually a way of maintaining their faith. Increasing numbers of people today regard the spiritual search as something that is not necessarily supported or enhanced by involvement in the life of organized religious institutions.'¹² The evidence seems to indicate that for an increasing constituency of Scots, they, in common with most Britons, 'want to believe but do not want to involve themselves in religious practice.... Practice declines in all social groups (unevenly and from different starting points), while some sort of belief persists.'¹³ People simply no longer accept the metanarrative the Church has been proclaiming in the language in which it is proclaimed. Behind the privatised religion of most contemporary Scots lies an epistemological shift that urgently requires our attention.

Texts and truth

Defining postmodernism in his seminal work, *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-François Lyotard points us to the epistemological shift that has taken place. It is an 'incredulity towards metanarratives'.¹⁴ That is, the conviction that there is no longer any room for the idea of an overarching explanation for life and the existence of things. It is, says Stanley Grenz,

a revolution in knowledge. More specifically the postmodern era spells the end of the 'universe' – the end of the all-encompassing worldview. In a sense, postmoderns have no worldview. A denial of the reality of a unified

¹¹ C. Brown, *The Social history of Religion in Scotland Since 1730* (London, 1987), p. 255.

¹² Drane, *McDonaldization*, p. 5.

¹³ Davie, *Religion in Britain*, p. 107.

¹⁴ J. F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester, 1979), Introduction, xxiv.

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world as the object of our perception is at the heart of postmodernism. Postmoderns reject the possibility of constructing a single correct worldview and are content simply to speak of many views and, by extension, many worlds.¹⁵

This 'incredulity towards metanarratives' has become an increasing norm in today's Scotland. At the base of that incredulity, as Lyotard shows, is a deconstruction of the function of language as communicative action. Language is a game engaged in in order to legitimate the players. It is a tool in the quest for power. The conveyance of information, the idea that meaning has a necessary connection with words, is a metaphysical nonsense. In the same vein, Derrida can argue¹⁶ that all meaning is exclusively bound up with the knower, not the text. Words and truth have no connection at all. The myth of 'logo-centrism' is a tool in the power struggle of any given group.

When reasonable debate serves no purpose in achieving a knowledge of truth, all that remains are the machinations of power – whether the cause be racial, sexual, or religious. Citizens become tribespeople with little sense of the commonwealth. The maxim of 'speaking the truth to power' is transformed into 'mobilizing power to overcome the others in power'.¹⁷

As a result, the idea of 'heresy' is deconstructed. It is merely one of Gerhard Ebeling's *Wortgeschehen*, simply a language-game of the dominant group, who define 'orthodoxy' in order to enforce conformity. Religion can no longer be talked of in the 'public sphere' as commanding the assent of the majority of the populace. It is now a private affair. It rests with the choice of the knower, who makes of the religious 'text' what he will. He may do this without hesitation, since the religious text, in common with every text, bears no intrinsic resemblance to reality. Rather, its meaning is entirely the construct of the reader's own mind, or the collective interpretative predilections of his community. In reading texts, 'What we are really coming to understand is ourselves. "The text... becomes a hermeneutical aid in the understanding of present experience."' ¹⁸

¹⁵ S. J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, 1996), p. 40.

¹⁶ J. Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', ed. R. Macksey & E. Donado, *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (Baltimore, 1970).

¹⁷ D. Grootius, 'The Biblical View of Truth Challenges Postmodernist Truth Decay', *Themelios* 26.1 (2000), p. 16.

¹⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Leicester, 1996), p. 71.

In this way the possibility of knowing, and of communicating, a single 'truly true' explanation for 'things' in the phenomenal world is exploded. Metanarratives, and the worldviews they express, are products of the arrogance of modernism, and a Christianity that claims a universal and public relevance, becomes a dangerous and untenable tool in the hands of religious manipulators.

Carson summarises the epistemological transition that has taken place:

the quest for certainty has gone, along with dependence on a single approved method in each discipline, all forms of foundationalism, and the confident assertion that the 'truths' being discovered enjoy an ahistorical universality.¹⁹

A crisis has arisen in Scotland that involves far more than the numerical decline of its churches. Nor is it simply that Scots have found other religions more appealing and fulfilling than Christianity. Scotland's crisis is one of knowing. Meaning, chimera-like, has retreated into our collective imaginations. We *create* texts as we read them, we no longer *interpret* them, much less *understand* them. 'Truth' is but a function of perspective. The only 'metanarrative' left to us is the claim that there are no metanarratives. The only heresy left for many Scots is that of claiming that they are, or could ever be, in error. Yet postmodern Scots do not think they 'know it all'. Instead they 'know' that they 'know nothing' with any degree of certainty. They live, as Lyotard puts it, at the intersection of many clouds of 'narrative functions' within each of which are conveyed, 'pragmatic valencies specific to its kind'. However, such an existence is marked by epistemological uncertainty, since, 'we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable'.²⁰

The churches of contemporary Scotland are facing a profound crisis, which in our view provides a powerful mandate to engage in church planting. Such church plants must be self-consciously engaged in a confrontation with this new metanarrative of 'incredulity'. They must view themselves as communities seeking to embody a corporate life that demonstrates the impact of interpreting reality through the lens of the Bible's plot-line. They must find ways of telling the Bible's story with confidence and creativity, so as to invite postmoderns to adopt a stance from within the worldview assumptions of Scripture, and looking at reality

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²⁰ Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.

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from this perspective, to see themselves and all of life 'under God'. Only in this way will they come to hear God's Word, not as a construct of one's own interpretative tastes, but as 'a voice from outside'. However, before a return to the biblical plot-line can restore the Church's *kerygma*, it must first inform and revitalise its *missiology*.

MISSIOLOGY, CHURCH PLANTING, AND THE BIBLICAL PLOT-LINE

Turning for a moment from the Scottish context we will now seek to develop a (necessarily brief) overview of some of the major strands in redemptive history as they bear on the task of planting churches. In particular we will focus on three key covenantal 'moments' in redemptive history; the covenants with Adam, Abraham, and David.

The covenant of life: the garden of God

That the narrative of Genesis 1 and 2 must be understood against the background of ancient near-Eastern suzerainty covenants has been amply shown. In a now classic discussion of the subject, for example, Meredith G. Kline writes of the creation Sabbath with which the Divine creative fiat climaxes, 'The Sabbath ordinance thus called upon all earthly kingship to acknowledge itself to be a vassal kingship under the heavenly Suzerain. Now such a relationship was the kind of covenantal relationship that was defined by the ancient suzerain-vassal treaties.'²¹ Hence, he says, 'the Lord's assignment of dominion to man over the world under conditions of Edenic beatitude (Gen. 1:28) can be seen as signalling a covenantal relationship between God and man'.²² Having created our first parents and placed them in the Garden of Eden, God, the Great King, 'entered into a covenant of life with them'.²³ In the light of this covenantal framework for Adam's Edenic dominion, Harvey Conn can write, 'God the great King blesses Adam, his vassal, with the responsibility of covenant obedience in the world, the arena of covenant response. The earth is to be full of the knowers of God as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). Man is called to extend the covenant territory, "the garden of God" (Ezek: 28:13, 31:8-9) to the boundaries of the whole earth.'²⁴ The 'garden of God' then, stands as a sample of the full possession of YHWH, the earth in its entirety. Adam's

²¹ M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue, Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal World View* (Overland Park, KS, 2000), p. 18.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²³ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q&A 12.

²⁴ H. Conn, *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth*, (New Jersey, 1977), p. 1.

role in tending and ruling here is a kingly and priestly one, which has reference to the design of God for 'all nations'. Through Adam the governance of the Great King was to cover all the earth and all peoples were to reside within an enlarged Eden. Yet Adam, vested with the image of the Great King (Gen. 1:26-27), as his vassal, fell into sin and rebellion, 'the garden of God' was lost, and humanity excluded. Yet in God's designs of grace Eden became an

eschatological sign of God's covenant sanctuary, repeated in the tabernacle plan delineated by God (Exod. 25ff. Heb. 8:5) and the temple design given to David (I Chron. 28:19) and pointing always to the Messianic Son of David who will build the true and eternal house of God (II Sam. 7:11-13) and the desolate land to 'become like the garden of Eden.' (Ezek. 36:35) In the redemptive work of the second Adam the task of the first Adam will be fulfilled.²⁵

There is, then, a scope implicit in the design of God behind his placing Adam in the garden, that will reach every corner of his world, Adam's fall notwithstanding. It is only in the advent of the last Adam (I Cor. 15:45, cf. Rom. 5:12ff.) that the gates of the Edenic paradise are flung open once again to humanity. He will give 'the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (Rev. 2:7). Moreover, as Jeremias has it, 'the message of the Gospels goes much further [than contemporary Jewish expectation] when it says that the return of Paradise has come already with the coming of Jesus.... Jesus is already the one who brings back Paradise.'²⁶

The garden-sanctuary of God

Eden was, as we have seen, a prototypical 'kingdom of God' which was vested with a sanctuary-like character as the habitation of the Creator, and the sphere of Divine-human encounter. Indeed, the links between Eden and the later Temple at Jerusalem are clear. Dumbrell points out that the verbs *cultivate* or *work*, *serve*, (*'abad*), and *guard* (*shamar*) in Genesis 2:15, are 'translated elsewhere in the OT as serving and guarding and can refer to priestly service and guarding in the tabernacle (Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; I Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14; see also Is 56:6). Indeed, the only other

²⁵ Conn, *Theological Perspectives*, p. 2.

²⁶ J. Jeremias, *paradeisos*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Friedrich (Vol. 5; Grand Rapids, 1967), p. 772. Cf. *Testament Of Levi* 18:10; also Matt. 11:5, cf. Isa. 35:5ff. Mark 7:37, cf. Gen. 1:31 & Isa. 35:5.

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time the OT uses both verbs together is in connection with the Levitical service and guarding of the sanctuary (Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26).²⁷ After Adam's expulsion from the garden two Cherubim were sent to *guard* (the same verb is used in Genesis 3:24 as in 2:15, *shmr, to guard, keep*) the garden-sanctuary of God. This in turn becomes,

memorialised in Israel's temple, when God commanded Moses to make two statues of Cherubim and station them on either side of the ark in the Holy of Holies. Moreover, in Ezekiel's new temple, the walls of the holy place are profusely engraved with garden emblems, while the function of the cherubim as guardians of the divine sanctuary reappears in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple.²⁸

Thus Adam's priestly role²⁹ in the first sanctuary-garden is taken up and amplified in a series of narrowing, concentric, typological circles; 'Adam's role in Eden was to extend the contours of the garden to the whole world, since this is the transition that finally occurs in Revelation 22. As such, the presence of Adam in the garden presages Israel's role in its world, and then that of Christ as well.'³⁰ First we note the priestly role of the people of Israel serving the nations in the (fallen) garden-sanctuary of the world (Exod. 19:5-6, 'Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests'). This is followed by the priestly role of the Levites serving Israel in the emblematic garden-sanctuary of the Tabernacle and Davidic Temple. Then follows the high priesthood of the Son of David, Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:1), the True Israel, serving all nations in the temple of his flesh (John 2:19-22).³¹ His inaugurating the restoration of access to the garden-sanctuary of communion with God is followed by the creation of a 'royal priesthood' of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), extending and

²⁷ W. J. Dumbrell, 'Genesis 2:1-17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation', *Biblical Theology, Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. S. J. Haffeman (Leicester, 2002), p. 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 61, 'the original inhabitant of the garden, Adam, [had] a pronounced priestly/kingly character'.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³¹ In John 4 Jesus informs the Samaritan woman that, 'her convictions about the true temple were never on track, and even the Jerusalem temple that she rejected is now superseded. Worship of God is in Spirit and Truth. What is implicit here is explicitly related in Jn. 14:16: Jesus is the truth' (G. L. Goldsworthy, 'The Great Indicative: An Aspect of a Biblical Theology of Mission', *Reformed Theological Review* 55.1 (1996), p. 11).

participating in Christ's priesthood, incorporated into Christ's Body, and being built into a living Temple (1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Pet. 4-5), finally to climax in the eschatological garden-sanctuary, where 'the dwelling of God shall be with men' once more (Rev. 21: 3), and where 'the leaves of the tree' of life shall be 'for the healing of the nations' (Rev. 22:2).

The broken 'Covenant of Life', made with Adam in the Garden, which was originally orientated to the inclusion of all the earth, led to the expulsion of humanity from communion with YHWH, but is taken up once more in the covenantal action of Jesus, the Last Adam, who fulfils the stipulations of the Adamic suzerain-vassal covenant. In doing so, the Last Adam inaugurates a process of restoration to the paradise of God. Into this priestly ministry the new Covenant community is drawn as it extends the boundaries of the garden-sanctuary of the Last Adam's dominion over all the earth, through its preaching of the gospel, and the establishment of churches as 'little-Edens', where the eschatological fullness of a restored Paradise is glimpsed by the world, and enjoyed by the New Israel of God. The relevance of such a perspective for the task of planting churches is seen when we recognise that the Church is,

established on earth as the house of God, the place where His glory dwells, and to which the nations are drawn. God's praises are drawn from the new Zion, and the nations are called to join the song (Is. 25:6-8; 52:7-10; 60:1-3; Ps 96:3). The church is prefigured in the house of God's dwelling in Zion (Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5 cf. Heb. 12:22; Phil. 3:20). In Christ, God's promises are fulfilled; the door is opened for the gentiles to be drawn in.³²

The Church is called to participation in the work of the Last Adam, as he fulfils the covenant obligation to 'fill the earth and subdue it' through the ministry of gathering communities that are characterised by the enjoyment of an inaugurated Paradise. Churches are planted because the Garden of God is growing, until its boundaries encompass all nations. Those churches serve as signs and samples of life in that Garden, and as agents in its extension.

The Abrahamic covenant: embracing the nations

The promises to Abram, following on the call to leave his father's household, form the next central element in the unfolding programme of God for the mission of the Church in the world. The particularising words, indicating YHWH's election-commissioning of Abram, at the beginning of

³² E. Clowney, *The Church* (Leicester, 1995), p. 162.

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Genesis 12, must be understood against the wider, universal context of chapters 1-11, specifically the 'table of nations' in Chapter 10 and the Tower of Babel narrative in Chapter 11. The 'table of nations' signals the spread and diversity of fallen humanity, while chapter 11 indicates their characteristic rebellion. Building a great tower at Shinar, they sought to 'make a name' for themselves and 'not be scattered over the face of the whole earth' (Gen. 11:4). God responded judicially by confusing their languages and effecting their scattering. However,

God initiates differentiation in judgement on man's arrogant attempt to correct the divisive impact of sin by unity in man's honour. Yet, at the same time, the very relationship of the history of Babel to both the table of nations and the covenant promises given to Abraham imply that the judicial act of God at Babel may be a redemptive judgement. God's intervention had an ultimately redemptive purpose for the nations.³³

Understanding the significance of Genesis 12:1-3 within this universal context, as an indication of a missiological purpose, is fully congruent with the unfolding drama of God's redemption, and, as we will see, the New Testament's use of the Abrahamic covenant as programmatic for the planting of churches.

Blessing on three horizons

Basic to the call of Abram is the Divine initiative, 'I will make... I will bless... I will make... I will bless...' (12:1-3). God is the sovereign electing Lord, who bestows blessing and selects Abram for his own purposes. However, those purposes are not altogether inscrutable, for everywhere in these three verses, and in their context, are indications of the plan of YHWH to bring the whole earth into the elect blessedness Abram enjoys. God's selection of Abram was, 'the beginning of the restoration of the lost unity of mankind, of broken fellowship with God',³⁴ that would find its ultimate resolution in the undoing of the confusion of tongues in Christ's gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:4ff.). Fundamental to the embryonic Abrahamic Covenant³⁵ as it is recorded in vv.1-3 is the emphatic, 'bless' (*brk*) or 'blessing' (*brkh*). Five times they are repeated in these three

³³ Conn, *Theological Perspectives*, pp. 4-5.

³⁴ Conn, *Theological Perspectives*, p. 7.

³⁵ '[T]he covenantal structure is apparent' (B. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, 2001), p. 205).

verses,³⁶ so that, while the pericope commences with a word of command, to 'leave your father's country' (v.1), the duty required of Abram is clearly to be understood as a resting on the promises of 'blessing' by faith. Moreover, consistent with the passage's 'particularism of grace' that eyes the whole earth (an ultimate universalism) as its goal, this five-fold blessing may indicate the negation of the five curses pronounced on the whole human race in chapters 1-11 (see, 3:4, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25).³⁷ It is significant to note the three 'expanding horizons'³⁸ on which the successive promises of blessing are to be outworked. First, God calls Abram out of his father's house and pledges him the blessing of a land of his own, 'the land I will show you' (12:1), and a 'great name' (12:2). Secondly, God will make Abram into a blessed nation (12:2), and then thirdly, God will expand the horizons of Abram's blessings to encompass 'all the peoples on earth' (12:3). In each of these 'horizons' the blessing promised connects to redemptive-historical trajectories that run throughout the biblical plot-line to climax in the work of Christ, in whose ministry all who believe in him share. We will indicate only some of these in what follows.

Great names and promised seed

In making Abram's 'name great' (12:2) the LORD is giving in free grace what humanity sought to gain by its own efforts at the Tower of Babel (11:4). 'What was sought in Shinar by autonomous human effort – the restoration of cosmic-cultic focus and the great name – was bestowed on Abraham as a promissory grant.'³⁹ The bestowal of the great name involves more than the accumulation of reputation and influence, it signalled the blessedness of the bearer of the name, along with their posterity. The closest biblical parallel to the idea of 'the great name' here, is found in 2 Samuel 7:9 where God promises David to 'make your name great'. The only other occurrences are, significantly, with reference to God's own name. The great name then, is a royal aspiration, connected to

³⁶ Compared with only five times in chapters 1-11, cf. 1:22, 28; 2:3; 5:2; 9:1.

³⁷ Cf. G. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco, 1987), p. 270.

³⁸ B. Waltke, *Genesis*, p. 203.

³⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, p. 294; cf. G. Von Rad, *Genesis* (London, 1972), p. 160, 'Yahweh now intends to give what men attempted to secure arbitrarily.'

the bestowal of God-like character on ancient near-Eastern kings.⁴⁰ It was *this* that was sought by the tower builders at Babel, a royal, God-like name-character. It was *this* that God uniquely possesses, and *this* he graciously bestowed on Abram, then later on David, and from them, through Jesus Christ, on their Jewish and Gentile 'seed' (Gal. 3:19).

Further, the blessing and cursing involved in Abram's call (12:3) is 'an allusion to the creation account. These links confirm that Abraham is of the seed of the woman'⁴¹ (see 1:22, 28). Indeed the creation connections indicate that when YHWH promises to grant the land to Abram's 'seed', (*l'zr'k*), Genesis 12:7, it is difficult to avoid the allusion to Genesis 3:15 and the promise of the 'seed' of the woman (*zr'h* : from *zr'*, 'seed, offspring'). The elect line continues to find expression in the seed of Abraham; it is from among Abraham's descendants, his seed, that we are to look for *the* Seed of the woman, in whom Eden will be restored and the serpent's head crushed. Moreover the New Testament sees in the promise of the Seed both a *corporate* fulfilment, and an *individual* one.

The promise of a *corporate* seed finds partial fulfilment in the formation of the covenant community of Israel (Num. 23:10; 1 Kgs 4:20; 2 Chron. 1:9, Acts 3:25), but its consummation only in the New Covenant community of believing Jews and Gentiles (Gen. 12:3 and Rom. 4:16-18; Gal. 3:29; Rev. 7:9).⁴² Central to God's design then, is the formation of an elect community on earth, who will become instruments of regeneration. In short, in view is the planting of churches. Thus, according to Paul (Rom. 4:16-17), his converts, which are being gathered into visible churches all over the world, from among 'all peoples on earth' (Gen. 12:3) have Abraham as their father.

Paul also takes up the promise of the *individual* Seed in Galatians 3:16-29, 'The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds', meaning many people, but 'and to your seed', meaning one person, who is Christ.' In Christ, Paul recognises the unique Seed of Abraham, in whom all that Israel failed to accomplish that was prophesied of it, and all the blessings it never enjoyed that were promised to it, are now fulfilled. Moreover, Paul recognised that by faith Jew and Gentile alike are incorporated into Him, and therefore he can say without contradiction, 'If you belong to Christ, then *you* are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3:29). Thus

⁴⁰ Cf. the language of Psalm 2, where the Davidic King is declared by God to be 'my Son' and, by virtue of his enthronement, God has become his 'Father'. (vv.6-9).

⁴¹ Waltke, *Genesis*, p. 203.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 210.

because of the *one* Seed, the *corporate* Seed of Abraham is called into existence as of the covenant community, in union with Christ.

Furthermore, the missiological scope of the Abrahamic covenant becomes still more unequivocal when we notice the intertextual connections of the promise of God to make Abram a blessing (12:2). The grammatical construction of this clause is found in only two other places in the Hebrew Bible, Isaiah 19:24-25, and Zechariah 8:13.⁴³ Both maintain the same theme; Israel will mediate the blessings of Abraham to the nations in their eschatological restoration.⁴⁴ Focusing on Isaiah 19:24, we read that, along with Israel's enemies, Egypt and Assyria, Israel will be 'a blessing [*brkh*, cf. identical use in Gen. 12:2] on the earth'. This verse is significant because, with v.25, it indicates the inclusion of two of Israel's bitterest enemies in covenant beatitude, 'The LORD Almighty [note the covenant Name] will bless them [cf. Gen.12:2] saying, "Blessed [*baruk*] be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.'" Egypt, Assyria, and Israel are co-ordinated, and given appellations that indicate covenant inclusion. They are blessed, with language that is identical to Genesis 12, and, as though to resolve any doubt about the connection to the call of Abram, the *precise construction* found in Genesis 12:2 is repeated. Israel, along with Egypt and Assyria, standing in covenant unity, will, like Abram, be a blessing on the earth. Israel will become the instrument of extending the restored garden-sanctuary of God, seen in embryo in Eden, and in type in the land promised to Abraham, over the whole world.

Yet this extension of the kingdom-reign of YHWH necessarily involved a clash of world and life views that, for his physical 'seed' would entail warfare, for, 'Abraham's arrival (*when it came*) in the land was confrontational. The land was not unclaimed territory but occupied by the Canaanites, in whose midst Abraham erected the altar-claim of his God.'⁴⁵ Establishing the covenant community of YHWH involved erecting the alter-claim of God in the midst of Canaanite paganism. It involved, at base, a worldview confrontation. In planting New Covenant communities of Jesus Christ in a postmodern world, that same process of worldview confrontation still obtains, as the Church erects among 'all nations' the

⁴³ Wenham, *Genesis*, p. 275.

⁴⁴ Zechariah 8:13 reads, 'As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing.' Once again, as in Isaiah, the blessings mediated by Abraham will be mediated by Israel in the era of eschatological renewal and return.

⁴⁵ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, p. 336.

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altar-claim (or to put it differently, *the metanarrative*) of Jesus Christ, and extends the boundaries of his dominion.

*Covenant indicatives and missionary imperatives*⁴⁶

In the light of the above, it is clear that we are to understand Genesis 12, with the biblical writers, as indicating that Abraham was to be the vehicle of worldwide blessing; 'all peoples on earth will be blessed through you'. The renewal and extension of the garden-sanctuary of Eden over the entire world is firmly in view. That Paul repeatedly founded the great rationale for his church planting activities among the Gentiles upon the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12-17 indicates that more than a basis for the Pauline doctrine of justification apart from 'the works of the law' is being asserted. In Romans 2-5 and in Galatians, Paul is careful to explain his doctrine of justification by faith alone as resting on the believing pattern set by Abraham in which 'he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness' (Gal. 3:6 *cf.* Gen. 15:6). Paul in Galatians 3 shows that 'God's promise-arrangement with Abraham was made synonymous with the gospel of grace.'⁴⁷ The result being, that Jewish Paul could say of Abraham to his Gentile hearers, 'He is the father of us all' (Rom. 4:16). However it is precisely because of this connection to the Abrahamic Covenant that Paul *goes* to the Gentiles with the gospel of covenant inclusion. The Abrahamic Covenant is therefore programmatic for the Church's mission, not only because it indicates the *scope* of the blessing, 'all peoples on the earth' (Gen. 12:3), but because it provides, in the gospel itself, the *rationale* for New Covenant universalism. The Pauline doctrine of Justification (that is, inclusion in Abrahamic blessedness) simply follows the paradigm Abraham set; he believed God.

Thus, when we seek a rationale for the planting of assemblies of the New Covenant community, we can do no better than to recover the Reformed emphasis on what we might call the great Abrahamic Indicative; justification by faith alone according to the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant, just as Paul did. It was the free grace of the gospel that provided the *indicative* upon which the Pauline missionary *imperatives* were founded. Paul *planted churches* because the gospel of gracious covenant inclusion was no longer confined primarily to Israel. It could no longer be contained, and was not meant to be so, to Jews alone. Now Christ had come, the doors of covenant belonging were flung wide. The path into the

⁴⁶ This language is borrowed from Goldsworthy, 'The Great Indicative', pp. 2ff.

⁴⁷ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, p. 294.

New Israel, like the path to the Edenic paradise, was made available to all in Christ. However this Indicative of grace, propelling the Pauline mission to the Gentiles as it did, carried within it an *imperative* to form those who became the 'seed of Abraham' by faith, into distinct covenant communities. In short Paul *planted churches* because, 'Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness'. To affirm justification by faith alone, and yet fail to labour to establish assemblies of the justified – to plant churches in other words – was an inconceivable paradox.⁴⁸

THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

The current crisis that confronts the churches calls them with renewed vigour to mission. The nature of life in today's Scotland itself *mandates* church planting. Further, we have seen that throughout redemptive-history the gathering of a worshipping community that enjoys a foretaste of the coming eschatological restoration of the Edenic sanctuary of God has always been at the heart of God's plan. That plan finds its shape through the covenantal development of history. All of the relationships sustained by the Triune God are covenantal in form. The *rationale* for church planting in large part must therefore derive from its integration into the purposes of God throughout the *historia-salutis*. If we can say that planting churches is part of the gospel, we can also say with confidence that sensitivity to that gospel as it is articulated in Scripture will lead to a covenantal approach to church planting. As we conclude, we are concerned to outline the contours of this covenantal approach in a way relevant to the contemporary Scottish situation.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Again, in fuller discussion something needs to be said about the place of the Mosaic covenant. Suffice it to say that, in the structure of the Pentateuch, the Sinaitic Covenant is the partial fulfilment, consolidation, and development of the Abrahamic Covenant. Thus Sinai dovetails carefully with the unfolding *Missio Dei* ('mission of God') initiated in Eden and given programmatic form in the Abrahamic Covenant.

⁴⁹ We cannot now outline in any depth the practicalities involved in planting churches. That techniques and mechanisms are of some use, we do not deny. However, it has been our conviction throughout this paper that, while a great deal has been written on a pragmatic basis to support and facilitate church planting, there has been very little rigorous theological thinking about the task. Following an incarnational model, it is our view that the reflective practitioner can only ultimately derive a more prescriptive programme of 'do's and 'don't's for the planting of churches from within their own particular context and environment. We are seeking here only to

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There are two crucial motifs that help outline a theological approach to church planting that is both contextual and sensitive to the covenantal contours of Scripture. First, church planting must be viewed as a vehicle for the advancement of the *missio Dei*. The Church has been brought into the circle of the intra-Trinitarian economy, an economy that is deeply covenantal in form. The planted church is an executor of the mission of the Triune God. Secondly, and arising directly from the former, church planting must be fundamentally incarnational. That is, it must be concerned for the development of a thoroughly contextualised community of faith, proclaiming a contextualised gospel.

The covenant of redemption and the 'missio Dei'

We have noted that the *task* of planting churches is rooted in every successive unfolding of the covenant structure of redemptive-history. When we begin to ask what *form* a church plant should take, we must look behind the temporal covenants that demark the progression of human history, to the eternal intra-Trinitarian economy. Here the Reformed tradition points to the eternal compact entered into by God the Father with God the Son, as Mediator of his people, in which the Son promises to accomplish the work of redemption by his active and passive obedience, and the Father pledges to save and redeem his people by his Son, and to glorify his Son with the 'name that is above every name'. Scripture alludes to this pre-temporal intra-Trinitarian covenant in many places. In John's Gospel for example, Christ declares 'the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does' (5:19). There is a relationship of obedience and dependence that reflects the subordination of Christ as mediator to the Father. This role-relationship is explained in terms of the Father's bestowal of specific tasks upon the Son. He is to give life (v.21). The Father has 'entrusted all judgement to the Son' (v.22). Jesus conceives of the Father as 'the one who sent me' (v.24), and he declares that his ministry is to 'seek not to please myself but him who sent me' (v.30). Jesus therefore was conscious of having been given a redemptive task by the Father, and saw himself as the Servant of the Lord, pursuing His

make a case for broad missiological principles that will inform such a contextual programme. For examples of a more pragmatic approach to the doing of church planting see S. D. Faircloth, *Church Planting for Reproduction* (Grand Rapids, 1991); A. Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, 1992), H. Conn, *Planting and Growing Urban Churches* (Grand Rapids, 1997).

pleasure. In John 6:37-39 he announces that 'all that the Father gives me will come to me.... For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me...'. The Father, in sending the Son, has given him a people to save and never lose. Moreover, Jesus' own impending death is understood by him in terms of the commandment of the Father, 'No-one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father' (John 10:18). In John 17, he acknowledges that the Father 'granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him' (17:2).⁵⁰

The concept of an intra-Trinitarian engagement of the Son by the Father is basic to the life, ministry, and self-understanding of Christ. Historically, this engagement has been described, at least in the Reformed tradition, in terms of the 'covenant of redemption'.⁵¹ What is significant for our purposes is the link made by Christ himself between *his* work, in fulfilment of the covenant-mission of the Triune God, and the mission of the *Church*. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' Then he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven' (John 20:21-23). Of vital importance here is the enlarging of the mission of the Triune God ('as the Father has sent me') to include, not only the Persons of the Godhead, but the Church ('I am sending you'), living in mystical union

⁵⁰ Cf. Luke 22:29, which demonstrates that the relation of Son to the Father in the redemptive economy has the form of a covenant: 'I confer [*diatithemai*; confer by a *covenant*] on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred [*dietheto*] one on me.' Jesus' bestowal of the Kingdom upon his people is a *covenantal* action towards them that rests upon a *prior covenantal action* of the Father towards him. See also, Ps. 89:3 (based on 2 Sam. 7:12-14 and cited in Heb. 1:5 as Messianic); Isa. 42:6; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 1:4, 3:9, 11; 2 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; Jas 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:2.

⁵¹ Mastricht, a Mark, Owen, Dickson, Durham, Rutherford, Turretin, Witsius, Heppe, the Hodges, Shedd, Vos, Bavinck and Honig, and more recently Kline and Reymond, have all espoused this view. However, some Reformed theologians, not denying the covenantal intra-Trinitarian relation, have preferred to speak of it as a part of the one covenant of grace. Of this view were, most notably, Thomas Boston, and Abraham Kuyper. John Murray and B. B. Warfield preferred not to speak of a *covenant* so much as of a 'redemptive economy', or simply of the 'plan of salvation'.

with its risen Lord. All three Persons are here represented; the Father, who sent Christ, then Christ who sends the Church, and the Spirit, with whom the Church is invested that they may carry on Christ's work of ministering the forgiveness of sins to a fallen world. We have already noted how the covenant-commission of Matthew 28 has the gathering of communities of discipleship in view. We should further note, however, that the Matthean emphasis on baptism into the Triune name of God at the command of the Risen Christ signals the participation of the disciple, with the believing community, in the covenant life and mission of the Trinity. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus the missiological scope of the covenant of redemption is enlarged to embrace the Church as the members and instruments of Christ in the covenant of grace. In baptism the Church is united to Christ, and becomes the instruments of His ongoing fulfilment of the covenantal role laid upon him from eternity. In short, the *missio ecclesiae* has become a subset of the one *missio Dei*. 'It is exactly in the Trinitarian life that we find the archetype of the historical covenants',⁵² says Berkhof; the historical outworking of the missionary plan of God in the covenants arises from, and is patterned after, the pre-temporal covenant within God himself.

Turning to contemporary trends in missiology we note a significant paradigm shift paralleling this conception of the grounds and patterns for Christian mission. Bosch, speaking of the 1952 Willingen Conference notes that here, perhaps for the first time in modern missiology,

Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put into the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the '*missio Dei*' as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.⁵³

This fresh insight in modern missiology dovetails well with the systematic-theological and redemptive-historical insights of Reformed theology and, through the concept of the covenant of redemption, can help establish a robust reformed theology of mission.⁵⁴ In considering the task

⁵² L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London, 1971), p. 266.

⁵³ D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York, 2002), p. 390.

⁵⁴ Indeed, there are signs that this is an emphasis to which contemporary Reformed theologians are not insensitive. Clowney can write, 'Mission expresses' the purpose for which Christ came into the world, and the

of church planting we must understand how it fits into the participation of the Church in the *missio Dei*.

Incarnation, contextualisation, and church planting

The heart of the covenantal *missio Dei* was the sending of the Son, the Incarnation. Thus, if the covenant of redemption is the archetype of the historical covenants, and the *missio Dei* is the model for the *missio ecclesiae*, then the incarnation is more than the defining event of history; it is also the great paradigm for the missionary methods of the Church. Newbigin's comment here is apposite,

Even Jesus himself speaks of his words and works as not his own but those of the Father. His teaching is the teaching of the Father, and his mighty works are the work of the Father... the mighty works of Jesus are the works of God's kingly power, of his Spirit. So also with the disciples. It is the Spirit who will give them power and the Spirit who will bear witness. It is not that they must speak and act, asking the help of the Spirit to do so. It is rather that in their faithfulness to Jesus they become the place where the Spirit speaks and acts.⁵⁵

Jesus' words and works were given to him by the Father and done in dependence upon the Spirit. So it must be with his Church. Further, when we recognise that the incarnation involved, from beginning to end, a ministry of self-denial with the twin foci of service to God, and service for the world, the shape of the mission of the Church becomes clearer. Christ's mission was a ministry of complete self-giving and self-negation. When we ask how, when faced with a Scottish society increasingly removed from the church's modernist institutions and traditional target groups, can it best live up to this incarnational paradigm, the answer must surely lead us to think of church planting.

To establish a new church should signal a desire to en-flesh the life of the Body of Christ in a fresh, risky, and perhaps costly way in a new community and environment. It implies a facing up to the mandate and imperatives laid upon the Church by the current situation and the biblical witness. Above all, it demonstrates a resolve to pattern ourselves, in our life together, after our Saviour. It is the church that is sensitive to the Bible's plot-line that will embody its central drama before the world in

purpose for which he sends us into the world. His purpose is the purpose of the Father' (*The Church*, p.161).

⁵⁵ L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (London, 1991), pp. 117-18.

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planting new churches. It will enact the gospel it proclaims, clothing itself with the concerns and perspectives of the people it seeks to reach, while pointing beyond these to the ultimate concern of God for them in Christ, and it will do so most physically and demonstrably when it finds ways to reproduce itself throughout Scotland.

Following from this, church planting in today's Scotland must be an expression of an attempt to follow Christ in standing against societal evils as well as announcing spiritual salvation. 'Like its Lord,' writes David Bosch, 'the church-in-mission must take sides *for* life and against death, *for* justice and against oppression.'⁵⁶ Context therefore becomes as significant a factor in shaping the structures and ministry of a church plant as its theological presuppositions. In short, the incarnation as a paradigm *means* contextualisation, and church planting in contemporary Scotland will be an act, perhaps *the* act, of responsible contextualisation. The congregation labouring carefully to articulate truth with cultural sensitivity is the greatest 'hermeneutic of the gospel' by which the life and power of gospel truth is embodied and in which the person and work of Jesus Christ is seen. Furthermore,

Insofar as it is true to its calling it becomes the place where men and women and children find that the gospel gives them the framework of understanding, the 'lenses' through which they are able to understand and cope with the world.⁵⁷

The Church then, enables the world to understand and respond to Christ but it also enables those it has gathered from the world to understand and cope with the reality of life while they still remain.

The shape of a Scottish church plant

If the Incarnation forms the paradigm for the mission of the Church, we must therefore conceive of the Church as a self-sending, self-giving community that seeks constantly to 'become flesh and dwell amongst' new peoples and social contexts. Contextual self-reproduction is basic to the incarnational model. Such churches become hermeneutical tools that bridge the understanding gap between the social context and the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. This means that the *shape* of the church plant will grow out of a critical reflection on the social context and the biblical-theological data. In other words, 'Church planting is not Church cloning...

⁵⁶ D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 426.

⁵⁷ L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, p. 227.

it will be necessary to consider to what extent the existing form of church reflects the sub-culture from which it comes. Such an evaluation is important because, in all probability, ways of relating, the process of learning, styles of leadership and decision-making structures will be different in the new area.⁵⁸

Church-planting in postmodern Scotland will therefore mean the creation of radical communities where relationships are central, where acceptance of all people is unconditional, and where questions of authority, structures, and hierarchy, give way to more ultimate questions about finding God in a chaotic world. It is an undoubted strength of the church plant that its small scale, vulnerability, and outward focus, make it far more able to develop patterns of ministry that facilitate creative and redemptive interaction with today's society. It does not have the problem of inherited traditions that must be undone. It is free to engage in truly responsive incarnational mission. The reality for the majority of Scottish churches, across traditions, is that they are largely middle-aged, middle-class ghettos, longing to reach the rest of society but unwilling to face the challenges the incarnation forces upon them. We must live *for* and *among* those to whom we are called to minister. The church plant, to follow the incarnational paradigm, must strive to reach those around it, and its leaders should arise from there, and live there.⁵⁹

While so much that is important in the structure and method of a church plant arises from its social context it must never lose sight of its ultimate responsibilities. It exists before all else for God and towards God. It is to be a community of disciples who live to praise and adore the Triune God. Doxology is the final goal of missiology and ecclesiology. This Godward focus should be apparent in the life of every church plant. It is, after all, to be a foretaste of the restored Eden-Sanctuary of God on earth. Its worship life should therefore be carefully developed to demonstrate and provide an experience of communion with God. That will not mean simply restating what has always been done, or arbitrarily rejecting it because it is no longer fashionable in the particular Christian sub-culture to which we belong. Rather, we must look *up* with renewed awe to our God, and *around* with renewed yearning to our society, and ask how we might ensure our praise is Christ centred, saturated with reverence and joy, while accessible

⁵⁸ S. Timmis, *Multiplying Churches* (Fearn, 2002), p. 106.

⁵⁹ For an excellent defence of the Incarnational model and its implications for living amongst those to whom we minister see, V. Grigg, 'Sorry! The Frontier Moved', *Planting and Growing Urban Churches*, ed. H. Conn (Grand Rapids, 1997), pp. 154 ff.

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and intelligible to those among whom we live and serve. Once again, the freedom of the church plant to develop its liturgy argues powerfully for its missiological importance.

For most of us this will mean asking how far our liturgy has become identified with our church culture, denominational history and traditions, and a willingness, in a church plant situation to ask how, in an urban environment for example, can our liturgy become fully owned by *this* constituency, while retaining its God-ward focus.⁶⁰ While this kind of self-evaluation may be painful, it is an undoubted implication of the incarnational model. For church planting to be meaningful it cannot be 'church cloning'. It must be driven by a gospel agenda that seeks to communicate Christ across barriers of class and ethnicity. For many of our churches this is not a task that has come naturally.

Church planting is an act of obedience to the covenant-commission of the Risen Christ and as such is a participation in his continued obedience to the covenant commission he has received from the Father. This *missio Dei* calls the Church to an incarnational model of mission which, we have argued, must result in the establishing of new congregations rooted in their local contexts which, with sensitivity to the imperatives of the gospel and the learning-styles of the surrounding culture, both model and proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified. This will certainly mean a reassessment of the forms and traditions of church structure and liturgy, but above all it will mean a movement towards fresh usefulness in the ongoing programme of the Triune God for the gathering of the nations into his Church, that there they might participate together in the praise of the Sanctuary being rebuilt in Jesus Christ.

⁶⁰ For an insightful treatment of the questions of worship and postmodernity see, Drane, *McDonaldization*, pp. 85-111. Drane is challenging, but in our view seeks to shape the worship of the church around the concerns of postmodernity, rather than around the primary aims for which it is instituted. We rather believe that true worship is Godward. It is not a 'celebration of the faith'. It is the expression of adoration and reverence for *God* revealed in Jesus Christ. Thus his concerns must meet and interact with ours, but ours are always subordinate to his. It is God and his Word that must shape our praise therefore.

REVIEWS

The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation

Leland Ryken

Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2002; 336pp., \$15.99; ISBN 1 58134 464 3

We cannot do anything about the proliferation of English Bible translations. They will keep coming. This is something to lament, not to celebrate. People are not more biblically literate as more and more English translations are available. On the contrary, they know less and less about the content of the Bible (p. 196).

This quotation serves to highlight the issue which Leland Ryken, Professor of English at Wheaton College, Illinois, is addressing in this book. Aware of the fact that the last two decades have seen a profusion of new translations of the Bible in English, Ryken's concern is to examine the principles which underlie the task of Bible translation. Reading his book, one is aware both of a burden and of a passion: a burden for the Word of God, which, he contends, some modern versions have failed to communicate fully, and a passion to highlight those principles which will secure excellence in Bible translation.

But this is no mere academic discussion of the merits of essential literalism over dynamic equivalence. It is a devastating critique of all translations which have applied the dynamic equivalence theory, on the basis that it is enough to communicate the *thought* of a passage. Translations like the NIV, the New Living Translation and *The Message*, are all flawed at this point, according to Ryken. By not paying attention to the individual words of the original text, they are guilty of obscuring much of the original world of the text as well as its literary qualities.

In fact, Ryken's work is the exposition of a simple principle: that any translation has to respect the words of the original speaker. When these words are the words of God, the importance of the task is magnified. Many modern translations, according to Ryken, have adopted fallacious pre-judgements: such as that the Bible is uniformly simple, or that it is essentially modern, or that the ultimate goal of translation is readability, or that we should translate as if the Bible writers were living today, or

that we should assume that readers are unfamiliar with the Bible, or that we need to eliminate figurative and abstract language from translation.

In fact, argues Ryken, so many fallacies abound regarding the biblical text, the art of translation and the readers of the Bible that publishers often take an *a priori* position which is at odds with the Bible's own theology of itself: that God breathed out the *words*. We may not find Mark's repeated use of 'and' to be modern, or readable, or colloquial – but, Ryken is arguing, God put them there, so we ought to keep them there!

Throughout this book, Ryken holds up the King James Version as the English version which consistently upheld the criteria for excellence in translation which he wishes modern translators to follow. While he also consistently argues that he does not wish to see a return to the uniform and uncritical acceptance of the KJV, he does not state explicitly which his preferred modern text is, although his having served on the committee of the English Standard Version and his numerous citations of the ESV is a giveaway.

Whether one accepts that the ESV is preferable to the NIV or not, it is difficult to refute the principles which Ryken articulates in this book. Modern translators have a primary obligation to translate the words which God gave, neither masking nor obscuring them in any way. Whatever our preferred translation, we would do well to visit Ryken's work, which is bound to disturb much contemporary thinking in this area.

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

Does God Have a Future? A Debate on Divine Providence

Christopher A. Hall & John Sanders

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2003; 222pp., \$17.99; ISBN 0 8010 2604 0

When the New Age movement started, some of us thought that it would fairly quickly fade away from public view, like some other Western spiritual adventures of the last decades. We were wrong. It has apparently latched on to and picked up much that was on the ground and in the air, and is culturally significant. In some ways, this might be happening with open theism. The point is emphatically not to tar it by snide association with New Age. I'm thinking not of its substance or relation to religious orthodoxies, but of its cultural significance, in this case, in relation to

Western evangelical culture. The comparison is a broad one, but the debate over open theism may turn out to be a defining moment.

What is being defined? Two key questions appear to be at stake: the substantive one concerning the nature of God and the part-substantive, part-formal one concerning the criterion for what constitutes evangelical theology. This book, where two authors of differing standpoints on the doctrine of God examine the pros and cons of classical and open theism, underscores the fact that a third question is at stake which is, in one respect, more fundamental than either. It is the question of how evangelicals conduct their disagreements. Six strong endorsements on the back cover focus on this point, and one can see why. Throughout most of the book, our minds are likely to be occupied with the substantive issues at stake, though we note what John Sanders occasionally says about the attitudes that he has encountered or treatment received. By the end, our minds are likely to be off the substantive issues and occupied more with the question of the spirit and ethos of evangelical discussion.

The contributors indeed exhibit exemplary attitudes in this volume and the point of displaying them in a published volume is well made and should be well taken. They explain that a series of email exchanges, always destined for publication in some form, have been turned into this book. It covers the topics familiar in the 'open theism' debate. So the volume is meant as a theological contribution, as well as a public exercise in the exemplification of dialogical virtue. As a 'debate' (see the subtitle) it is somewhat frustrating. It is more an exchange, though plenty of debating goes on. The problem is that John Sanders quite regularly puts pointed questions to Christopher Hall that the latter does not answer, while Sanders himself generally tries to meet the objections. It does not look as though any editorial work done on the exchange accounts for this. And, naturally, neither can respond to everything or pursue every particular item in the discussion *ad infinitum*.

As far as this reviewer is concerned, if categorical judgement be made on the merits or demerits of open theism, a firm distinction is required. Critical appraisal of classical theism or Calvinism with respect to such things as timelessness, impassibility, foreordination and evil is one thing. That is obviously not new, nor do open theists say that it is. But when Christopher Hall makes his strongest statement: 'I find the possibility of divine error to be terribly problematic and its implications, theologically and pastorally, horrific' (p. 132), we are on to something very different. This appears to me to be the crux of the matter, in an assessment of open theism. It is at this point, surely, that evangelical theology is threatened, though, in saying it, I should want to distance

myself from those who are attitudinally keen to sniff out heresy in the evangelical fold, in the way that many seem to have gone about things in North America. And in concentrating my comment on open theism, I am aware of the danger of pondering one 'side' more than the other. As far as this volume goes, Christopher Hall and John Sanders are to be thanked for the personally and theologically constructive possibilities that they have brought to this whole debate.

Stephen Williams, Union Theological College, Belfast

After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition

Richard A. Muller

Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003; x+275pp., £35; ISBN 0-19-515701-X

Muller's book comes at about the same time as the long-awaited publication of his four-volume study *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Baker, 2003). This is fortuitous, for *After Calvin* provides much of the methodological discussion important for appreciating the larger project. *After Calvin* also follows upon Muller's well-received *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (OUP, 2000), in which Muller argues skilfully and convincingly for a rigorous contextualisation of Calvin's method and theology which entails the abandonment of numerous anachronistic, twentieth-century interpretive grids. In *After Calvin*, Muller turns his attention to Calvin's successors with similar intentions: just as the traditionally 'humanist' Calvin is also scholastic (so *Unaccommodated Calvin*), so the traditionally 'scholastic' orthodox are found to be humanists, too.

Unfortunately, *After Calvin* has numerous spelling, punctuation, and printing errors in common with its forerunner. The subtitle for *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Paternoster, 1999), for instance, is regularly misprinted as 'Essays in Reappraisal' (beginning with p. 195, n.2). This is surprising given the quality of the publisher. Also, though the complaint is frequently heard, the use of very cumbersome endnotes rather than footnotes is disappointing. There is an index but no bibliography.

As for actual content, however, there is much to delight. For those already familiar with Muller's work this volume does not disappoint. It reflects the attention to detail, extensive familiarity with primary sources,

and judicious assessment Muller has led us to expect. As Muller tells us (p. v), the essays in *After Calvin* are all, with the exceptions of the introduction, one essay, and the afterword, revised and updated versions of pieces published over the course of two decades. The combination of these essays in one volume makes what might appear a redundant publication in fact a very useful one: unlike before, when one had to glean from various journals and edited volumes, one now has single-volume access to Muller's most penetrating essays on the methodology, scholarship, and thought of post-Reformation Reformed Protestantism. This alone makes the book worthy of publication; the revisions simply add to its value.

The book divides naturally into two parts, one addressing matters of method and definition and the other applying this method to specific questions, figures, and ideas. Part I consists of four essays, the first (ch. 2) dealing with the misunderstood terms 'scholasticism' and 'orthodoxy'. Reacting to the largely pejorative sense in which these terms are used, Muller argues that 'scholasticism' denotes fundamentally a common method of argument and presentation, and does not alone indicate commitment to a particular philosophical metaphysic. We can be thankful also that both parts of Muller's classic methodological essay on 'Calvin and the "Calvinists": Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy', originally published in *Calvin Theological Journal*, have been revised and included here.

In Part II, several essays will stir considerable interest. All who are involved in ministerial and theological education, whether students or professors, will benefit from Muller's discussion in chapter 6: 'Calling, Character, Piety, and Learning: Paradigms for Theological Education in the Era of Protestant Orthodoxy'. The essay on exegesis and theology (ch. 10), the piece not previously published, is also valuable and should stimulate further similar investigations. Finally, Muller's fine study of the covenant of works in seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy (ch. 11) is sure to draw attention. Among other fine points, Muller persuasively demonstrates that the Reformed orthodox understanding of 'covenant' cannot be reduced to legalism, speculation regarding the translation of *berith* and *diatheke* by *foedus*, or the effort to reduce the 'tension' between election and human responsibility (pp. 177-81).

Predicting the reception of *After Calvin* is not an easy matter, however. It is difficult to find a place where *After Calvin* is more needed than in this country, where a very recent publication of a doctoral thesis proves that the standard of scholarship for work on Calvin and the Reformed orthodox is still often very poor. In this publication, for

example, whose author I will spare from naming, little more than a dismissive nod is given to the extensive work by Muller and others on the historical and textual points at issue, and the author chooses merely to repeat in new form the heavily-criticised and, in the view of many in this field, discredited interpretive model which pits Calvin's Christ-centred approach against orthodoxy's 'legal, contractual, and introspective' theology. Unfortunately, this situation is enough to breed an ungrounded cynicism about the value of scholarship. Independent of the relative merits of Muller's arguments, a reasonable standard of scholarship would seem to demand at the very least a fair and attentive hearing as well as serious interaction at the textual and historical level. *After Calvin* is a work worthy of serious attention; for those writing on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology, to ignore Muller and the many others doing similar work would seem the worst form of scholarly obscurantism. This reviewer, at least, sincerely hopes the publication of *After Calvin* will help ensure that this state of affairs no longer persists.

Mark A. Garcia, New College, University of Edinburgh

Preaching Christ in All of Scripture

Edmund P. Clowney

Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL., 2003; 189pp, \$15.99/£8.46; ISBN 1 58134 452 X

Edmund Clowney's recent work entitled *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* is a book which utilises a combination of deductive and inductive approaches to encourage preachers of today to present Christ from every location of Scripture. The heart and mind of Clowney's conviction clearly permeates the pages of the text as he offers theoretical and practical help for understanding the central role that Christ must have in the message of the pulpit. The author's passion for Christ-centred preaching is reflected in the following statement from the preface, 'Preachers who ignore the history of redemption in their preaching are ignoring the witness of the Holy Spirit to Jesus in all the Scriptures' (p. 10). As most expect from Clowney, an emphasis on the unity of Scripture based on the single story of redemption which weaves the Testaments together is the foundation point for his argument.

Clowney's book may be divided into two main sections. The first consists of two initial chapters which substantiate Christ's presence in the Old Testament and role in preaching, respectively. The second section

of the book is the final thirteen chapters which present Clowney's own sermons that exemplify Christ-centred preaching from the Old and New Testaments.

In chapter 1 Clowney expounds his view that the key to preaching Christ in the Old Testament is 'to take into account the full drama of redemption, and its realization in Christ' (p. 11). He focuses in on Christ's presence in the Old Testament as Lord and Servant of the Covenant of Redemption. It is here that Clowney shows the way that Christ is not only anticipated in the Old Testament, but more accurately *present* in the Old Testament by the way in which he most appropriately satisfies the Lord and Servant imagery in light of New Testament characterisation of Jesus. Introducing these themes allows Clowney to move into a treatment of typology and symbolism, and other evidences of Jesus' formation in Old Testament contexts. It is at this juncture that Clowney's discussion becomes a bit cumbersome. The reader begins to feel the claustrophobia of fitting a complex hermeneutical discussion within the confines of a few pages. Clowney's discussion whets the appetite but leaves the reader hungry for clarification of terms and concepts he mentions such as typology, symbolism, analogy, allegory, identity, moralism, meaning, and 'original meaning'; more specifically, the relationships between them (*cf. esp. p. 21*). For example, is typology a kind of symbolism or synonymous with symbolism? Does the Old Testament text's 'original meaning' contain the Christological reading or should this remain distinct? How does the text, as an original message to Israel, constrain Christological interpretation (p. 44)? Clowney's discussion falls short of empowering the preacher to use or discern these ideas and terms with confidence. Despite the problems with this portion of the book, he does provide a helpful chart (p. 32) to explain his movement from the Old Testament text to the act of preaching. The chapter as a whole also presents numerous concrete examples of Christ in the Old Testament.

The tenor of the book changes a bit in the second chapter as Clowney rehearses the way in which Christ is present in sermon preparation. He does not provide systematic instructions for sermon construction, but rather reminds the reader of where Christ resides in the preparation, content, and delivery of biblical messages. Clowney's years of experience and wisdom shine through the chapter as valuable nuggets of insight and truth saturate the discussion.

The final portion and greater part of the book is a sampling of Clowney in action. His thirteen sermons are enjoyable to read and make the book worth having on the bookshelf. They exhibit in a general way

the principles presented in the first two chapters. He effectively demonstrates the depth and fruitfulness of a Christ-centred approach to preaching which is sensitive to the overarching redemption story told by the two-Testament canon. Any preacher would benefit from having Clowney's sermons as legitimate examples of preaching Christ in all of Scripture.

Steven D. Mason, University of St Andrews

On Revival: A Critical Examination

Andrew Walker and Kristin Aune (eds)

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2003; 252pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 84227 201 2

Some, at first glance, may bemoan the release of yet another treatise on 'revival', but this is surely one of the most honest, thoughtful and relevant appraisals of the subject to have been published in modern times. Based on a two-day symposium held in London in 2002, no fewer than 16 scholars bring together the separate fruits of their observations and studies regarding one of the most discussed (and misunderstood) topics in the church today. Each 'paper' comes under one of three headings – theological, historical or contemporary; the latter two focusing particularly on the UK situation – though there is a fair amount of interplay between groupings. While the contributors – who come from a wide range of evangelical traditions and academic disciplines – have differences of opinion on certain matters, there is general consensus on some major issues.

The most obvious of these is the looseness of meaning of the word 'revival' itself. It is used in many contexts to mean many different things; hence the sub-division of the term by Steve Latham / Andrew Walker into six categories (p. 172):

- R1: a spiritual quickening of the individual believer
- R2: a deliberate meeting or campaign to deepen the faith of believers and bring non-believers to faith
- R3: an unplanned period of spiritual enlivening in a local church
- R4: a regional experience of spiritual quickening and widespread conversions
- R5: societal or cultural 'awakenings'
- R6: the possible reversal of secularisation and 'revival' of Christianity as such.

R5 and R6 are in fact extremely rare events; the term 'revival' generally being understood by evangelicals to refer to R3 or R4 events. This leads to another area of agreement among writers – the necessity of differentiating between 'revival' and 'revivalism'. The latter depends on human efforts rather than being a spontaneous work of God, and thus generally appears as R2 (however, it is important to note that revival and revivalism may occur together in a particular setting).

Noting these basic premises, we can briefly consider a number of individual studies. Max Turner offers the most helpful answers to the question 'Revival in the New Testament?' I have read, while from an equally detailed biblical perspective, Graham Macfarlane examines the role of the Holy Spirit in awakenings. There are numerous 'Lessons from History', including Mark Stibbe's illuminations on the ministry of little known Hans Nielsen Hague during Norway's Great Awakening at the turn of the nineteenth century. Kenneth Jeffrey's essay is a condensed form of his meticulously-researched PhD thesis on the 1859-62 revival in the North East of Scotland (published by Paternoster as *When the Lord Walked the Land*, 2001), the main objective of which is to show how R2-R4 revivals vary richly in timing, duration and manifestation depending on their context (e.g. among urban, farming and fishing communities).

Andrew Walker and Neil Hudson bring to light the difficult relationship between Pentecostal revivalist George Jeffreys and the Elim denomination he established, while further (mini-)profiles are given of Welsh revivalist Evan Roberts and American Lonnie Frisbee (a 'catalytic figure' in the early Vineyard movement). Meanwhile, Mark Petterson's exposure of early nineteenth-century pre-millennialism in Britain under auspices of the Albury Circle shows the ongoing connection between revival(ism) and prophecy. Other writers disdain the many false prophecies of revival which have beleaguered the Western church in more recent times; Tom Smail rather cynically noting that 'the only revivals that I have had anything to do with are those that did not happen'! (p. 59).

Smail also wonders whether decline in the European church isn't so much due to our failure to bring about revival, but rather due to the church being under judgement and in 'exile'. Several other essays make for equally sombre reading. Some note their disapproval of human methods to secure revival, with their employment of aids such as the 'JIM' campaign, prayer warfare and an over-emphasis on human emotions. Thus, while Stibbe applauds the Toronto Blessing for holding at its centre a theology of the love of God (he describes revival as

essentially 'a falling in love with Christ'), other contributors are more wary of such phenomena-based activity. On more neutral ground, and despite all that has been previously written on the 'Blessing', Rob Warner's reflections on 'Ecstatic spirituality and entrepreneurial revivalism' add noteworthy new insights.

In yet more sober tone, Nigel Wright and Ian Stackhouse individually suggest that 'revivalistic' methods have done far more harm than good for evangelicalism; the latter writer lamenting the church's 'obsession with growth, of a numerical kind' (p. 241), and controversially pronouncing every recent evangelistic aid from seeker-sensitive evangelism to praise-marching – and even the Alpha Course – as 'faddism'. In contrast to this view, one or two writers regard 'revivalist' methods, though altogether rather 'routinised and formatted affairs', as possibly 'just as spiritually authentic' as 'higher' forms of revival (Walker / Aune p. xxii).

Even the most negative of essays offer hope; Smail looks to a 'resurrection' of the church through reflection and repentance; Stackhouse sees hope in a renewed 'understanding of and confidence in, the gospel itself' (p. 243). With so many varied points of view – and no overall 'conclusion' – the reader will undoubtedly disagree with some things stated in these pages. Yet one cannot fail to be impressed with the way difficult issues are tackled head-on, thus providing much food for personal thought as well as for public discussion; also proving a valuable source of reference (each chapter has its own mini-bibliography). With all 15 essays being of genuine interest, this fascinating study contributes significantly to the whole discussion of revival at the start of the twenty-first century, and is an almost essential tool for any serious student of revival and evangelism. Wholeheartedly, I commend it.

Tom Lennie, Orkney

First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics

Kevin J. Vanhoozer

Apollos, Leicester, 2002; 384pp., £17.99; ISBN 0 85111 207 6

The aim of *First Theology* is to do theology having God as our first thought, Scripture as our second and hermeneutics as our third. Whilst it is aimed at a scholarly constituency, there is much which is devotional about *First Theology*. Many sections require prayerful meditation while producing keener Christian discipleship.

First Theology is a collection of essays Vanhoozer has published in other forums. The author of *Is There a Meaning in This Text*, Vanhoozer

comes from a Reformed perspective. He is willing to interact and engage in meaningful dialogue with pluralists, pantheists and postmoderns.

The question of *First Theology* relates to whether we begin the process of theological understanding from the knowledge of God or from our interpretation of Scripture. Vanhoozer's introductory chapter explores and criticises each possibility. He lays down his own 'first theology': we must resist either-or and affirm both-and. Vanhoozer calls it 'theological hermeneutics' and counsels us not merely to look along, but to live along the text.

The remainder of the book is divided into three sections, each of which practises theological hermeneutics. Section one contains three chapters reflecting on God. They address the issues of pluralism, God's love and pantheism. In these chapters, Vanhoozer steers a genuinely innovative course to the safe havens of Reformed teaching. My only complaint about these chapters is that they are too short; they leave one hoping that sometime in the future Vanhoozer will devote more time to expanding and presenting them in another monograph.

Section two contains two chapters focusing on the Scriptures. Familiarity with speech-act theory allows Vanhoozer to establish a coherent and defensible doctrine of Scripture. The most significant chapter in this section, and in the whole book, is chapter 6 – 'From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts' – which gives a ten step summary of theological hermeneutics. Vanhoozer shows theological astuteness by using locution, illocution and perlocution as categories of speech-act communication. He does this in order to overcome Barthian confusion as to the inspiration of the Scriptures. Vanhoozer clears up the confusion by stating that 'the Bible is the Word of God (in the sense of its illocutionary acts) and... that the Bible becomes the Word of God (in the case of achieving its perlocutionary effects).'

Section three covers issues of hermeneutics ranging from the ethics of interpretation to understanding modern culture. This section amply shows Vanhoozer's ability to apply theological hermeneutics to a wide range of conditions and situations. The way he introduces his method in each chapter is innovative and at times entertaining. This section provides convincing evidence that theological hermeneutics is a robust first theology.

Vanhoozer's scholarship is of the highest order. His breadth of reading and quotation is vast and well marshalled. *First Theology* is easy to use with references at the foot of each page and indexes of authors and subjects at the end of the book.

As with his previous books, *First Theology* is not easy to read. Vanhoozer's writing style is dense and at times staccato. However, writing as he is in a field where not being misunderstood is as important as being understood, this is perhaps understandable. Furthermore, philosophical discourse is by definition complex. Compared to many other philosophers whom this reviewer has read, Vanhoozer's style is lucid and accurate.

First Theology is the first floor of the house Vanhoozer is erecting as the foundation of theological hermeneutics. It propels him into the front rank of evangelical scholarship. However, Vanhoozer's aim is consistently that in meeting the Christ of the Scriptures we will learn Christ and come to know him as Lord.

Colin Dow, St Vincent Street Free Church of Scotland, Glasgow

Occupy until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evangelisation of the World

Dana L. Roberts

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003; 312pp., \$32.00/£21.99; ISBN 0 8028 0780 1

Where has this man been all this time? Arthur Tappan Pierson (1837-1911) seems hardly known in Britain, though I cannot speak for the USA, where his life and ministry were based. His was a life too full even to be sketched here. Dana Roberts (Boston University) does a superb, highly readable job of covering his very extensive interests, acquaintanceship, and prolific preached and literary output, within a mere 312 pages.

The only frustration is that nothing can be dealt with in much depth. Questions came to mind, when quite bald statements were made, with little to substantiate them. These were chiefly concerned with the connections in Pierson's thinking between particular doctrinal leanings – for example, that his driving concern for evangelism and mission was enhanced by his eventual persuasion as to the validity of premillennial dispensationalism. Having said that, Roberts can well be excused, for the sake of brevity, and the book is written so capably as to draw the reader on almost 'breathlessly' to the next development in Pierson's thinking. All in all it serves well the purpose of this type of biography.

In a number of crucial respects Pierson did 'move' over the course of a long ministry, but it was mostly gradual and considered. At the same time he was a man of very deep convictions, and a passion for spiritual

realities. While many a reader may disagree with his conclusions, it would be a sad day if his motives were called into question. As so often, his work and thought should be judged in the light of the day in which he lived. In this regard, Roberts shows herself particularly adept: the intricacies of the social, political, cultural and religious scenes which unfolded over his lifetime are painted very clearly.

If space permitted, it would be good to give an outline of Pierson's leading preoccupations. At least, glaringly eminent amongst them (and thus having to be mentioned) was his innovative and thorough approach to the call upon the church, from God, to mission and evangelism. Using new 'scientific' approaches, and gathering vast amounts of information, he set out quantitative scenarios for the evangelisation of the world. Out of this grew the catch-phrase 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation', which proved such a rallying-cry for the remarkable movement into foreign missions in the latter part of the nineteenth century. As a long-term editor of *The Missionary Review*, his influence was considerable, as it was in the Britain of his day. He spent considerable time here, and both extensively influenced, and was influenced by, the British church.

Dana Roberts provides a good read, and a valuable contribution to an understanding of the multiple strands to be found in the development of the North American church, and of an important surge in international mission-work. These directions also had significant impact on the British church scene and, inevitably, on the growth of the Christian church throughout the world. A. T. Pierson played such a leading role, he deserves a biography of this calibre, in our day. Possibly, anything more substantial, of an older style, would deter some, but this book can be usefully read by any Christian – all of us need the kind of stimulus it provides. Especially with its closing section (*A Note on Sources*), for the enthusiast, it supplies an encouraging opening into what promises to be a very rewarding field. Technically, there are few notes provided with the text. If quotations are used, the reference is commonly given in the course of the text itself, and this is complemented by the *Sources* section.

On the assumption that this quality may be found in the other ten titles in this series, Eerdmans is also to be complimented on this project: the *Library of Religious Biography*.

David D. Miller, Cobham Presbyterian Church

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