

# themelios

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**Vol. 13 No. 1**

# themelios

Vol. 13 No. 1

An international journal for theological students, expounding and defending the historic Christian faith. It is published three times a year jointly by the British Theological Students Fellowship, a constituent part of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. It seeks to address itself to questions being faced by theological students in their studies and to help readers to think out a clear biblical faith.

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# Editorial:

## A model for theological students?

In many circles theology has a bad name: theologians and their ideas are seen as at best irrelevant, and at worst a dangerous and spiritually corrupting influence. Unfortunately theologians have often deserved this reputation, and it is up to those of us who are now theological students to take care that we are faithful ministers of God's truth, who further the work of God and build up the church of Christ.

How can we ensure that we do this? We could do much worse than look to Luke, the author of his gospel and also of Acts, to help us set our priorities.

Our first and central priority must be Jesus the Saviour. It is easy for those studying theology to get so tied up in theological theories and ideas that they lose sight of Jesus. Luke was excited and enthusiastic about Jesus: his gospel starts with joy at Jesus' birth and ends with joy at his ascension. Among the things that excited Luke about Jesus were, on the one hand, his care for the poor, the needy and the lost, and on the other hand, the well-attested fact of his resurrection from the dead (*cf.* Acts 1:3). This caring, historical, risen Jesus is still exciting today, and we need to keep him central in our thinking and theology.

Luke does not see Jesus as a solitary historical figure, but as the centre point of God's purpose and plan for the world. So he emphasizes Jesus as the fulfilment of the OT Scriptures (*e.g.* Lk. 4:21; 24:25,44), and as continuing his saving work through the Holy Spirit in the church. Both emphases are important for us in an age that tends to doubt the Bible and ridicule the church. Luke reminds us of Jesus' own love and use of the Bible: 'Did not our hearts burn within us when he . . . opened to us the Scriptures?' (24:32). And although Luke is well aware of imperfections and problems in the church, he believes in the practical power of the Holy Spirit leading the first Christians to a common life of sharing, of prayer, of overcoming social and racial barriers, of bold and effective mission to the world.

Of course, if we are to be effective theologians it is not just Luke's ideas that we need, but his own practical commitment to those ideas. If the author of Luke/Acts was the companion of Paul, as is probable, then he was involved practically in the mission of the church himself, no doubt at real personal cost. And his writing of Luke/Acts, which must have involved a lot of research and hard work, was itself an act of service: he wanted Theophilus to 'know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed' (1:4). If anyone wants evidence of the value of historical and theological work and thought, Luke has given it to us in his writings.

Faithful and effective theologians like Luke are not a thing only of the distant past. In this generation Colin Hemer, whose unexpected death this year deprived *Themelios* of one of our most valuable reviewers and authors, was such. Like Luke the physician he moved into theological study and writing from another profession, in his case from school-teaching. He took up NT research at Manchester University when he was well into his thirties – an encouragement to some *Themelios* readers? – and proceeded to produce an important and original thesis on the seven churches of Revelation, published recently under the title *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their local setting* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986). In this, as in the other work he went on to do, he applied his thorough knowledge of Greek and Roman history and archaeology to the NT, being convinced that Scripture is best understood, and defended from attack, by patient, honest historical work. When he died, he was well advanced with a work on the historicity of Acts, which will hopefully see publication in due course and which may well be a definitive work, significantly furthering our appreciation both of Acts and of the NT as a whole.

Colin was committed not just, or even primarily, to the academic study of the NT, but above all to the good news and service of Jesus Christ. This commitment was expressed not only in his work and in his gentle and humble manner, but also in his involvement with people, especially with overseas students visiting Britain, many of whom he befriended and helped.

Colin had a lot in common with Luke: his concern for the outsider, his self-effacing manner – Luke indicates his own presence in the Acts story through the 'we' passages, but talks about Paul, not himself! – his expert interest in things historical, especially in the history of Jesus and the church, his involvement in mission, his belief in the gospel and his confident hope in the resurrection. Luke and Colin show that theology and theological study can be profitable. Our prayer must be that ours will be also.

### TSF Bulletin

With its May-June issue the American *TSF Bulletin* ceased publication after ten vigorous and useful years. Professor Vernon C. Grounds, the editor of the *Bulletin* and President Emeritus of Denver Seminary, has agreed to become an International Editor of *Themelios*. We welcome him warmly, and also subscribers to the *TSF Bulletin* who are now receiving *Themelios*. We hope that to some extent at least the good work done by the *Bulletin* will be carried on by *Themelios*.

# 'Who is the prophet talking about?'

## Some reflections on the New Testament's use of the Old

Richard N. Longenecker

*The author is Ramsay Armitage Professor of New Testament at Wycliffe College in the University of Toronto. In this article he returns to the subject of his book Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). His other recent writings include a particularly useful commentary on Acts in the Expositor's Bible Commentary series (vol. 9, comprising John and Acts; ed F. E. Gaebelin; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).*

The question of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 is that asked by every inquiring person when reading what has come to be known as the Old Testament: 'Who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' (v. 34). And Philip's answer is the definitive response of Christian proclamation: 'Jesus' (v. 35). The movement from Scripture to Jesus, however, while seemingly simple, is a matter that requires careful delineation. For it is all too easy to reason in some deductive manner as to how early Christians must have viewed matters, given certain basic commitments, than to investigate inductively how they actually worked out their convictions in the context of the presuppositions and methodologies of the day. Three matters, in particular, call for reflection when we attempt to understand the NT's use of the OT: 1. the concept of fulfilment in the New Testament; 2. the exegetical procedures of the early Christians; and 3. the normativity of then current hermeneutical practices for Christian faith, both in that day and today.

### I. Fulfilment in the New Testament

The concept of fulfilment is at the heart of biblical theology. This is true, first of all, for the OT, where God's purposes were to be fulfilled through his covenant people Israel and where the latter prophets often explicate the former prophets. It is pre-eminently true for the NT, where the focus is on Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfilment of God's redemptive purposes for mankind.

The question is, however, as to what exactly is meant by fulfilment in the biblical sense. One answer is to assert that fulfilment has to do with direct prediction and explicit verification. Indeed, a primary test of a prophet in OT times was that his predictions could be precisely validated at a later time (Dt. 18:22; cf. 1 Sa. 9:6). And this same expectation is carried on in the NT, as witness Jesus' statement on fulfilment in Matthew 5:17-18 (even the most minute features of the prophetic vision shall be fulfilled) and many of the quotations of Scripture by the evangelists (e.g. Mk. 1:2-3, par.; Mt. 2:5-6; Jn. 12:14-15). It is, in fact, this understanding of fulfilment that Justin Martyr used to excess in his *Dialogue with Trypho*. It appears also in extreme form in many of the Church Fathers; for example, in Tertullian's claims that Genesis 49:27 ('Benjamin is a ravening wolf; in the morning

he devours the prey, and in the evening he distributes food'), 1 Samuel 18 (Saul's pursuit of David, but later repentance), and Isaiah 3:3 ('I will take away from Judah . . . even the wise master-builder') are veiled predictions of Saul of Tarsus, who was from the Judean tribe of Benjamin, and so were fulfilled in Paul's life and ministry (*Adv Marc* 5.7.10).

So-called 'proof from prophecy' of a direct nature has always been a factor in both a Jewish and a Christian understanding of fulfilment. Sadly, however, some see this as the only factor, and so lay out prophecy-fulfilment relations in a manner approximating mathematical precision. Starting from such basic theological axioms as that there is a God in charge of human affairs and that historical events happen according to his will, they point to a few obvious instances where explicit predictions have been literally fulfilled (as Mi. 5:2, quoted with variation in Mt. 2:5-6) and move on from there to construct an often elaborate and ingenious 'biblical' apologetic that is usually more 'gnostic' than biblical.

What a 'proof from prophecy' approach fails to appreciate is that other factors are involved in the NT's understanding of fulfilment. For example, there are times when an OT text in its own context is enigmatic, yet is used in the NT with Christological significance. Such a passage is Ps. 110:1 ('The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"'), which was variously understood in early Judaism — usually of God speaking to Abraham, or to David, or even to Hezekiah, but not as having messianic relevance by the rabbis until about 260 CE — yet was explicated by Jesus to clarify the nature of Messiahship and to point to himself (Mk. 12:36, par.). Stemming from Jesus' usage, this verse in fact became the scriptural bedrock of early Christian proclamation (most clearly seen in Acts 2:34-35) and the basis for further Christological reflection in the Christian church (e.g. anchoring the catena of passages in Heb. 1:5-13 as to the nature of Christ's Sonship, and triggering the use of Ps. 110:4 in Heb. 5:6-7:28 as to the nature of Christ's priesthood). There are also times when the NT quotes the OT in ways that appear quite out of context, yet claims fulfilment by Christ or in Christian experience for those passages. Romans 10:6-8 ('The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart') is one such case, for Dt. 30:12-14 (used proverbially) surely has in mind the Mosaic law, whereas Paul interprets it to mean 'the word of faith which we preach'. Likewise, Paul's use of a number of OT texts in Galatians 3-4 can be cited as not being in strict accord with their original contexts. And though the biblical argument of Galatians 3-4 is telling when understood in terms of Paul's Christian perspective and polemical purpose, his use of Scripture cannot be said to be in line with a direct prediction-explicit verification model.

Furthermore, the concept of fulfilment in the NT often has more to do with ideas of 'corporate solidarity' and 'typological correspondences in history' than with direct prediction. For example, the editorial comment of Matthew 2:15, quoting Hosea 11:1 ("So was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son" ), seems to be a rather clear case of the evangelist thinking along the lines of what has been called corporate solidarity (*i.e.*, the interchange between the nation and its representative, with the Messiah being the embodiment of Israel's hopes and the ultimate recipient of God's promises to his people) and of rereading his OT from an eschatologically realized and Christological perspective. For while in Hosea 11 'my son' appears as a collective synonym for the nation (LXX: 'his [Israel's] children') which from childhood was loved by God (v. 1) but drifted into idolatry (vv. 2-7), the evangelist's point – without taking up any of the other features in the passage, many of which would have been entirely inappropriate for his purposes – is that what was prefigured in the nation's exodus from Egypt finds its ultimate focus in the experiences of Jesus, Israel's Messiah. Likewise, Matthew 2:17-18, quoting Jeremiah 31:15 (Rachel weeping for her children), and Matthew 4:14-16, quoting Isaiah 9:1-2 (a great light appearing to the people of Zebulun and Naphtali), use certain events of the nation's history as prefigurements of Jesus' life and ministry, seeing these events as fulfilled in (1) Herod's killing of the young boys at Bethlehem (so Je. 31:15) and (2) Jesus' preaching in Capernaum (so Is. 9:1-2). Similarly, Paul invokes ideas of corporate solidarity and typological correspondences in history when he argues that Christ is Abraham's 'seed' (Gal. 3:16; *cf.* Gn. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:7-8; 22:17-18; 24:7, where 'seed' as a generic singular refers to Abraham's posterity as an entity), and that 'that rock [which followed the Israelites in the wilderness] was Christ' (1 Cor. 10:4, probably alluding to traditions based on Nu. 21:17 and Dt. 32:1ff.).

The passages cited above are only some of the more obvious instances of where the NT's understanding of fulfilment overflows any simple prediction-verification model. More elusive still, yet of great significance, are the currents of fulfilment that flow almost everywhere throughout the substrata of the NT writings. For example, as Leonhard Goppelt has spelled out in detail, underlying the common narrative of our canonical gospels are all sorts of typological connections between God's activity among his covenant people Israel and his working in the life and ministry of Jesus – connections which the earliest believers in Jesus, whose lives were lived in the ethos of Scripture, saw more clearly than we do today. Likewise, in each of the evangelists' portrayals there are redactional features that speak of fulfilment: in Matthew, of Jesus as *the Jew* who recapitulates the experiences of Israel and the one 'like' Moses whom the people are to 'listen' to (*cf.* Dt. 18:15-18); in Mark, of Jesus who leads his people out of the wilderness; in Luke, of Jesus as the prophet of eschatological promise; and in John, of Jesus as the centre of the nation's social and religious life, the fulfilment of what was typified in the nation's festivals, and the true paschal lamb. Paul also carries on such motifs in his portrayals of Christ as the obedient Son whose faithfulness to the Father in the context of Jewish covenantal nomism is the basis for mankind's redemption (*e.g.* Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 5:19).

Much has been written on each of the passages and themes referred to above (see appended bibliography for some

helpful books and articles), and much more need be said for any full treatment. The point to be made here, however, is that the concept of fulfilment in the NT is broader and more profound than usually thought. Certainly it includes direct prediction and explicit verification. We would be surprised if it didn't. But direct prediction that explicitly comes to pass is only one factor in a biblical understanding of fulfilment – and one not as prominent or prevalent as is often popularly thought. To be included as well are matters having to do with the clarification of the enigmatic, with corporate solidarity, and with typological correspondences in history, as we have suggested above.

Yet behind all our analyses of individual passages and basic to any proposed characterization of what is taking place in the NT's use of the OT stands a vitally important couplet of ideas that needs to be brought to the fore if we are ever to understand what fulfilment in a biblical sense signifies: (1) that God's plan for mankind has to do with 'achieving a truly personal relationship between himself and his people', and (2) that 'God's personal relations with man assume, for those who are sensitive to personal values, a recognizable pattern' (quoting C. F. D. Moule, 'Fulfillment-Words in the New Testament', *New Testament Studies* 14 [1968], pp. 194, 198). What the NT tells us is that in Jesus of Nazareth the early Christians saw the culmination or fulfilment of God's redemptive purposes for mankind, not principally because they could verify each of the prophecies recorded in their Scriptures but 'because they found reflected in Jesus a perfect filial relationship with God' (*ibid.*, p. 298). So they were able to look back over God's pattern of personal relationships in the past – particularly those with his covenant people Israel – and see all of those relationships coming to finality in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Or, as Moule aptly puts it: 'They had come to estimate Jesus, in his ministry, his crucifixion, and his resurrection to life, as the climax, the coping-stone, of an entire edifice of relationship. He was the inaugurator of a new and decisive covenant' (*ibid.*).

Having, then, such a view of God's purposes and their culmination, the early Christians looked to their Scriptures for prefigurements of what they had seen and experienced in Jesus. In so doing, they spelled out those prefigurements in terms of what we have categorized as (1) direct prophecy explicitly verified, (2) enigmatic passages clarified, (3) corporate solidarity, and (4) typological correspondences in history – though, admittedly, such a precise demarcation of categories would have seemed to them overly pedantic. In effect, they began with Jesus as the epitome of the divine pattern of personal relationships and worked from that estimate of him to prefigurements of such a pattern in the OT. From their Christocentric and so new revelational perspective they laid stress on 'fulfilment' – with fulfilment being understood to include everything from direct prediction precisely enacted on through typological correspondences in history.

## II. Exegetical procedures of early Christians

In addition to understanding the concept of fulfilment in the NT, it is necessary to give attention to the exegetical procedures used by early Christians in working out their convictions. Scholarship of late has focused more and more on the exegetical methods of the NT vis-à-vis those of early

Judaism. And this is entirely as it should be. For though the gospel is supra-historical in its origin and effect, it comes from a God who always incarnates his word (as witness the incarnation *par excellence*, Jesus Christ) and who uses current historical modes as vehicles for his grace (as witness, for example, the sacraments). Why, then, should it be thought unusual or un-Christian for early believers in Jesus to have interpreted their Scriptures by means of the hermeneutical canons then at hand? Indeed, how could they have done otherwise?

Jewish exegesis of the first century can generally be classified under four headings: literalist, midrashic, pesher and allegorical. Admittedly, such a fourfold classification highlights distinctions of which the early Jewish exegetes themselves may not have always been conscious. In dealing with a system of thought that thinks more holistically, functionally and practically than analytically — one that stresses precedent over logic in defence of its ways — any attempt at classification must necessarily go beyond that system's explicit statements as to its own principles. Nevertheless, we still maintain, Jewish interpretations of Scripture fall quite naturally into one or other of these four categories.

A literalist (*peshat*) type of exegesis is to be found in all strands of early Jewish interpretation. While midrashic exegesis may characterize the Talmud, rabbinic literature also contains many examples of Scripture being understood in a quite straightforward manner, with the result that the natural meaning of the text is applied to the lives of the people — particularly in applying deuteronomic legislation. The situation is somewhat similar in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where preoccupation with pesher interpretation so overshadows all other types of exegesis that one could easily get the impression that the men of Qumran never understood Scripture literally. Yet the opening lines of the Manual of Discipline commit the members of the community to a literal observance of both 'the rule [order, *serek*] of the community' and what God 'commanded through Moses and through all his servants the prophets' (1QS 1.1-3). Deuteronomic legislation, in fact, while adapted somewhat to their unique situation, was taken by the Qumran covenanters, for the most part, quite literally — even hyperliterally. Likewise Philo, while known most for his allegorical interpretations, understood certain biblical passages in a literalist fashion. Most familiar in this regard is his insistence that though allegorical exegesis is proper, it must not set aside the literal practice of the Law (*De Migrat Abr* 89-94). Philo believed, for example, that circumcision should be allegorically understood, yet practised literally (*De Migrat Abr* 92); he insisted on the eternity of the Law (*De Vita Mos* 44) and rebuked those who did not keep it (*De Exsecrat* 138-139).

The central concept in rabbinic exegesis, and presumably that of earlier Pharisees as well, was 'midrash'. The word comes from the verb *derash* ('to resort to', 'seek'; figuratively, 'to read repeatedly', 'study', 'interpret'), and strictly denotes an interpretive exposition however derived and irrespective of the type of material under consideration. In the Mishnah, the Palestinian Gemaras, and the earlier Midrashim the verbs *peshat* and *derash* are used in roughly synonymous fashion, for the earlier rabbis (the Tannaim) did not see any difference

between their literal interpretations and their more elaborate exegetical treatments. Only among the Amoraite rabbis, sometime in the fourth century CE, were literalist exegesis and midrash exegesis consciously differentiated. But while not recognized as such until later, midrashic exegesis can be seen in retrospect to have differed from literalist exegesis among the Pharisaic teachers of the NT period.

Midrashic exegesis ostensibly takes its point of departure from the biblical text itself (though psychologically it may have been motivated by other factors) and seeks to explicate the hidden meanings contained therein by means of agreed-upon hermeneutical rules (e.g. Rabbi Hillel's seven *Middot*; Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha's later set of thirteen; or Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose ha-Galili's thirty-two). The purpose of midrashic exegesis is to contemporize the revelation of God given earlier for the people of God living later in a different situation. What results may be characterized by the maxim: 'That has relevance for This' — i.e. what is written in Scripture has relevance for our present situation. In so doing, early Judaism developed what George Foote Moore once aptly defined as 'an atomistic exegesis, which interprets sentences, clauses, phrases, and even single words, independently of the context or the historical occasion, as divine oracles; combines them with other similarly detached utterances; and makes large use of analogy of expressions, often by purely verbal association' (*Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, I. 248).

The expositions in the texts from Qumran are usually introduced by the term 'pesher', which stems from the Aramaic word *pishar* meaning 'solution' or 'interpretation'. There are also instances where 'midrash' appears in the texts (e.g. 1QS 6.24; 8.15, 26; CD 20.6; 4QFlor 1, 14), though in these cases the word is used in a non-technical sense to mean only 'interpretation' generally. The Dead Sea sectarians considered themselves to be the elect community of the final generation of the present age, living in the last days of 'messianic travail' before the eschatological consummation. Theirs was the task of preparing for the coming of the Messianic Age. And so to them applied certain prophecies in Scripture that were considered to speak of their present situation.

While the rabbis sought to contemporize Holy Writ so as to make God's Torah relevant to their circumstances, the Dead Sea covenanters looked upon Scripture from what they accepted was a revelatory perspective (based on the interpretations of the Teacher of Righteousness) and emphasized imminent, catastrophic fulfilment. Their maxim seems to have been: 'This is That' — i.e. our present situation is depicted in what is written in Scripture. Qumran's pesher interpretation of the OT, therefore, is neither principally 'commentary' nor 'midrashic exegesis', though it uses the forms of both. As Cecil Roth pointed out: 'It does not attempt to elucidate the Biblical text, but to determine the application of Biblical prophecy or, rather, of certain Biblical prophecies; and the application of these Biblical prophecies in precise terms to current and even contemporary events' ('The Subject Matter of Qumran Exegesis', *Vetus Testamentum* 10 [1960], pp. 51-52).

The most prominent Jewish allegorist of the first century was Philo of Alexandria, whose expositions of Scripture were

produced during the life of Jesus and the earliest days of the church. Though a Jew, Philo was the inheritor of Stoic and Platonic ideas. And though a critic of the content of these philosophies, he used their basic categories of thought and methods in presenting to his Grecian audience what he believed to be the truth of the Jewish Torah. So he usually treated the OT as a body of symbols given by God for man's spiritual and moral benefit, which must be understood other than in a literal or historical fashion. The *prima facie* meaning must normally be pushed aside — even counted as offensive — to make room for the intended spiritual meaning underlying the obvious; though, as noted above, at times he seems willing to consider literalist and allegorical exegesis as having a parallel legitimacy. In the main, however, exegesis of Holy Writ was for Philo an esoteric enterprise which, while not without its governing principles, was to be disassociated from literalist interpretation.

But though Philo was the most prominent Jewish allegorist of the first Christian century, he was not alone. The Letter of Aristeas includes one instance of a mild allegorical treatment in its portrayal of the High Priest Eleazer's defence of the Jewish dietary laws (see 150-170; esp. 150: 'For the division of the hoof and the separation of the claws are intended to teach us that we must discriminate between our individual actions with a view to the practice of virtue'). Jacob Lauterbach has identified two groups of Palestinian Pharisees active prior to the time of Rabbi Judah 'the Prince' (the compiler of the Mishnah in the latter part of the second century CE), the *Dorshe Reshumot* and the *Dorshe Hamurot*, who used a type of allegorical exegesis in their interpretations of Scripture ('Ancient Jewish Allegorists', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 [1911], pp. 291-333, 503-531). And Joseph Bonsirven and David Daube have presented significant data in support of the thesis of an early Pharisaic allegorical exegesis within Palestine itself (Bonsirven, 'Exégèse allégorique chez les rabbins tannaïtes', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 23 [1933], pp. 522-524; Daube, 'Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 22 [1949], pp. 239-264). In addition, the Dead Sea Scrolls include a number of examples of allegorical interpretation, representative of which is the treatment of Habakkuk 2:17 in 1QpHab 12.3-4: "Lebanon" stands here for the Communal Council; "wild beasts" for the simple-minded Jews who carry out the Law" (see also 1QpMic 8-10; CD 6.2-11; 7.9-20). But though allegorical exegesis was widespread amongst Jews of the first century, it was not dominant in Palestine.

The Jewish roots of Christianity make it *a priori* likely that the exegetical procedures of the NT would resemble to some extent those of then contemporary Judaism. This has long been established with regard to the hermeneutics of Paul vis-à-vis the Talmud, and it is becoming increasingly clear with respect to the Qumran texts as well. Indeed, there is little indication in the NT itself that the canonical writers were conscious of varieties of exegetical genre or of following particular modes of interpretation. At least they seem to make no sharp distinctions between what we would call historico-grammatical exegesis, midrash, pesher, allegory, or interpretations based on 'corporate solidarity' or 'typological correspondences in history'. All of these are used in their writings in something of a blended and interwoven fashion. Yet there are discernible patterns and individual emphases among the various NT authors.

In almost all of the NT authors one can find some literalist, straightforward exegesis of biblical texts. Occasionally some allegorical interpretation is also present. The pesher method, however, dominates a certain class of material, namely that representative of Jesus' early disciples: principally Peter's preaching recorded in the early chapters of Acts, the Gospels of Matthew and John, and 1 Peter. Here these authors seem to be taking Jesus' own method of using Scripture as their pattern. By revelation they had come to know that 'this' manifest in the work and person of Jesus 'is that' of which the OT speaks. Yet other NT writers, notably Paul and the author of Hebrews, can be characterized by a midrashic type of biblical interpretation (except where Paul uses a pesher approach in describing his own apostolic calling). Midrashic interpretation in the hands of these authors starts with Scripture and seeks to demonstrate Christological relevance by means of a controlled atomistic exegesis. Thus the interplay of Jewish presuppositions and exegetical procedures on the one hand, with Christian commitments and perspectives on the other, has produced on the pages of our NT a distinctive interpretation of the OT.

Constraints of space and time prohibit any detailing here of the NT's use of the OT as to specifics. That is what I have attempted to do in my *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (1975), and what can be found in many of the works listed at the end of this article. Suffice it here to say regarding the nature of NT exegesis: (1) that the early Christians used many of the same exegetical procedures as were common within the various branches of then contemporary Judaism, and that they did so quite naturally and unconsciously; (2) that they seem to have looked to Jesus' own use of Scripture as the source and initial paradigm for their own use; and (3) that they believed themselves to be guided by the exalted Christ, through the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, in their continued understanding and application of the Scriptures.

### III. The normativity of then current hermeneutical practices

Any attempt to spell out the nature of the NT's use of the OT raises the question of the normativity of then current hermeneutical practices for Christian faith, both in that day and today. Most evangelicals and many 'constructive' theologians have been at least sympathetic to the view that the NT's exegetical procedures are so bound up with the NT's proclamation that they together constitute one package, so to speak, with both being in some manner normative for the exposition of the gospel in that day and for the church's exegetical endeavours today — though exactly how those exegetical procedures should be considered normative and exactly how they should be worked out is often left unanswered. Recently, for example, S. L. Johnson, Jr, in taking up my question of 1970, has insisted (in somewhat extreme fashion):

'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?' Unhesitatingly the reply is yes, although we are not allowed to claim for our results the infallibility of the Lord and His apostles. They are reliable teachers of biblical doctrine and they are reliable teachers of hermeneutics and exegesis. We not only *can* reproduce their exegetical methodology, we *must* if we are to be taught their understanding of Holy Scripture. Their principles, probably taught them by the Lord in His post-resurrection ministry, are not abstruse and difficult. They are simple, plain, and logical. The things they find in the Old Testament are really there, although the Old Testament authors may not have seen them fully (*The Old*

*Testament in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], pp. 93-94, emphases his).

Yet despite Johnson's ringing assurance, I am forced by the data alluded to above to respond: Really? Are we able? Ought we to try?

Evangelical Christians are committed to receiving, defending, proclaiming, and living out the faith and doctrine of the NT. But are we also committed to reproducing the exegetical procedures of the NT? We have always distinguished between the normative and the descriptive in other areas as presented in the NT — for example, in matters pertaining to church government, on the issue of apostolic doctrine and apostolic office, and regarding spiritual gifts and specific charismatic expressions, to name only a diverse few. Furthermore, the authors of the NT themselves at times suggest that their exegesis should be taken as more circumstantial and *ad hominem* in nature, in accord with their purposes then in view, than universally normative (e.g. Paul's catena of polemically motivated passages in Gal. 3:10-13, or his argument on the generic 'seed' in Gal. 3:16, or his allegorical treatment of Hagar and Sarah and their sons in Gal. 4:21-31).

It is my contention that, unless we are 'restorationists' in our attitude toward hermeneutics, Christians today are committed to the apostolic faith and doctrine of the NT, but not necessarily to the apostolic exegetical practices as detailed for us in the NT. What the NT presents to us in setting out the exegetical practices of early Christians is how the gospel was contextualized in that day and for those particular audiences. We can appreciate something of how appropriate such methods were for the conveyance of the gospel then and of what was involved in their exegetical procedures. And we can learn from their exegetical methods how to contextualize that same gospel in our own day. But let us admit that we cannot possibly reproduce the revelatory stance of pesher interpretation, nor the atomistic manipulations of midrash, nor the circumstantial or *ad hominem* thrusts of a particular polemic of that day — nor should we try. For various reasons, neither we nor our audiences are up to it. Ours, rather, is to contextualize the gospel in our own day and for our own circumstances, speaking meaningfully to people as they are and think today. Ours is to reproduce the faith and doctrine of the NT in ways appropriate to the apprehension of people today, not to attempt to reproduce — or to feel guilty about not being able to reproduce — the specific exegetical procedures contained therein.

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# The priority of Jesus: a look at the place of Jesus' teaching and example in Christian ethics

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## Introduction

It is not unusual to come across the rule-of-thumb advice: 'Do what Jesus would have done', being given to a Christian facing a particular moral problem. Initially at least, this might appear as 'wise counsel'; after all, what could be better than to appeal directly to the example of the Master himself? Indeed, it is the apostle Peter who urges Christians to follow in Christ's footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21), and this means working out the Christ-pattern in the rough and tumble of day-to-day existence. But for all its immediate attractions, not least that of simplicity (and it is important that we do not complicate matters unnecessarily), such a recommendation requires more of the Christian than might appear at first sight.

Without wishing to deny the charismatic experience of direct guidance by the Holy Spirit on matters of morality (which even John Wimber admits can sometimes be due more to indigestion than the Third Person of the Trinity!),<sup>1</sup> there is a tendency to respond to such advice simply by allowing the imagination to sketch rather hazy and romantic pictures of Jesus moving about in the situation within which we find ourselves, and almost magically handling the problem in question.<sup>2</sup> But as Os Guinness points out in another context,<sup>3</sup> which Jesus are we thinking of? Our picture of Jesus might be as far removed from the portrait of Christ in the Bible as was the 'Gentleman Jesus' of the Victorian drawing room. After all, we are well aware that both 'Jesus the pacifist' and 'Jesus the revolutionary' have their advocates. If all were to be left at the level of sanctified imagination, then the charge that where you get ten Christians together you will find eleven different opinions might not be wide of the mark.

In point of fact, far from short-circuiting ethical thinking, trying to discern 'what Jesus would have done' requires a good deal of careful application. It involves cultivating a familiarity with the sort of things Jesus said and did during his earthly ministry — the principles he enunciated, the way he responded to moral matters, the pattern of behaviour he established, and so on — all this providing some of the raw material out of which guiding principles might be forged. Even so, this is only the beginning, for there is one major fact which has to be faced, the glaringly self-evident one that there is an historical and cultural distance between the world of Jesus and our world today. Although this point may be deemed as 'self-evident', it is one which can surprisingly be passed over with remarkable ease in Christian ethical thinking. Jesus did pronounce on matters which *prima facie* have no direct relevance for us today (e.g. paying the temple

tax, Mt. 17:22f.; walking the extra mile, Mt. 5:41f.). What is more, we have to face ethical dilemmas which the teaching of Jesus could not directly address because they arise out of recent technological developments (e.g. *in vitro* fertilization, genetic engineering, nuclear warfare). Without lapsing into the irresolvable cultural relativism of the sort in which Nineham finds himself,<sup>4</sup> such factors should put us on our guard against assuming that with the teachings and example of Jesus we can, with the odd adjustment made for minor cultural differences, make a point-for-point direct transfer to our present situation without engaging in some of the rigorous hermeneutical groundwork of the sort suggested by Marshall.<sup>5</sup>

There are two important questions raised by the type of considerations outlined above which form the primary focus of this study, *viz.* 1. To what extent is moral authority to be attached to the actions and teachings of Jesus for our guidance today? and 2. how are those actions and teachings to be appropriated in the service of ethics? In short, how are we to conceive of the priority of Jesus in Christian ethics? In an attempt to move towards answering these questions, five interrelated areas of thought will be explored:

1. The basic features of Christian ethics. This will provide the wider perspective against which the teachings and actions of Jesus can properly be considered, while at the same time not losing sight of the fact that the words and deeds of Jesus are themselves constitutive of that perspective.
2. The nature of Christ's ethical teaching and how it contrasts with legalism.
3. Christ as exemplar. What this means and an assessment of the peculiar epistemological problems it raises.
4. The extent of the moral obligation attached to the teachings of Jesus. This will be specifically linked to a moral decision-making process.
5. The relation between 'Creation ethics' and 'Kingdom ethics'.

Although in this study a wide range of discursive material will be considered, the main objective is a practical one, namely to determine how we might more effectively understand, and get to grips with, ethical problems in the light of Jesus' teaching and pattern of life, and so take up the call of the one who said, 'Come, follow me'.

## Features of Christian ethics

### *Creational*

It is proposed that the starting point for Christian ethics is God and his will for creation, and in this sense one may refer

to Christian ethics as 'creational' in design and foundation, with their focus upon the moral ordering of the world which in turn is related to the character of God and the nature of man. Such 'creation ethics' need to be distinguished from what is often referred to as 'natural law', the difference lying in the epistemology of the two approaches.<sup>6</sup> Natural law, which plays an important role in Catholic moral theology,<sup>7</sup> has a prestigious history with a lineage extending back through Thomas Aquinas to Aristotle. It takes as its basic premise the belief that God has so shaped human nature that it is only by leading a moral life that this nature can achieve satisfactory realization. Following on from this, natural law theory claims that it is possible to read off from these 'givens' of human nature the sort of moral imperatives God may have set and which are necessary to follow if one is to move towards real human fulfilment.

Without denying natural law's fundamental premise, one is forced to question the extent of its usefulness and the validity of its epistemology. In the first place it falls foul of what G. E. Moore called the 'naturalistic fallacy'. This makes two complementary points. The first is that such a position assumes that it is possible to derive what man 'ought' to do from what man 'is'. But as David Hume aptly demonstrated, this simply cannot be done without having already built into the situation moral assumptions from the start. Thus what 'ought' to be done is brought to a factual situation (what 'is') and is not deduced from it. The second point involves taking the step of defining 'good' in terms other than of itself, e.g. 'the pursuit of happiness' or 'the realization of man's God-given potential'. But as Moore went on to show,<sup>8</sup> while what is 'good' may *also* be something else (happiness, fulfilment, etc.), it cannot be defined by that something else, i.e. placed within the *same* category of meaning (such that good *means* happiness). The fallacy is revealed by a simple test. If it is being claimed that one should follow a particular course of action because, say, it 'maximizes human happiness', one can ask 'Why?' What reasons can be given to convince me that I should do this? Although a variety of subsidiary reasons may be adduced to support the original contention, such as 'that social stability will be secured', eventually an appeal will be made to the belief that we should do it because it is 'good'. If by this the person is maintaining that good *means* the particular goal envisaged, then it is reduced to the level of trivial tautology. For example, if good means human happiness, on purely linguistic grounds this amounts to saying no more than that human happiness is human happiness. But if not, then it has to be conceded that what is 'good' is irreducibly something other than 'human happiness', although related to it, having its own moral category of meaning.

In the second place, even if one were to grant that a phenomenal approach to morality, rather than a largely philosophical one, could be harnessed in the service of natural law,<sup>9</sup> establishing that moral experience is universal (man *does* have a moral sense) and that there is a certain amount of agreement between different cultures over what actions are right and which qualities are good, giving moral content to form,<sup>10</sup> one is still left with what are at best broad generalizations as well as a fair degree of cultural diversity; and one is forced to ask with Paul Ramsey,<sup>11</sup> what is particularly *Christian* about the results?

The alternative approach being advocated here begins with God and his revelation, together with a consideration of moral experience (itself validated by Scripture, the *locus classicus* being Rom. 2:14-16), and then moves towards moral imperatives which are grounded in and proceed from the Divine Creator. This is not to suggest that ethics cannot in the first instance exist independently of theology: quite clearly they can and do for many people,<sup>12</sup> but rather that Christian theism provides ethics with a 'metaphysical home' and substantial coherence when related conceptually to other elements within the Christian framework.<sup>13</sup>

However, it could be objected at this point that by opting for an ethic which is creational, established by special revelation, one has left unresolved a dilemma classically formulated in Plato's *Euthyphro*, viz: 'Does God will a thing because it is good, or is a thing good because God wills it to be so?' To opt for the former would mean surrendering the 'Godness of God', for it would be to admit another principle outside of God to which he must conform ('Goodness'). But to go for the second horn of the dilemma would mean that in principle 'right' and 'wrong' are merely products of arbitrary will. David Brown argues that it is by adopting a naturalist position, rooted in natural law theory, that a resolution of this problem is possible.<sup>14</sup> He maintains that God, by ordaining man's natural capacities in such a way that only by leading a moral life can they be fulfilled, has made it possible to ascertain what is right or wrong without direct reference to his will, and so they cannot be considered arbitrary. On the other hand, there is an ultimate connection with God's will in a way which is not arbitrary, because human nature and morality are linked to God's loving concern for man. But it is difficult to see how this solves the problem. What it does is to push it further back, for one can ask whether God willed the fulfilment of human nature and ordered it in such a way because it is good, or whether it is good because he willed it? The dilemma remains but in a different form. A much more satisfactory answer has been proposed independently by White<sup>15</sup> and Ward,<sup>16</sup> who in different ways postulate that what is good (Ward's 'realm of values') is *also* what God wills and what God wills is also good, the two ultimately residing in the being of God as two aspects of the same reality. Thus, far from creation ethics being arbitrary, they are consistent with the loving purposes of God and the nature of man as he intended.

Taking the link between a moral universe and the Moral Creator a stage further, one can suggest that God is *the Good*, not in some abstract Platonic sense, but as the personal revealing God who is the ground of all goodness (cf. Mk. 10:18f.). Consequently what are perceived as moral imperatives, instances of goodness in obligatory form, are different aspects of this one unitary reality — the Good. It follows that those attitudes and modes of behaviour which are considered 'virtuous' amount to the correct and appropriate responses of man not only to the way things really are, but also to the God in whom the perceived values of goodness and rightness reside and find complete resolution.

#### *Covenantal*

Central to both the OT's and the NT's understanding of the relation between God and his people is the concept of 'covenant'. Some, like Karl Barth, would go further in

claiming that covenant is central to the understanding of the *whole* of God's dealing with creation in that 'Covenant is the internal basis of creation and Creation is the external basis of covenant'. In establishing his covenant God does so in an act of gracious freedom as classically formulated in Deuteronomy 7:7: 'It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you . . . it is because the Lord loves you'. Running throughout his covenant (*berit*) with his people, and establishing it, is the gracious love of Yahweh (*hesed*). Although God's covenant in promissory form is to be found in his dealings with Abraham (Gn. 15:18) and David (2 Sa. 23:5), it is particularly in the book of Deuteronomy that the concept takes on a role of tremendous theological significance,<sup>17</sup> encompassing in both form and content the mutual *obligation* of those involved. The actual stipulations of the covenant which were binding upon Israel are set out in the form of a written 'law' (*tôrâh*) (see Dt. 4:44). In fact so close was the connection in the minds of the people between law and covenant, that to obey the law was to obey the covenant (*cf.* Je. 11:1ff.). What is more, the implications of such a relationship established by covenant were to penetrate every area of life as is evidenced by the Holiness Code of Leviticus 19 — any sacred/secular division with which we are only too familiar was ruled out on the basis of the *berit* (something which the prophets had to continually remind the people, *cf.* Is. 1:10-26).

It was with the Deuteronomic covenant in mind that Jeremiah, in the midst of national apostasy and defeat, made the innovative declaration that a new covenant would be made, with the law written upon the people's hearts (31:31ff.), a promise also taken up by Ezekiel (36:26). However, it was in the person and work of Christ that this promise was to become a reality, establishing a *kainē diathekē* (Lk. 22:20), a 'new *kind* of covenant' of the type envisaged at a distance by Jeremiah. To those under the freedom of the 'law of Christ' comes the obligation to fulfil it in neighbourly concern (Gal. 6:2) and to exhibit a life characteristic of the people of God called to be holy (1 Pet. 2:9ff.). To modify Barth's phrase it becomes clear that covenant is the internal basis for Christian ethics (its motivating principle and frame of reference) and ethics is the external manifestation of and response to God's covenant.

#### Objectivity

Another important claim of Christian ethics is that morality is objective, not only insofar as there is a phenomenon called moral experience, but that matters of right and wrong have an existence and meaning independent of our evaluation of them. This is indicated by the fact that such matters are the subject of discussion with reasons being given for why we think a particular action to be right or wrong, something we don't do when things are solely a matter of subjective preference (*e.g.* taste). This is what Baelz calls the 'logical impartiality of ethics'.<sup>18</sup> All of this accords with what has gone before — that goodness and rightness are expressions of the nature and character of God, distinct from the created order and yet manifest in and through it.

#### Teleological

By using the term teleological it is being claimed that Christian ethics are primarily purposive, ordered towards a goal. What is good for man *is* related to the type of creature he is and the purpose for which he was made, and it is here that

the premise of natural law finds its place, not as a means of determining moral imperatives without reference to God, but as an indication that true fulfilment lies outside of man in relation to God. The naturalist approach of Brown is in grave error of giving the impression that the final end of man is to be found within man (the fulfilment of his nature by living the moral life), thus opening the door for a new form of Pelagianism. Rather, the final end of man as witnessed to by moral experience and special revelation is that it is something which is over and above him, which makes its claim upon him, and this is God himself, the 'summum bonum'. Ward puts it well: 'For theism, God is the purpose and inner nature of all being; he is the ontological base of reality; and to respond to him is to respond to being's real nature'.<sup>19</sup>

It is this goal and the eternal context in which it is framed that determines much of the content, rationale and direction of Christian ethics, and which marks it out from many other ethical frameworks. This should put the Christian on his guard against making superficial comparisons with other ethical beliefs and cause him to delve a little deeper into what is being proposed. For example, the utilitarian principle of 'the greatest good of the greatest number' might at first sight seem attractive and compatible with Christian ethics, but the Christian would want to ask: a. How is the 'greatest good' to be understood? b. How does it relate to *the* goal of developing man's relationship with God? and c. What difference in perception is made when the claim is placed within an eternal context?<sup>20</sup> What is more, the view that the primary end of the moral life is not to be found solely within the nature of man *qua* man, but in responding appropriately to the Creator (which itself is part of being true to our nature), means that however much in practice theology is separated from ethics (and vice versa!), it is a division which is not warranted by the biblical witness and which if pursued will always result in an inadequate ethic, one which leaves a major part of reality out of its reckoning (in fact the *grounds* for reality — God).

#### Attitudinal

The final mark of Christian ethics is that they are attitudinal, having a concern for character and attitudes and not simply with the observance of external moral rules, which can become ends in themselves (*cf.* Mt. 23:23). Christian ethics go deeper than this in that they are to do with man's response to God and his attitude toward his fellow men and creation. The upshot of this is that Christian ethics are more 'open-ended' than legalism or casuistry, going beyond fixed points (*cf.* Mt. 5:21-22).

The above is not meant to be an exhaustive or even a comprehensive list of the components of Christian ethics, but an indication of those features which are central to its composition and which form a backdrop against which the teachings and example of Jesus can be properly viewed and understood and against which a moral decision-making process can be developed.

#### Jesus and ethics — the teaching

In turning to Jesus' ethical teaching three preliminary points need to be made. The first is that Jesus' view of ethics is firmly rooted in the OT. The disparity between Jesus' ethical teaching and that enshrined in the 'law and the prophets' is, as we shall see, more apparent than real. Indeed, for Jesus the

whole of the law was summed up *in nuce* in the dual requirement of loving God and loving one's neighbour (Mt. 22:37-39), which itself comes from the *torâh* (Dt. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). This is also a clear indication of the theocentricity of Jesus' ethics and eschatology.<sup>21</sup> This is particularly related to the central message of Jesus' proclamation concerning the kingdom of God. In the person and work of Christ this reign had begun and carried with it its own ethical demands (Lk. 3:10ff.). Yet although the kingdom had been inaugurated by Christ, its consummation lies at some point in the future, the nature of which should have a determining effect upon the way the members of the kingdom act in the 'mid-time' (Mt. 6:19; 25:31ff.). Far from Jesus presenting an 'interim ethic' as suggested by Schweitzer,<sup>22</sup> it is an authentic and lasting ethic appropriate to the reality and demands of the kingdom. Finally, arising out of the last point, the ethics of Jesus is an ethic of the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Although it is mainly in the epistles of Paul that the work of the Holy Spirit and Christian behaviour are firmly linked, there is a drawing together of the two in the gospels, albeit in an indirect manner. Luke especially relates the Spirit, kingdom and prayer to decisive moments in the ministry of Jesus.<sup>24</sup> In this connection it is interesting to note that the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37) is placed between the story of the sending of the 70 to announce the coming of the kingdom, in which Jesus rejoices 'in the Spirit', and Jesus' teaching on prayer and the need to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, it is in the Gospel of John that the centrality of the Spirit in the Christian life is stressed. He is the one who will enable Christ's followers to bear fruit and so glorify him (Jn. 14-16).

Central to any understanding of Jesus' attitude towards ethics is a group of sayings that are to be found in Matthew 5:17-18, although originally they may have been independent of each other.<sup>25</sup> First of all there is the statement: 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfil'. This is then followed by another statement reaffirming the abiding significance of the law: 'For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished'.

It should be pointed out that the texts do not say anything about the law *per se*. A distinction is not made between ceremonial, moral or civil law, as some Christians do today; rather, Jesus is concerned with the law in its entirety. Clearly the key to the interpretation of these verses is to be found in the meanings of the verbs 'abolish' and 'fulfil'.

In saying that he came not to abolish the law (*katalusai* = 'nullify' – doubly stressed in v. 17), it could appear that Jesus is enjoining continual adherence to the law. However, Jesus goes on to say positively that he has come to 'fulfil' the law (*plerôsai*), and this verb suggests more than simple adherence. It is something which has to be understood from the standpoint of the whole of Jesus' ministry, and the thought is not so much that Jesus came to keep the law right down to the last detail, but rather that he gives to the law and the prophets a deeper and richer understanding, expressing their inner intention and purpose; thus they are 'fulfilled completely'. R. J. Banks summarizes the relation between Jesus and the law as follows: 'It therefore becomes apparent that it is not so much *Jesus'* stance towards the law that Matthew is concerned to depict: it is how the *Law* stands with

regard to him, as the one who brings it to fulfilment and to whom all attention must now be directed. . . . The true solution lay in understanding "fulfilment" in terms of an affirmation of the whole law, yet only through its transformation into the teaching of Christ was there something new and unique in comparison."<sup>26</sup> Perhaps one should further add that it was also by the law's realization in the *life* of Christ that something new and unique occurred.

Such an understanding would go a long way towards explaining Matthew's concern for 'righteousness', with the noun *dikaïosunē* occurring some five times in the Sermon on the Mount. In the OT the primary meaning of 'righteousness' (*Tsedeq*) is that which meets with approval in the heavenly court. The man who is declared 'righteous' is the one who is pronounced as standing in a right relationship to God. As Steve Motyer has shown,<sup>27</sup> this is intrinsically bound up with God's salvific purposes in that he is concerned with establishing righteousness (doing and seen to be doing what is right) by acting on behalf of the outcast and the needy. It is in Christ that this is decisively achieved, the one in whom the will of God is realized, the covenant completely kept and through whom salvation has been wrought. The ethical implications for Christ's followers then become clear: they too are to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness – his rule and saving action – and are to reflect the same character of righteousness in their lives. It is by acting on behalf of those who cannot help themselves that they are to exceed the 'righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees' (cf. Mt. 5:20; 23:31). Thus, far from the law and the prophets being dissolved by Christ, they are in fact completed and transcended by him. What is more, their inner intention, which is the outworking of God's saving rule, is in turn to be recapitulated by members of the kingdom both individually and corporately.

One implication of such an interpretation is that for the Christian, OT ethics cannot be viewed in isolation of Christ who is their full expression and exposition. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8), and in a deep sense Christ's love did just that (thus he is the 'end of the law', Rom. 10:4). But what we see completed by him and in him is to be re-worked in the lives of his followers. Although from the standpoint of OT exegesis one can consider the ethical precepts without reference to Christ, from the standpoint of trying to determine their application for the Christian such findings need to be 'filled out' by placing them in the light of Christ's teaching and example.

A second implication of this position is that as law and grace become integrated under the over-arching concept of 'righteousness' fulfilled in Christ, Christian ethics proceed from the starting point of forgiveness and acceptance. This in fact is a pattern already established in the OT but which is often missed because of the Reformed preconception of law being prior to grace. It was *after* the event of the exodus, itself an act of grace, that the law was given. Indeed one may see the giving of the law as an expression of grace, a means of drawing the covenant relationship into a state of maturity. Paul also works to the same pattern, the ethical exhortations following developed doctrine of the saving acts of God (cf. Gal. 5). Theologically this is in effect to reverse Matthew's ordering of the Sermon on the Mount, placing the demand of 5:48 first, 'Be perfect', and the resolution of 5:17ff., 'I came to fulfil', last.

We now turn to the way Jesus handled the so-called 'traditions of the elders'. Scholars have differed in their views as to whether the Sermon on the Mount was intended by Jesus or Matthew as in any sense a new law. It is certainly not a law-code of the sort found in the OT, e.g. in the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:21–21:23). John Robinson describes much of this material as 'shocking injunctions',<sup>28</sup> designed to jolt a person out of moral complacency, enabling them to 'see' things in a new way and so respond in a manner which is appropriate to the coming of the kingdom of God. Dodd<sup>29</sup> prefers to speak of them as 'parables of the moral life' disclosing to a person the sort of things which might be required of anyone who is a member of the kingdom. Both these descriptions have their validity, but one should be wary of reducing the moral force of Jesus' sayings by over-generalization. What we see are a number of 'rules' quoted by Jesus, some of which are to be found in the OT, others being the 'traditions' of the elders, all of which have been treated in a legalistic and casuistic manner (e.g. Mt. 5:21-48). On each issue – swearing, adultery, divorce, etc. – Jesus goes back to some underlying principle of truth which is concretely expressed as an imperative. Far from weakening the requirements of the law, Jesus' treatment gives them greater force and a wider field of application, going well beyond the restraints of legalism. According to Dick France, the effect is 'to make a far more searching ethical demand. In all of this, there is a sovereign freedom in Jesus' willingness to penetrate to the true will of God which lies behind the law's regulations.'<sup>30</sup>

It is this internalization of the law which underscores the point made earlier that ethics also embrace attitudes (Mt. 5:21f.). Of course this is not to imply that 'thought' and 'deed' are to be given equal moral weighting, so that 'one might as well be hung for a sheep as a goat'. It does mean that when speaking of moral action, one must give the concept of 'action' a much wider interpretation than the mere physical act and its consequences. In considering the moral value of a particular action three constituent elements should be evaluated: intentions, consequences and event.

To take *intentions* first. As far as one is able, one should try and assess whether they are good rather than selfish. The problem of course is that there is usually a mixture of motives, desires and intentions; some are good, others less so. Invariably our 'wants' also contaminate to some degree our understanding of what is right, creating a distorted 'moral vision'. However, there are instances where a sharp dichotomy does exist between what we want (e.g. to preserve our life) and what we should do (rescue the drowning man). One of the errors of situationism as advocated by Joseph Fletcher<sup>31</sup> is that too much weight is given to intentions, such that if a person is convinced that his intentions are right, the act becomes morally acceptable. But this is too individualistic, and while psychologically securing a person from blame, does not ensure that an action is morally right. This is why intentions need to be taken together with the other two components of moral action as well as the moral imperatives which stand over and above the situation.

While situationism gives a prominent place to intentions, it is utilitarianism which gives pride of place to *consequences*. But this too proves to be an inadequate criterion for determining the 'rightness' of a course of action. To say that

one should take the course which promotes the 'greatest happiness for the greatest number' begs the question of what constitutes 'happiness'. This is far too general a concept to be of any use. What is more, it requires that the moral agent should be in a position to determine what consequences his action will bring. But this again is asking too much, for we are all painfully aware of the many unwanted effects that our 'well-intentioned' actions have thrown up in the past. Finally, this position fails to take into account the complex relationship between events and consequences. To speak of an action as 'a means to an end' is in itself an abstraction, for that 'means' is an 'end' of an earlier 'means'. The web of cause and effect is far more mysterious than this position allows for. However, possible consequences do have to be taken into account as we wrestle with the options open to us in a moral situation, and the Christian will also be humbled by the fact that consequences of eternal significance have to be placed in the balance.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to intentions and consequences, *the act itself* will need to be taken into the reckoning. It is questionable whether one can legitimately speak of 'an act-in-itself', as if the act could be divorced from its wider context of intentions and consequences. However, one may make a working distinction (rather than a formal one) between an 'event' – which is neutral in description, and an 'action' – which is related to intentions and consequences. Such a distinction might enable one to discern more effectively the moral relevance of a factor which can easily be overlooked while solely operating with the notion of 'moral action'. For example, on the basis of intention and consequence a case could be made for sex outside of marriage (intention = I wish to share my love with my partner; consequence = no unwanted pregnancy due to contraception and we are happy). But if after considering the sex act as 'event' it is concluded that this in itself is expressive of promise and commitment, then this brings into question the morality of the situation, for what is being expressed by intercourse is denied by the overall situation, including the intentions of those involved. (A similar exposure of the disparity between actions, intentions and consequences is to be found in Jesus' treatment of the tradition about 'Corban' in Mk. 7:5-13.)

As we have seen, Jesus' approach to ethics is far more 'open-ended' than legalism. It is also deeper in that it takes into account motives and intentions, and wider in that a decisive eschatological perspective is envisaged. As we shall see later, it is this 'dynamic' interaction between principles, intentions, actions and consequences which form the heart of Christian moral decision-making.

### Jesus and ethics – the example

In speaking of Jesus as 'God incarnate' (and thus the 'Good' incarnate), one is making a double point. The first is that it is *God* who does that which man cannot do and refuses to do, namely the fulfilling of the law and the perfect expression of the moral life. The second is that it is *God as man* in whom these things happen, thus what man *ought* to be actually *is* in Christ. As W. F. Lofthouse put it, 'If we could tolerate the paradox, we might say that he was man because he was what no man had ever been before . . . Christ did not become what men were; he became what they were meant to be . . .'.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, not only would the Christian wish to point to the

teaching of Jesus to illuminate morality, but also to his acts as providing a model or paradigm for true moral behaviour. This is particularly important if one is to make use of the vast wealth of ethical material in the gospels which goes beyond specific moral teaching. This is especially true in a gospel such as John where, as John Robinson notes,<sup>34</sup> very little moral teaching is given didactically, but a considerable amount is conveyed through action. Indeed this is the Johannine emphasis upon living as Jesus *lived* and not merely as he *taught* (Jn. 13:34; 1 Jn. 2:6; 3:16). For John, Jesus is the exemplar par excellence.

The concept of Jesus as moral paradigm also gathers up much of what was said earlier about the fulfilment of 'righteousness'. As it is in Jesus that God's righteousness is shown, especially in the cross where God declares himself both just (*dikaion*) and the justifier (*dikaionta*) of him who has faith (Rom. 3:26), we are given tremendous insight into what true righteousness means in action. This is well summarized by Motyer: 'The basis of the whole life of the people of God is his righteousness – his outreaching, saving mercy which rescues creation for himself. This righteousness has now been supremely expressed in Christ. But as men are grasped by it, "justified" and made acceptable to God, so they are stamped with the image of the righteous Saviour, and summoned to live in imitation of him as his people.'<sup>35</sup>

Without doubt, as Luther stressed, it is possible to hold to a slavish literalism of the notion of 'imitation of Christ' so as to turn it into a new form of legalism, and yet one should beware of so overreacting to this danger that one robs it of any ethical content. It is an idea which is firmly embedded in the NT, with its roots grounded in the OT with Israel's call by God to be 'holy for I am holy' (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:26). Within the context of the master/slave relationship Peter writes: 'Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example [*hypogrammon* – to 'trace' or 'copy'], that you should follow in his steps' (1 Pet. 1:21). Here it is the cross which provides the primary reference point at which the imitation is to be followed (*cf.* Eph. 5:21ff.). The same focus is to be found elsewhere. On the question of humility it is the divine condescension which is appealed to (Phil. 2:5ff.), as it is in the case of charitable giving (2 Cor. 8:9). Certainly for Paul it was the realization that God had done something of such magnitude for the Christian in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that provided the nerve cord for Christian morality – *cf.* Gal. 2:20ff.: 'I have been crucified with Christ . . . it is no longer I that live but Christ . . . I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.' In addition there is room for growth and development of the moral life, hence the call to 'put on the mind of Christ' (Eph. 5:23) and to 'bear fruit' (Gal. 5:22).

Rather than a detailed example to follow, Christ's life, and the culmination of that life in his sacrificial death, provides a pattern to be copied. But it is at this point that a particular epistemological problem is raised and which can be formulated as follows: 'To recognize a person as a good example to follow presupposes that one already has a set of moral criteria by which to judge the example, therefore one may ask what, if anything, does the example add to our understanding of morality? Is it not superfluous?' It was Kant who put the problem in its starkest form: 'Even the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize him as such'

(*Grundlegung*). However, the fallacy of this objection has been clearly set forth by Basil Mitchell.<sup>36</sup>

While agreeing that it is true that in order to recognize someone as a good example to follow we must have some notion of what 'goodness' is, Mitchell maintains that it does not follow that we should be able to describe in detail beforehand the actual features of a good example. He illustrates this point from the game of rugby. If a person recognizes Fred Smith to be a good rugby player, and thus a good example to imitate, then he must have some idea of the game of rugby, the basic rules, the sort of moves involved, and so on. But this does not mean that the observer would be able to describe beforehand the moves Fred Smith was going to make. The rugby enthusiast has, as it were, a 'form' in his mind of the game 'rugby', and seeing Fred Smith in action gives new 'content' to that form. The same can be said when it comes to recognizing a moral example. Man having a moral sense, as well as having specific moral content, can have that enriched as he looks to Christ, perceiving that here we do have an example to emulate. As Mitchell himself puts it: 'It does not, fortunately, take a saint to recognize a saint, a genius to recognize a genius, a master of a trade to recognize a master, a phronimos (wise man) to recognize a phronimos.'<sup>37</sup>

#### Jesus and ethics – relevance and application

It transpires from the discussion so far that within the context of Christian ethics it is Christ who is the focus of morality, the synthesis of the ought and is. As with any moral fact (and the Christian would wish to add that here is *the* moral fact incarnate) there is the necessity of obligation. Certainly a distinction has to be made between someone recognizing something as a moral fact, which carries with it the notion of obligation, *i.e.* x is good therefore I ought to do x; and discussing whether something is a moral fact, in which case no decision has been made. Of course there is also the possibility that someone may recognize a moral fact and yet choose to ignore or reject it. This equally applies to Christ as ethical teacher and exemplar as to any principle or rule. Even so, if Jesus is the archetypal moral man, the Ideal, and is recognized as such, then this carries with it a sense of obligation that we too ought to imitate this pattern which, in turn, has to be translated into our own situation. But the question arises as to how this translation is to take place and to what extent the teachings and example of Jesus are binding.

So far it has been claimed that Jesus is the personification of the Good, the Universal which has been revealed in a specific historical-cultural situation. The fact that Jesus' teaching was clothed in the language of his day, and that his lifestyle and mode of behaviour were appropriate to his contemporary culture, means that a certain amount of relativity is introduced into Jesus' ethics. Indeed, this is a phenomenon which is inevitable with any use of language. The moment specific content is given to a principle it is also given a limited range of meaning relative to the culture and circumstances. Thus 'Do not steal' will create a certain 'resonance' in the minds of the people who hear that injunction, conditioned by the sort of things which constitute 'stealing' in their particular culture. However, the specific principle enunciated is still an articulation of something which is universal; it does not undergo a thorough relativiza-

tion. This also applies to the idea of Jesus as 'example'. The pattern of humble service and sacrificial self-giving is expressed relative to Jesus' specific historical circumstances, the universal pattern being given concrete expression so that we can 'see' what this pattern involves, rather than allowing it to remain at the level of general abstraction. Having considered the historical acts and attitudes of Jesus as they are worked out in the 1st century context, we then have to translate them into our own. This means that there will be discontinuity, due to the loss of that which is culturally relative (e.g. feet washing), but also continuity in that beneath the specific expression there is a universal quality or 'core' which can be transferred and applied regardless of time and culture. Keith Ward gives an example of how such a translation of the 'imitation of Christ' might apply to a Christian who is a scientist. He writes: '... the man who feels that it is his vocation to pursue intellectual studies may allow the pursuit of truth to be the predominating value of his life; and in so doing he will not, of course, be 'imitating Christ' in any direct sense, since Christ was not a scientist. But, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the Christian ideal of life will temper the scientist's attitude to his own vocation. It will prevent him from erecting an ideal of intellectual superiority, from despising the ignorant, and from supposing that the pursuit of truth is the only value which should be acknowledged by all men.'<sup>38</sup>

Allowing for both the universality of the life and sayings of Jesus for ethics and yet at the same time their relativity, what sort of process is involved in the moral decision-making which a Christian individual or community might engage in? What is offered below is one way of answering this question. In part it is descriptive in nature, formalizing the sort of approaches Christians often adopt in reaching moral decisions, but it is also prescriptive in suggesting a particular approach which builds upon some of the considerations outlined above.

Taking the application of moral principles first. It is proposed that in considering a moral context, that is, either a particular moral problem to solve or a pattern of behaviour to follow, a dynamic interaction exists between the principles based upon Scripture and the overall situation. Thus one would need to take into account the various 'background factors' which make up the situation (e.g. what the needs are, the constraints of the situation, the ability of the moral agents, etc.) and in the light of these consider the relevant biblical principles. Identifying and interpreting the biblical principles is a supremely important task, since Scripture is the normative authority in Christian ethical decision-making. But attention should also be given to 'moral tradition', that is, other relevant ethical thinking which has been undertaken in the past. It is out of an interaction between these ethical resources and the actual situation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that a moral decision is derived. This 'moral dialectic' can be summarized in diagrammatic form (see Fig. 1 on page 17).

Many moral situations are complex, and the interactionist approach as outlined above allows for such complexity. It applies universal moral principles which are grounded in Scripture and elucidated by the same hermeneutical procedure adopted by Christ, viz. pinpointing the underlying truth and principle beneath a moral injunction or story and

reapplying it to present circumstances. It also takes seriously the particularity of the actual situation, thus avoiding bland generalizations, yet it refuses to allow circumstances wholly to determine the principles employed (as with situationism) because of the belief in absolute values and a recognition of a wider, eternal context. There is also a place for traditional moral reflection, drawing upon the wisdom of those in the Body of Christ (past and present) whom God has gifted in ethical thinking. But also, it incorporates a strong charismatic element, realizing that such a process is not a mere cerebral exercise, but an openness to the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit.

However, as it stands this process is incomplete, for a Christian would also want to appeal to the example of Christ himself. In coming to a decision about a particular moral situation, the Christian will not only take into account ethical principles but also patterns of behaviour, especially *the* pattern set forth by Christ. In other words various 'paradigm acts' (lived-out examples) which related to a specific moral problem will also be incorporated into the moral decision-making process. For example, supposing that we are faced with a situation where we are being asked to give advice on whether a friend's unmarried daughter should have an abortion. This may be described as a 'neighbour situation'—there is a moral need arising in the life of a neighbour (in the broadest sense) and the immediate requirement is advice. Initially, the moral agent will have an immediate perception of the moral difficulty, considering the various 'background factors' which comprise the needy situation (e.g. the girl's age, the circumstances of the pregnancy, the attitudes of the girl and her parents, etc.), as well as having a primary moral response in being willing (hopefully) to listen and give appropriate advice, and having some ideas, however vague, on the issue in question. This primary stage can be represented as shown in Fig. 2, on page 17.

The one who has been sought for advice will then broaden and enrich his moral perception by drawing upon the ethical resources mentioned earlier. The biblical principles which will be determinative in our attitude will include the fifth commandment, 'You shall not kill', as endorsed by Jesus, and the whole biblical concern for the sanctity and quality of all human life. They will include also and supremely the importance of compassion, especially compassion for the weak and needy. It is at this point that the paradigm acts of Christ provide a focus for the moral agent in indicating what this compassion will involve. To be sure, the *way* Jesus approached needy situations will mean that two important qualities will be looked for. The first is that compassion be *real*, not sentimental, or a cover for some ulterior motive (e.g. seeking an abortion to get around the embarrassment of having to face one's friends with an unwanted pregnancy). It is clear that Jesus' compassion ran deep (cf. Mk. 1:41) and was far from superficial; indeed, it was sacrificial. Furthermore, not only is this compassion to be real, it also has to be *radical*; not necessarily going for the 'easy option', which may not deal with the root of the predicament at all. Jesus had compassion for the rich young ruler, but its radical nature meant that it would not compromise with half-baked 'immediate' solutions (Mk. 10:17ff.). A further part of the process will be the evaluation of other people's thinking on the moral question in hand, this taking place within the wider

context of the church as the Body of Christ, and under the prayerful guidance of the Holy Spirit (see Fig. 3 on page 17).

Arising out of this moral dialectic, a decision is reached and informed advice may be given. However, it should be stressed that although the primary objective in the situation envisaged above was to give advice, clearly the moral process is much wider, calling upon the moral agent to realize in practice the second great commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. This will mean extending a loving heart, and engaging in sacrificial empathy where required as well as offering wise words. Furthermore, the whole moral encounter should extend the moral repertoire of the agent and itself become a moral paradigm for future reference (see Fig. 4 on page 17).

The extent to which the above model will be both acceptable and applicable will largely be determined by a person's stance viz-à-viz the Christian faith and biblical authority. If a person places himself firmly within the Christian fold, appeal to the Bible, tradition and the illumination of the Spirit will be both natural and acceptable. But what of the person who would place himself squarely outside Christianity? To what extent will the ethical teaching and example of Jesus be binding upon him?

Two preliminary points need to be made in this regard. The first is that the moral authority of Jesus is integrally related to his person — the 'What' is decisively linked to the 'Who'. That is, what Jesus says is both determined by who he is (the eternal Son of God) as well as being evidence of who he is. This is clearly brought out by Jesus' distinctive form of address, prefacing his words with 'amen', thus identifying God in advance with what he is about to say (Mt. 5:18, 26; 6:2; *etc.*). In addition to the fact that Jesus did not appeal to the 'traditions', this will account for the astonished reaction of the crowds as recorded in Matthew 7:28: 'When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law'. But what is more, the authoritative pronouncements of Christ were of a piece with his actions. Not only did Jesus declare forgiveness of sins, he authenticated his words by healing (*e.g.* Mk. 2:1-12), both word and deed thus being expressive of his being as unique bearer of the divine nature. The moral authority of Jesus is therefore both unique and supreme because it is not derived 'second-hand' but is proclaimed directly, stamped with the very authority of God.

The second point is that strictly speaking *Christian* ethics is for Christians, those who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, who are members of the kingdom and who are empowered by the Spirit to bring about a substantial realization of that kingdom in their lives. There is considerable weight behind the contention that the Sermon on the Mount is directed to those who are already, or potentially, followers of Christ (*cf.* Mt. 5:1b, 2 — it is the disciples who are addressed).

Even so, these two considerations do not carry the corollary that Jesus' teachings and life only have moral force for those allied to the cause of the kingdom. In both principle and practice this is clearly not the case. If, as has already been

argued, morality is both objective and universal, part of the warp and woof of reality, then in principle it should be possible for such universals to be recognized, together with their binding nature, regardless of their source or the particular framework of beliefs held by the observer. This means that whether the source be Christ or Socrates, provided that it is to the true nature of moral reality they refer, acknowledgement should be possible by the person who in general does not subscribe either to the Christian faith or the philosophy of Socrates. To adapt Mitchell's example of the rugby player, it should be possible to recognize Fred Smith as a good rugby player even if one is not a supporter of his team or an active player oneself.

But not only is it possible in principle for those outside the Christian faith to recognize the validity of Jesus' ethical teaching, it is also the case in practice. It appears that Gandhi was able to accept much of Jesus' ethic, but not other elements of his teaching. One of the great dangers of 19th-century liberal theology was the reduction of theology to mere morality, with Christ being presented simply and solely as the Ideal Man pointing the way to the authentic moral life. This was a movement whose roots lay in Kant's contention that Jesus was the 'personified idea of the good principle'. However, given that Jesus is at the very least the focus of the Good (although much more than that), then it is eminently reasonable to expect that some perception of that 'Good' should occur on a universal scale. While it is true that one may wish to question the logical consistency (or lack of it) of those who would want to take on board the moral claims of Jesus while rejecting his religious claims, one is still left with the fact that those moral claims are recognized well beyond the bounds of the redeemed community; indeed such a recognition may be but the first step of a journey towards the full acceptance of the Lordship of Christ.<sup>39</sup>

#### Concluding remarks — creation ethics and kingdom ethics

At first sight, it might appear that a firm and irrevocable division has been made between creation ethics and kingdom ethics, but this is more apparent than real and dissolves under close analysis. We should be wary of stressing the discontinuity between creation and kingdom ethics at the expense of the continuity. The point of continuity is that God is the author, and relationships the subject, of both ethics as they are grounded in the loving grace (*hesed*) of God. The line of discontinuity is drawn around the fact that it is in Jesus Christ as representative Man that God's requirements of righteousness are met, a new covenant established, and relationships transformed by the eschatological Spirit which he dispenses. Indeed, it is Christ's redemptive work which provides the proper vantage point from which to view God's purposes in creation.

Even within the perspective of the OT, any attempt to separate off creation ethics from the wider context of redemption is doomed to failure. As Von Rad has shown,<sup>40</sup> not only are Israel's beliefs about creation inseparable from her beliefs about redemption, in many respects they are secondary. Therefore Chris Wright is quite correct in maintaining that: 'At every point this creation theology was linked to the fact that the Creator God was also their, Israel's, Redeemer God. This means that the "creation ordinances"



Fig. 1

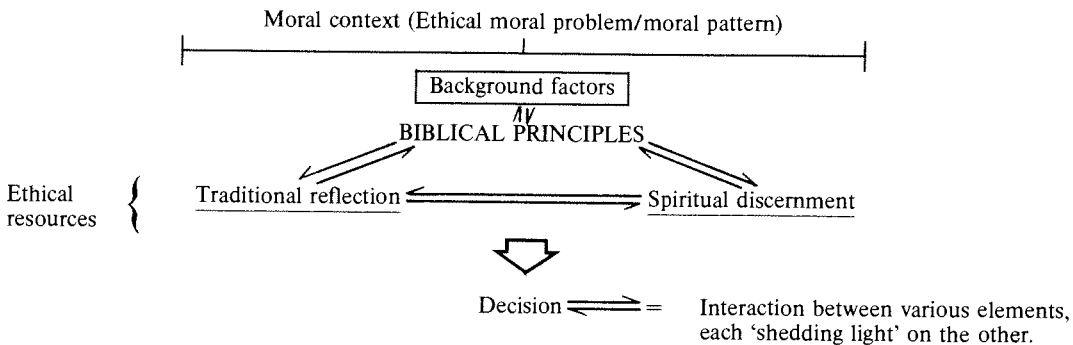


Fig. 2, stage A

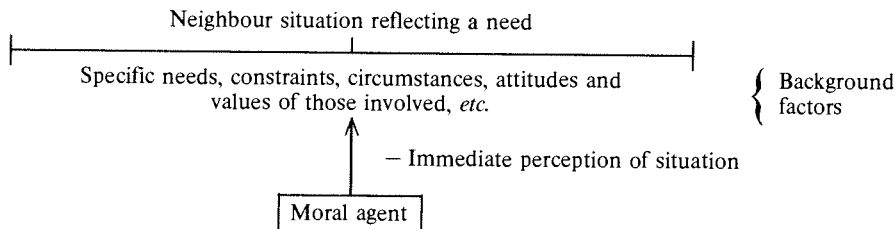


Fig. 3, stage B

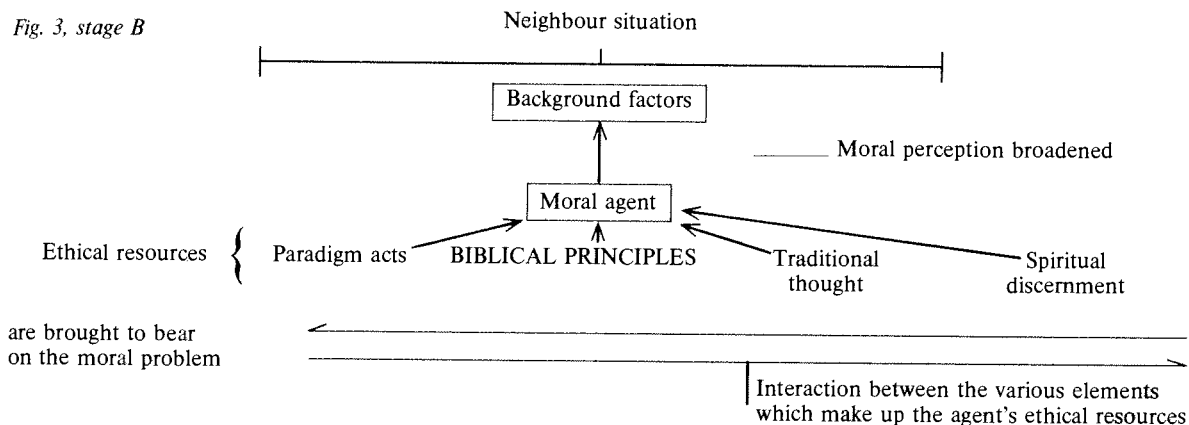
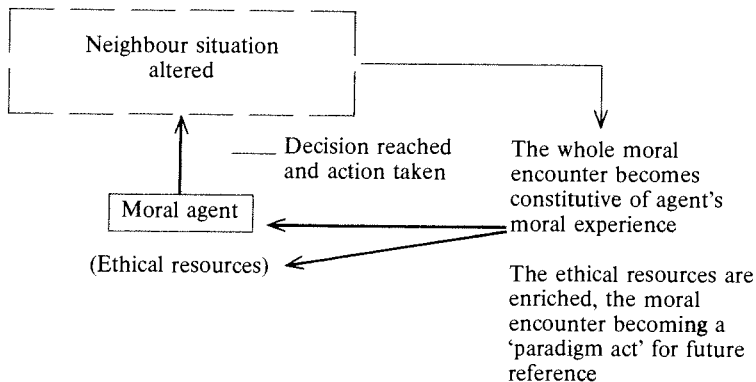


Fig. 4, Stage C: Action taken (individual or corporate)



can only be fully understood and appreciated when they are illumined by the light of Israel's redemptive faith and traditions, and not merely taken as "universal" and somewhat abstract propositions.<sup>41</sup> If the word 'Christian' were to be substituted for the term 'Israel' in Wright's statement, then it would provide a succinct summary of what is being maintained here, namely that it is in the light of the NT, and especially of Christ's teaching and example, that OT ethics can be appreciated and appropriated.

However, it is when a Christocentric approach is adopted, one which is on line with the NT's varied testimony that Christ is the integration point of all the works and purposes of God, that any hard-and-fast distinction between creation ethics and kingdom ethics has to give way to a more unified concept. We have already seen how Christ fulfils the inner intention of the law and the prophets; but it could equally be claimed that he also fulfils the inner purpose of creation as he brings about God's kingdom – viz. that the Creator and creature should live in harmony (the goal of covenant). For in Jesus, God's will is done, the kingdom has come and the Father's name is hallowed. But furthermore, what was achieved in the life, death and resurrection of this one Man, Jesus, will be universalized at the end of time, as the whole of creation becomes caught up in God's creative-redeeming action through this same person (cf. Rom. 5:21ff.; 8:18ff.). Or to put it another way, in Jesus there is an actualization of man's true potential as God intended (God's image); the ought becomes an historical reality. At the end of time the same image will be realized in other men, of whom Christ is the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:23). It is then that creation will be brought to true completion. The unity between creation and kingdom as found in Christ can be represented in Fig. 5 at the bottom of this page.

This same emphasis upon the unitary activity of God uniting both the work and goal of creation and the kingdom is to be found in Barth.<sup>42</sup> He draws attention to what he sees as the *conditio sine qua non* of Christian ethics, the command and will of God, who in Jesus Christ is man's Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer. What we perceive as three successive moments in God's activity (Creation, Reconciliation, Redemption, to use Barth's own terminology) are in reality one in the eternal movement of God (Creation-Reconciliation-Redemption). Thus from the overall standpoint of the God who 'sees the end from the beginning', any attempt to draw a division between creation/kingdom in absolute terms would be as erroneous as attempting to divide the Godhead.

The drawing together of creation and the kingdom to such a point that they more or less overlap is to be found in Colossians 1:15ff. In this great 'hymn' to the supremacy of Christ, Jesus is portrayed as the one by whom and for whom all things were created (v. 15). This is paralleled by the fact that he is also the one in whom and by whom all things are reconciled, establishing God's rule (kingdom) throughout the created order (vv. 18-20). It follows that if the creation/kingdom division is finally overcome in Christ, then so is the creation/kingdom ethics divide, with the latter being the transposition of the former. The Colossian hymn is shot through with praise to the Creator-Redeemer Christ, and it is as his pattern and teaching is worked out in the lives of his people, the members of his kingdom, that the same song will be heard – the song of the priority of Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> John Wimber, *Power Evangelism. Signs and Wonders Today* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> This is almost turning the Ignatius method of Bible study on its head. This method invites the reader to think himself into the biblical passage and so engage in an 'encounter' with Christ. To attempt to 'do what Christ would do' by the imagination is to try and envisage Christ stepping out of the text into our situation. In both cases hermeneutical controls are singularly absent.

<sup>3</sup> Os Guinness, *Doubt. Faith in Two Minds* (Lion, 1976), p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. D. E. Nineham, *New Testament Interpretation in an Historical Age* (Athlone Press, 1976). For a critique of Nineham's views see Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Paternoster, 1980), pp. 52-56.

<sup>5</sup> I. H. Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Hodder, 1982), pp. 99-113.

<sup>6</sup> David Cook, in *The Moral Maze* (SPCK, 1983), includes 'natural law' under the category of creation ethics, but he uses the term in a much broader sense, consonant with what is being suggested here, avoiding the excessive claims associated with strict natural law theory.

<sup>7</sup> D. Brown, *Choices* (Blackwells, Oxford, 1983), pp. 28-35.

<sup>8</sup> G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge, 1903), chapters ii, iii and iv.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Greg Forster's *Cultural Patterns and Moral Laws* (Grove, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (Fount, London, 1978), p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics*.

<sup>12</sup> Some, like Don Cupitt, argue that ethics have to be autonomous and must be severed from religion for man 'come of age'; for a reply see Keith Ward, *Holding Fast to God* (SPCK, 1982), pp. 50-62.

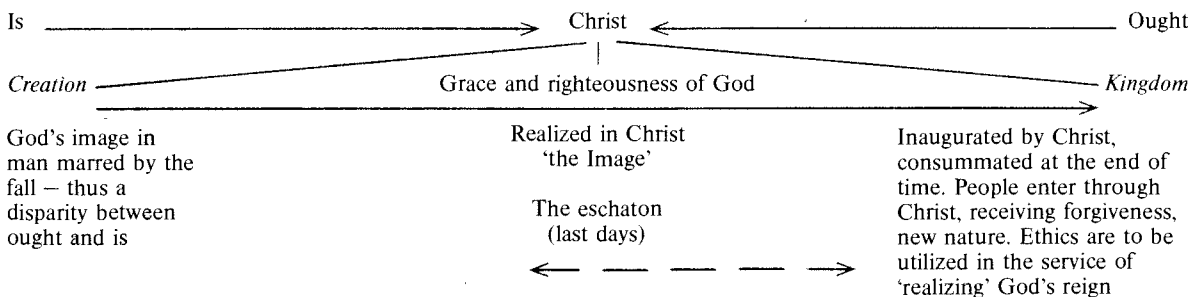
<sup>13</sup> Cf. V. White, *Honest to Goodness* (Grove, 1981) and O. Barclay, 'The Nature of Christian Morality', in *Law, Morality and the Bible* (IVP, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>16</sup> Keith Ward, *Ethics and Christianity* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1970), pp. 89ff.

Fig. 5



<sup>17</sup> R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Theology — A Fresh Approach* (Marshall's, 1978), p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> Baelz himself prefers to avoid the term 'objective' in relation to morals because of misunderstandings which could arise when placed in opposition to 'subjective', itself an emotive term. Hence his preference for the term 'logical impartiality' — *Ethics and Belief* (Sheldon Press, 1977).

<sup>19</sup> K. Ward, *The Divine Image* (SPCK, 1976), p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> A point made forcefully and with his usual lucidity by C. S. Lewis in his essay 'Man or Rabbit' (*God in the Dock*, Fount, 1979, pp. 68-69), who in contrasting the beliefs of a materialist with those of a Christian shows how those differences will inevitably manifest themselves at the most practical levels of social policy.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. N. Wilder, *Eschatology and the Ethics of the Kingdom* (New York, Harper Bros, 1950).

<sup>22</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom* (Black, London, 1914).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. H. Thielicke, *Theological Ethics* (Fortress, 1966), pp. 648-667.

<sup>24</sup> An observation made by S. S. Smalley, 'Spirit, Kingdom and Prayer in Luke-Acts', *Novt* 15 (1973).

<sup>25</sup> James Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (SCM, 1977), p. 246.

<sup>26</sup> R. J. Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTS Monograph 28, CUP, 1975), pp. 226, 234.

<sup>27</sup> S. Motyer, 'Righteousness by Faith in the NT', in *Here we Stand*, ed. J. Packer (Hodder, 1986), p. 35.

<sup>28</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (SCM, 1985), p. 322.

<sup>29</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law* (Cambridge, 1951).

<sup>30</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew* (IVP, 1986), p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (SCM, 1966).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Mt. 5:27ff. gives the negative eternal consequences of failing to take the 'right' course of action and Mt. 6:1ff. the positive eternal consequences of true righteousness.

<sup>33</sup> W. F. Lofthouse, *The Father and the Son* (London, 1934), quoted by Pollard in *Fullness of Humanity* (Sheffield, 1982), p. 86.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 336.

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> B. Mitchell, *Morality. Religious and Secular* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 147-150.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>38</sup> *Ethics and Christianity*, p. 146.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. White, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> G. Von Rad, 'The Theological Problem of the OT Doctrine of Creation', in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other essays* (Oliver & Boyd, 1966), pp. 131-143.

<sup>41</sup> Chris Wright, 'Ethics and the OT', in *Third Way* Vol. 1 No. 9 (1977), pp. 7-9.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III, 4 (T. & T. Clark, 1961, pp. 24-31).

## Conversion: a comparison of Calvin and Spener

A N S Lane

*Conversion is a particularly important feature of modern evangelicalism. In this article Tony Lane, who is Reviews Editor of Themelios and on the staff of London Bible College, asks some searching questions about the modern evangelical tradition from a historical point of view.*

What is conversion? This is an important question to ask, since so much evangelical concern and effort is devoted to the end of obtaining conversions. Reflections on the methods and techniques of evangelism are commonplace, but less attention is directed to the goal itself. What does it mean to be converted? Some of the issues involved will be highlighted by a comparison of the subtly different emphases of Calvin and Spener.

John Calvin will need no introduction to the readers of *Themelios*. Philipp Jakob Spener may not be so fortunate. He is best known as the founder of pietism. He was born in Alsace (then still part of Germany) in 1635. As a young man he was influenced by Johann Arndt's *True Christianity* (1606-1609), which stressed the inadequacy of sound doctrine without a relationship with God and holiness of living. Spener entered the (Lutheran) ministry and taught the same. In 1666 he became senior pastor at Frankfurt, where he sought to reform church practices. In 1675 he wrote the preface to an edition of Arndt's sermons. The preface was so popular that it was reprinted the same year on its own, with the title *Pia Desideria*, i.e. Holy Desires.<sup>1</sup> In this work Spener set out a programme for reform which became the manifesto of a new movement called (to Spener's displeasure) 'pietism'.

In the *Pia Desideria* Spener laments the sorry state of the contemporary church, argues from the promises of God and the actual state of the early church that conditions *can* improve and puts forward six specific proposals for reform. In the present context it is his teaching on *conversion* that concerns us.

Spener was writing at a time when virtually all citizens were baptized (as infants) and therefore (according to Lutheran doctrine) believed to be regenerate. In this situation Spener bemoans the prevalence of nominal Christianity: 'if we judge by this mark [love], how difficult it will be to find even a small number of real and true disciples of Christ among the great mass of nominal Christians' (p. 57). Spener does not deny that baptism is 'the real "washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5)' (p. 63). (Incidentally, John Wesley, who is to Anglo-Saxon evangelicalism what Spener is to German pietism, also held onto the traditional Anglican doctrine of baptismal regeneration.) But Spener would not have people imagine that baptism was enough, regardless of how one then lives. 'Nor is it enough to be baptized, but the inner man, where we have put on Christ in baptism, must also keep Christ on and bear witness to him in our outward life' (p. 117). Similarly, one must not claim to be justified by faith without recognizing that 'godly faith does not exist without the Holy Spirit, nor can such faith continue when deliberate sins prevail' (p. 64). There is no true Christian faith without an inner change, a heart knowledge of God and a godly life. The problem of nominal Christianity was acute, not least among the clergy. Some of them led scandalous lives. Others did not

but still exhibited a thoroughly selfish and worldly spirit. 'Although they themselves do not realize it, they are still stuck fast in the old birth and do not actually possess the true marks of a new birth' (p. 46).

Spener's opposition to nominal Christianity was to become a hallmark of both the pietist and the evangelical movements. To what extent was it also a part of the teaching of the Reformers? A three-point comparison of Spener and the evangelical tradition with Calvin will reveal some interesting similarities and differences.

Calvin, like Spener, is well aware of the fact of nominal Christianity. There is the phenomenon of the 'temporary faith' of the reprobate.<sup>2</sup> Apart from non-Christians and true believers, there are two other categories. Some are nominal Christians and are 'initiated into the sacraments, yet by impurity of life denying God in their actions while they confess him with their lips, they belong to Christ only in name'. Others are 'hypocrites who conceal with empty pretences their wickedness of heart' (3:14:1). Calvin has a clear doctrine of the 'invisible church'. In the visible church 'are mingled many hypocrites who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance' (4:1:7). The invisible church is the small and contemptible number of the elect hidden in a huge multitude (4:1:2). Calvin certainly did not believe that mere church membership and participation in the sacraments was any guarantee of salvation. But, as the term 'invisible church' implies, Calvin was opposed to attempts to separate the wheat and the chaff, to say who is elect (4:1:7-9). The invisible church is invisible not because it meets in secret or because its members are invisible but because its *boundaries* are known only to God. Only God can discern accurately whose profession of faith is genuine (2 Tim. 2:19). We are called to exercise a judgment of charity 'whereby we recognize as members of the church those who, by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments, profess the same God and Christ with us' (4:1:8). Evangelicals are usually willing *in theory* to accept that they cannot read people's hearts and divide the wheat from the chaff, but this does not usually stop them from at least having a shot at making the division. The acknowledgment that God alone reads hearts is relegated to the small print.

Calvin, like Spener, insists that church membership and outward participation in the sacraments do not suffice for salvation. There must be an inner change brought about by the Holy Spirit. There is the need to live a godly life. Without the sanctification of the Holy Spirit there is no true faith or knowledge of Christ (3:2:8-10). But while Calvin emphasizes this, he has very little to say about a conversion experience. Calvin stresses the need for saving faith, but he does not imply that it must come at an instant. Regeneration for Calvin is a lifelong process.

This restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practise repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death (3:3:9).

Calvin could speak of his own 'sudden conversion' to the Protestant cause, but he does not seem to have regarded such as the norm.

Calvin, like Spener, was opposed to the lax standards of the contemporary church and sought to improve them. He had a clear doctrine of church discipline (4:12) and his efforts in establishing discipline at Geneva are well known. But Calvin's response to lax conditions was not quite that of Spener and the evangelical tradition. Spener bemoaned the fact that many of the clergy were unregenerate. Evangelicals respond to the laxity of nominal Christianity with a call to conversion, treating nominal Christians as 'non-Christians'. Calvin's approach was somewhat different. Because of his doctrine of the invisible church, he did not presume to identify the nominal Christians. Instead he treated all of his congregation as professing Christians. If they fell into serious sin they were treated as erring sheep in need of discipline rather than non-Christians in need of conversion.<sup>3</sup>

So far we have compared Calvin and the evangelical tradition without any attempt to judge between them. There are a number of issues that arise out of the comparison.

First, Calvin was unwilling to separate the wheat and the chaff. Evangelicals might do well to pay more attention to his qualms. It would be wrong to suggest that all professions of faith must be taken equally seriously (Acts 8:20-23). But we need to be more fully aware that all of our judgments are provisional. The apparently nominal Christian may turn out to be a weak Christian who will in the fulness of time blossom into full maturity. The out-and-out convert may turn out to be rocky soil (Mk. 4:16f.).

Secondly, evangelicals generally see instantaneous conversion as the norm. It is of course acknowledged that some have a gradual conversion, but this tends to be seen as the exception to the rule. Perhaps we should be willing to learn more from Calvin's concept of conversion as a process. Even when adults come to faith through a crisis experience there is usually a process which precedes it. This is especially true of those brought up in a Christian home. My job includes interviewing prospective students. Very often those from a Christian home will refer to two crisis experiences: one in the early teens and another in the later teens. Some will refer to their conversion, followed by a deeper commitment later. Others will refer to a step towards God culminating in their conversion later. I suspect that in many (not all) of these cases we have people who have 'grown up into' faith and have sought to interpret their experience in terms of sudden conversion, since this is what is expected. Maybe we should think of two alternative 'models' of becoming a Christian: 'growing gradually into faith' and 'sudden conversion'. Few will fit fully into one category rather than the other, but the experience of most Christians fits more into one than the other. Those who are brought up in Christian homes are more likely to have 'grown up into faith', while others are more likely to have undergone a conversion experience. Both ways are equally valid.

Thirdly, if we need to recognize that conversion can be the culmination of a process, we need equally to see it as the beginning of a process. It does not matter too much whether we call conversion/regeneration a lifelong process or whether we insist that conversion must be followed by lifelong growth as a Christian. Either way, we must make sure that conversion is seen as the start of the Christian race, not as its conclusion. With some evangelicals there is so much emphasis on conversion and the gaining of converts that this obscures all else.

The emphasis is on numerical growth to the exclusion of growth in maturity. There is a medical term for this sort of growth: cancer.

Fourthly, we need to consider the content of conversion. Certain types of evangelistic effort are notorious for producing multitudes of 'converts' who are never seen again. One inner-city church was recently called upon to nurture over fifty 'converts' from Mission London. *Only one* of them appears to be continuing as a Christian. We would all agree that this is not satisfactory, but what is the solution? Why did these converts not continue? Perhaps the problem lies in the definition of conversion. Did they fail to continue or did they never start? What is conversion? Many who would regard an expression like 'letting Jesus into your heart' as superficial would nonetheless be happy to define conversion as repentance and faith, an inward change. This is certainly central to conversion, but is it *enough*? It would be more in keeping with the practice of Acts and the theology of the epistles to expand the definition to include baptism and embarking on a life of Christian discipleship within the fellowship of the church. But what difference does it make simply to change a definition? Is it not just a matter of words? No. It is important both because we use the word conversion so much (unlike the Bible) and because evangelism is geared to obtaining converts. The only way to avoid the problem of a flood of transient 'converts' is to rethink the definition of conversion. It is also important because for the NT the church is itself a part of the gospel message. You cannot preach the full gospel without preaching about the church. To have God for one's father implies, of necessity, having his other children as one's brothers and sisters. It is a contradiction in terms to talk of being God's child without belonging to his family. Conversion is not just entering into a private relationship with God. It means joining God's family, which is not some abstract mystical concept but is composed of actual human beings around us.

Finally, if our definition of conversion is expanded in this way it has another important consequence. As we accept a broader and fuller definition of conversion it becomes harder to see instantaneous conversion as the norm. After all, few folk today follow the pattern of Acts and repent, believe, are baptized and join the church all on the same day! For most these four elements come over a period of time. Furthermore, different people will go through these stages in different orders. Some may be baptized and confirmed before they come to saving faith. Others may not be baptized until later. This is a simple fact, whatever we may think *ought* to happen. But how should we react to the fact that for most people conversion in the full sense does not happen all at once? We must not fall into the trap of making conversion a two- or three-stage event, with certain steps following in a prescribed order. In the NT repentance, faith, baptism and church membership are held together as different aspects of what it means to become a Christian. Theologically it is disastrous to separate them — whether by separating faith from repentance or faith from baptism or baptism from confirmation or conversion from receiving the Holy Spirit. In practice conversion may happen by stages (like the healing of the blind man in Mk. 8:22-26), but we must not develop a multi-stage doctrine of conversion, any more than a multi-stage concept of healing. Conversion is, theologically speaking, a single event which may, in practice, happen gradually over a period of time and in stages.

<sup>1</sup> There is an English translation of the *Pia Desideria*, translated by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). Page numbers in the text refer to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutio* 3:2:10-12. Further references in the text are to the *Institutio*. Quotations are taken from the F. L. Battles/J. T. McNeill translation (London: SCM/Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> Calvin's attitude to pastoral care is well brought out in H. T. Mayer, *Pastoral Care* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), ch. 6.

## Towards an analysis of cult

N A D Scotland

*The sociology of religion has been a subject of growing importance in theological courses, but one into which Themelios has rarely ventured. In this article Dr Scotland, who is Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies at the College of St Paul and St Mary in Cheltenham, looks at some modern religious movements in a way that may encourage us to reflect on our own religious traditions.*

Until recent years sociologists of religion have concentrated their studies of religious institutions on 'church' and 'sect' types as enunciated by Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber and more recently developed by the Oxford sociologist Bryan Wilson. No attempt was made to distinguish between 'sect' and what has subsequently become known as 'cult'. But from the mid 1960s onwards scholars have begun to differentiate the two. It should be noted at the outset that some sociologists of religion, notably Roy Wallis (1984) and James

Beckford (1986), have preferred the term 'New Religious Movements' (NRM)<sup>1</sup> on the ground that it is less prejudicial. Others such as Eileen Barker seem happy to stay with 'cult'.<sup>2</sup> Ernest Becker pointed out that 'cults' were much like sects so that it was extremely difficult to draw a line between the two. However, Milton Yinger considered that cults represent a sharper break in religious terms from the dominant religious tradition of society.<sup>3</sup> A number of recent sociologists, most recently Ronald Enroth, Eileen Barker and James Beckford, have followed Yinger and sought to analyse a cult typology. This article draws on some of their material and with additional analysis seeks to clarify the nature of a 'cult'. Illustrative material is drawn in the main from Christian-related cults such as the Jonestown Community, the Children of God and the Unification Church, but reference is also made to Scientology and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

One reason why such an analysis of 'sect' and 'cult' forms of institution is important is because it provides a means of identifying and assessing expressions of religion. Orthodox Christianity for example has always been accepting of most sectarian groups whose basic doctrines are in keeping with the historic creeds. In contrast, however, cults, even those with Christian roots, are unacceptable to the main-line Christian denominations partly because of the function and role of their leadership and also on account of their denial of basic human freedoms.

Exponents of the sect typology have noted a number of significant characteristics. In their understanding of salvation the sects emphasize the importance of the instantaneous and the experiential 'new birth', 'nirvana' or 'Krishna consciousness'. Sectarian worship is correspondingly 'free', often associated with rhythmic chorus hymns, handclapping and the supernatural. The sect is frequently in the hands of a naturally emerging dominant personality. Sect membership is by conscious decision and exclusive. There is also a strict ethical code of conduct coupled with disciplinary and expulsion procedures.

A cult, it is argued, has a number of distinctive features which mark it off from a 'sect'. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that **the cult leader becomes God to the movement**. Max Weber pointed out that the founder of the sect would hold a certain authority over his followers which was best described in terms of 'charisma'. The sect leader was not considered to be an ordinary human being but in some sense 'a man above his fellows' with special powers and qualities of personality.

A cult (or NRM if you prefer) also has a living leader, but invariably he or she becomes God to the cult membership. Once the leader dies the likelihood is that the cult will disappear unless someone takes over the position. This is unlikely since if he is God or believed to be God he presumably cannot be replaced. It does seem, however, as though Scientology may succeed in transferring power following the recent death of its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, though membership has plummeted.

Cult leaders often begin life in humble, even harsh, circumstances but at some point they begin to receive a revelation of visions or acquire quasi-supernatural powers. Because of this the members' faith in the leader begins to develop rapidly and in a process which is largely unconscious they 'legitimate' his claim to absolute control as a messiah figure. Beckford expresses it as follows: 'The cult leader is usually seen not as the precursor of the messiah but as the messiah himself, therefore he exercises total control over the following.'<sup>4</sup> For example Sun Myung Moon, who was born in 1920 of Presbyterian parents of comparatively ordinary circumstances, began to 'pray for extra-ordinary things' when he was just twelve. At sixteen when he was praying out on a Korean mountainside he had a vision of Jesus in which he was told he had been selected to carry out an important mission. He was later able to converse directly with Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, Confucius, Wesley and Buddha, enabling Christianity to be reborn in a Moon-mediated form. In 1954 he founded 'The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity', more simply known as the 'Unification Church'. From this time on both he and his wife have assumed a god-like status over the movement, styling themselves the 'true parents'. Cult members frequently

address Moon as 'Father' or 'Master'. Moon teaches that he is in fact 'the Lord of the Second Advent' who has come to complete the work which Jesus left uncompleted. Indeed in one of his speeches Moon speaks of himself as 'the Way of God':

I have certain things you can find nowhere else. This is what has drawn you to me. What might seem presumptuous doesn't trouble me. My conscience is all clear and happy. You owe me. Without me there is a certain distance you cannot go in your search for God. You must come to Him through me. You are following the universal path to heaven which has shortly been sent by me.<sup>5</sup>

Beckford comments: 'The person of the Reverend Moon plays an important role in relation to the Unification doctrine not only . . . because he is thought to be the Lord of the Second Advent . . . but also because he is regarded as the movement's mediator with God and other eminent spirits.'<sup>6</sup> When no visitors are present at their worship Unification Church members pray to God through Moon as he is the physical representation of God.<sup>7</sup>

Swami Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), is regarded as the latest in an unbroken line of Krishna's disciples. Although Prabhupada is distinct from Krishna, he is nevertheless regarded as 'the perfect guide to Krishna'. He appears to have achieved this role on account of his matchless store of knowledge drawn from his unequalled understanding of the Hindu Scriptures.

David Berg, the leader of COG (Children of God), began his working life as an evangelical fire-and-brimstone preacher with strong pre-millennial convictions which he proclaimed along the California coastlands during the 1960s. In his early days he was very puritanical and offered salvation in return for heartfelt repentance. His gospel found ready acceptance amongst the back-packing youth culture of the permissive swinging sixties which was desperately searching for something to cling to.

Berg's personal dominance over the movement became progressively stronger. By the early 1970s it had been accepted that he had been 'filled with the Gift of Faith in his mother's womb'.<sup>8</sup> Berg began to style himself 'Moses David' to indicate his messianic status and he started to issue his teaching in the form of MO (short for Moses) letters. By the end of the 1970s Berg claimed that the COG were under God's leadership:

We have had world-wide fame! . . .  
All I do is just give the word!

Beckford comments: 'The evolution of the Children of God movement illustrates the overwhelming power that its leader has been consistently able to exercise over its members.'<sup>9</sup>

A similar pattern can be observed in the control which James Jones began to exercise over his following in the People's Temple in Los Angeles. Eventually the group moved to Guyana to set up the Jonestown Community, where Jones used to sit on a raised wooden throne from which he made pronouncements much in the manner of the Pope. As early as the mid 1960s he claimed to be 'God's heir on earth'.<sup>10</sup>

Some might feel that all of this is little different from the way in which a Roman Catholic regards the Bishop of Rome

or a high Anglican his parish priest or a house-church member unquestioningly responds to his shepherd or elder. And yet there is a fundamental difference in that in the cult the leader is more than a revered figure — he acquires the status of deity. Maurice Burrell encapsulates this aspect of cult succinctly when he writes: '... today's new wave prophets literally profess to be God incarnate and most wield absolute authority over cult members.'

Another distinguishing feature of 'cult' is seen in a **rigid and tyrannical authority structure**. Members of sectarian groups believe their leader to be uniquely inspired and to be a source of divine truth. Because of this they are prepared to accede to his or her wishes and follow sect patterns of behaviour. However, members who don't wish to fall in with sect patterns of behaviour are either free to leave or they may be expelled or excommunicated.

In the cult the leader assumes the role of dictator or absolute monarch and is to be obeyed without question. The structure of the cult is therefore pyramidal with each tier passing orders down from the top and no one questioning or challenging a higher level of authority. Cult leaders often live in great seclusion surrounded by an aura of mystery which leads to greater veneration when they appear in public. Moon lives in a palatial complex in a quiet area of New York State. L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, who spent his early years in naval service, lived in a life-sized replica of a clipper complete with three masts and bridge which was located at Gillman Hot Springs near the Mojave Desert in California.

Such leaders allow harsh discipline to be meted out on deviant or questioning members. Some instigate a reign of terror. David Blundy described the authority which Jones exercised over his thousand subjects as 'an ascendancy as despotic, as cruel and as absolute as Cleopatra's'. In a 1977 press exposé detailed accounts were published of what went on behind the doors of Jones' People's Temple. It included the fining of members, ritual beatings of adults and children and bizarre sexual activities. Later when the cult moved to Guyana dissenters were forcibly injected with drugs to quieten them down and make them amenable to Jones' policies. Jones, who was by this time styled 'father', demanded sexual favours from any of his several hundred women he happened to fasten his eyes on. They were forced to comply even if they were engaged or committed to someone else. All this was a far cry from Jones' early days as an evangelical fundamentalist preacher.

In 1984 a leading British newspaper gave a parallel report that some of the officials at the East Grinstead Headquarters of Scientology were acting 'like Hitler Youth' dressed in military uniform and inflicting punishments of confinement and violence. According to another article on Scientology in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, entitled 'The Sinking of the Master Mariner',<sup>12</sup> the Church was using the Spanish Inquisitional type of tribunals to bring even some of its more important officials into line. The Church had a 'penal camp' in an Indian Reservation several miles from Gillman Hot Springs. David Mayo, who was once Ron Hubbard's own personal auditor (or confessor), was apparently forced to dig ditches in the desert heat for six months and when he wasn't digging he was made to run around a pole. Why didn't he just

leave the movement and escape? According to an ex-Scientologist in the article:

They don't have any money. They don't know anybody outside except their family and they severed those ties years ago. Anyway they love Ron. He is their God.<sup>13</sup>

Similar instances could be cited from most cult groups but perhaps one more from the 'Love Family' cult reported by Enroth will suffice to make this point. 'The Love Family' was formed by Paul Erdman, a Seattle salesman, in 1969. He believes he is Christ's representative on earth whose special purpose it is to gather God's true family. Amongst other things they hold rigidly to the King James Version of the Bible and engage in a religious ritual which involves inhaling toluene, an industrial solvent. The following passage indicates forcibly the control and repressive discipline exercised by the leader.

Love also laid down the rules on marriage and sexual activity within the Family. At one point, celibacy was the norm. 'When I first got there, everybody had given up sex until the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.' Later Love changed the rules and allowed couples to live as man and wife. A man who wanted to be married would go to Love and would say, 'We would like to get together.' Love made the decision. Sometimes he would notice that two people liked each other, and he would ask, 'Would you two like to live as man and wife?' They would say yes, and they would be 'bonded'. There really wasn't a ceremony — they would just sleep together. Love also had the authority to unbond people. He could say that those two people couldn't sleep together any more. Or, without actually ending the relationship, he could say, 'Well, you are still bonded, but you can't sleep together now.' And they would obey him.

One guy got flogged for sleeping with some girl who wasn't in the Family. He wanted to remain in the Family so he had to submit to a beating as a punishment. He got paddled on his bottom with a stick that was about two feet long — forty swats. Everybody in the Family had to come and watch. One of the elders did the beating, and they hit him pretty hard.<sup>14</sup>

Another related feature of the cult is the **use of techniques akin to brainwashing**. It is important to stress techniques 'akin to' brainwashing because opinion is divided as to whether the techniques used do in fact constitute brainwashing. Beckford gives a number of instances from his researches which indicate brainwashing or something closely approximating to it.<sup>15</sup> For example he cites the case of Philip, a student of physics in his home town university. He left his parents a note to say that he had gone to UC Centre in the south of England to learn about the Reverend Moon. On his return home he burst into his parents' bedroom. His father describes the scene:

He was quite beside himself, wasn't natural at all, demented and... in a hectic state... completely confused and convinced that he had just had a message from Mr Moon. It was just to confirm that everything [the Centre] had told him was to be accepted... He was convinced that he must consider full commitment.<sup>16</sup>

This behaviour was echoed in another, Brian, a former teacher of music aged 29. His mother commented:

He left everything, library books which I had to take back, he just joined overnight... It made me suspicious because it all happened so quickly. I felt when he'd gone actually I was empty and I felt that he'd been brainwashed... And then I had letters full of the preaching and so on, and I just felt he was completely taken over. And, of course, since then I feel that he's become retarded.<sup>17</sup>

In a later chapter entitled 'The moral career of the ex-Moonie' Beckford gives further instances which suggest

evidence of something akin to brainwashing. Caroline's tearful departure from the UC Centre in Germany speaks for many ex-Moonies:

Then I was really upset and I would have given anything then to say I'd stay, because then, I really felt I was saying goodbye to Heavenly Father, and you know, it was so confusing, really mixed up . . . I completely felt I was doing the wrong thing, but then again it was the draw of my parents that kept me on the train to go back.<sup>18</sup>

Another young man stated:

I still can't eradicate, that's why I think there must be something to do with brainwashing. I still can't eradicate that there could be some truth in it. No matter how hard I try I still can't eradicate that feeling.<sup>19</sup>

Other ex-Unificationists reported experiencing psychic phenomena after 'disengaging', including dreams, visions of kneeling figures (often monks), fear and paranoia. In some cases ex-members also tried to compensate for an 'arrested role-passage' in their teenage years. They tried desperately to catch up for lost time and to enjoy some of the pleasure they'd missed out on but they reported only guilt and a sense of failure in many cases. Eileen Barker, in her extensive study of the Unification Church entitled *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (1984), is reluctant to commit herself to the view that the Unification Church brainwashes its subjects. She sums up her findings as follows:

What then are my conclusions? Has my study led me to believe that people join the Unification Church as the result of irresistible brainwashing techniques or as the result of a rational calculated choice? As will doubtless be clear to anyone who has read thus far, the short reply to such a question is that I do not find either answer satisfactory, but that the evidence would seem to suggest that the answer lies considerably nearer the rational-choice pole of the continuum than it does to [the] irresistible brainwashing pole.<sup>20</sup>

Ex-Moonie Monica Heftmann defined a brainwashed person as 'one who has been debilitated and manipulated to the point that he can critically analyse neither the beliefs instilled in him nor the desirability of actions consequential to those beliefs'.<sup>21</sup> Clearly there are adherents of the Unification Church and other cults who have been brainwashed and in some cases subsequently been deprogrammed, just as there are those who have made rational decisions to become members. On the other hand it has to be recognized that 'disengagement' is common. In the 1970s it is estimated that 75 per cent left the Unification Church within a year of joining. This hardly sustains the view that cults extensively brainwash.

Perhaps the least that can be said on this issue at this point is that from the moment visitors or inquirers first enter cult premises their time is fully monopolized in a fast-moving programme of lectures, seminars, recreation and leisure activities in which there is little time for reflection and none for questioning. No potential recruits are allowed to be alone to discuss their beliefs — always they are shadowed by a cult member. Young recruits are often subjected to long hours, little sleep and a strongly carbohydrate diet. New members are also frequently isolated from their homes and familiar surroundings with the result that they become increasingly dependent on the movement for their security. Erica Heftmann makes a significant assertion that cult members are 'not necessarily brainwashed' but totally dependent on the movement. Like children they are controlled because they are dependent.

It might be argued that the evangelistic techniques employed on occasion by certain evangelical groups run close to some of these procedures. Nevertheless it is doubtful whether even the most flamboyant of fundamentalist preachers sets out with conscious deliberation to deny his audience the freedom to reject his message.

A further related feature of the cult institution is **the repression of individuality**. Within a sect there is a certain amount of room for individuality and for members to develop their own identity as well as express their opinions within certain limitations. Within the 'cult', however, there is invariably a pronounced and concerted effort to repress individuality. Members may be given new names. When members joined the COG in the 1960s they signed the following statement: 'I promise to give all my goods and income, let you open my mail, obey rules and officers.' If they are married they may well be separated from their former partner, as frequently happens in the Unification Church.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes their marriages may be dissolved and they are then married to another.

Cults tend to keep their members on the move, making them work in different centres, headquarters, shops or street sells for three- or four-month periods. This means that they have little time to keep in touch with their families and past links around which their identity has been built. Parents are also frequently denied access to their children for this reason. The plight of many parents is summed up by this comment from the mother of a Unificationist:

The UC attacks family structure, because I don't think you can be a fully committed member of the UC and live a normal family life, it isn't possible. They don't encourage you to pop home for the weekend or if mother's ill, come home and nurse her or. . . You cannot have a normal family relationship.<sup>24</sup>

This fact that NRMs downgrade the nuclear family and emphasize the community of the cult family largely explains why they recruit the vast majority of their membership from unstable home backgrounds. The majority are in the 18-30 age band, 77 per cent being male and 95 per cent unmarried.

Part of the repression process is the rejection of the individual 'ego'. For example, an ex-member explained that if a Hare Krishna devotee has to look in a mirror he or she will probably say something to the effect of, 'O stupid body'. This apparently is part of the devotee's constant practice of subjecting himself 'to degradations and assaults on his identity which are designed to detach him from his former self-concept'.

Repression of the 'ego' is also achieved by so totally occupying the individual's time and energy that there is no time for one's own self-image or self-gratification. As one member of the Alamo Foundation put it:

I praise God for the way He stripped me down financially, mentally, etc. In preparation for my serving Him. Right now I'm down to God and me — plus clothes and personals. I believe you're either all for God or not.<sup>25</sup>

Beckford relates that the destruction of the self-image or ego in the cult adherent is also achieved in a process of intrusion into private affairs which exceeds the generally accepted limits of personal privacy. *The Times* (London), in an article in 1986, carried details of a successful lawsuit against the Scientology Church. The article asserted that the cult



subjected its adherents to 'psychological manipulations' in a process known as auditing whereby they were forced to reveal intimate details of their past lives. These details were monitored and recorded and then used to blackmail the same individuals to stay within the movement.<sup>26</sup> They were told quite bluntly: 'If you leave we'll reveal this and this about you.'

One further characteristic of cults or New Religion Movements is **the use of deception techniques in their recruitment activities**. As cults see it, the world is in the grip of Satan, therefore Satanic methods are both necessary and justifiable in dealings with the outside world.

In the UC this practice is actually termed 'heavenly deception'. This procedure means that if you can promote the interests of the UC or attract a potential convert by lying or not being open it's perfectly alright. Many Moonies if you meet them on the street won't admit that they belong to the UC; they call it 'The Holy Spirit Association' or 'One World Movement' or even the 'Kensington Gardens Arts Society'. Most often they just refuse to go beyond 'we're from the Church'. Many testify to the fact that they were first attracted to a cult by the friendly smile of a street worker or the depth of fellowship at an inquirers' weekend. All of this is often part of a deliberate tactic. Moonies frequently practise what is known as 'love-bombing'.

This is one of the problems sociologists or students of the movement face. You never know whether you are getting the truth or not.

Infiltration of mainstream churches has also been an approved tactic for winning new recruits and/or supporters, although this has led to some counter-productive controversy. Two examples locally illustrate this. About four years ago the UC membership in Cheltenham made a concerted attempt to infiltrate St Philip and St James C of E parish. Members of Stanton Fitzwarren UC (near Swindon) often visit other churches in the mornings and hold their own worship in the evenings.

The UC also organizes conferences for church leaders, scientists and medical practitioners. Some of these are solely with the objective of putting across a positive image to counteract other adverse publicity.

A very different deception technique is that pioneered by David Berg in the mid 1970s. Styled 'Flirty Fishing', he says that it is 'the sacred duty'<sup>27</sup> of women members to have or offer sexual intercourse for the deliberate purpose of bringing men to faith in Christ. Unfortunately this has resulted in the presence within the community of what are termed 'Jesus babies' and 'mateless mothers'.<sup>28</sup>

This form of behaviour was justified in a series of MO letters in which Berg argued that because this is 'the end time' immediately before the millennium, the new law of love has replaced the old Mosaic law. The same basis is also used to justify the practice of condoning extra-marital sexual relations. Husbands in particular are warned to be magnanimous and forgiving of their wives' liaisons:

Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what measure ye mete it out it shall be meted unto you again (Mt. 7:12). Even if your wife is guilty, you'd better forgive her if you want to be forgiven for your sins. For if you self-righteously and hypocritically judge her

harshly God will judge you the same, but justly. 'For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Gal. 6:7).<sup>29</sup>

Gerry Armstrong, former international archivist of Scientology, said, 'I went from being a devotee -- I thought it was the hope of mankind and I learned it was all lies and deception.'

### Conclusion

What are we to say in conclusion? First, in many of the so-called NRMs the members become totally dependent on the leadership and thereby 'legitimate' his or her actions even to the extent of dictatorial terrorism. NRM leaderships illustrate the maxim that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Many cults exemplify antinomian tendencies which probably result from initial over-intensity and puritanical traits. Cults attract and in many cases deliberately set out to meet the need for friendship and community which many lack who have had unstable home situations.

In an attempt to look on the positive side James Beckford has suggested one or two areas in which NRMs have made some sort of contribution. For example, he relates that some cults have emphasized holistic healing and humanistic psychology in ways which have found favour among many sections of the adult population of Western Europe.

Whatever else may or may not be said, the 'cult' typology clearly helps us to a fuller understanding and analysis of religion of an intense kind which reflects the fragmentation of late 20th-century society.

<sup>1</sup> R. Wallis, *Elementary Forms of New Religious Life* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); J. Beckford, *Cult Controversies* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> E. Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (1984).

<sup>3</sup> See E. Becker, *The Birth and Death of Meaning* (Penguin, 1962); J. M. Yinger, *Sociology Looks at Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> See Beckford, *op. cit.*, p. 45f.

<sup>5</sup> R. Enroth, *Youth Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults* (Paternoster Press, 1977), pp. 109-110.

<sup>6</sup> Beckford, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> I discovered this through informal conversation with UC members after one of their Sunday worship services.

<sup>8</sup> MO Letter No. 77, 1971, cited by Beckford, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Beckford, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> See for example J T Richardson, 'People's Temple and Jonestown: a corrective, comparison and critique, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (September 1980), pp. 239-255.

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 July 1984.

<sup>12</sup> D. Blundy, 'The Jonestown Tape', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 25 November 1979.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> Enroth, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>15</sup> Beckford, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>19</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> E. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 122f.

<sup>21</sup> E. Heftmann, *The Dark Side of the Moon* (Penguin, 1983), p. 244.

<sup>22</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>24</sup> Beckford, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>25</sup> Enroth, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>26</sup> *The Times* (London), 20 September 1986.

<sup>27</sup> Beckford, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 40, 134. See also J. Williams, *The Locust Years* (Hodder, 1987), pp. 136-137.

<sup>28</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> MO Letter No. 1012, June 1981.

# Book reviews

A. S. van der Woude (ed.), **The World of the Bible** (Bible Handbook, Vol. 1), translated by Sierd Woudstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), xii + 400 pp., £31.00.

J. A. Thompson, **Handbook of Life in Bible Times** (Leicester: IVP, 1986), 384 pp., £12.95.

The 'world of the Bible' is a category which may comprise a remarkable diversity of content. These two books are themselves very different in level and approach, and in the focus of their usefulness. Both, in different ways, major very strongly on the OT, even to the detriment of the NT. Both have striking virtues in their own class.

The first work is a translation from the Dutch of the first volume of a major projected series. Most of the contributors are Dutch or Dutch-American. Their work is in parts fairly technical, and in general represents a moderate mainstream scholarship. In the areas of its strengths, subject as ever to the reader's careful and critical use, it will be a most valuable reference tool. The problem lies in its strangely uneven coverage, and particularly in the sketchy, often almost perfunctory, treatment of the NT sections. I suspect there is a special reason for this in the lamented death of Professor W. C. van Unnik, whose name is retained among the editors. Evidently his contributions, both in writing and in editorial organization, were lost to the project in mid-course.

The book is divided into six principal sections, covering respectively geography, archaeology, writing and languages, textual criticism, history of the ancient Near East, and biblical institutions. There are wide variations between contributors in scale and approach. Thus, while J. H. Negenman devotes 40 pages to a detailed factual description of the physical and human geography of all the relevant countries, almost without biblical reference, B. van Elderen makes selective topographical connections with the NT in five (though the lukewarm piped water of Laodicea does not come from the neighbourhood of Hierapolis/Pamukkale, p. 48, but from the opposite side of the valley). The two pieces on archaeology, by H. J. Franken and C. H. J. de Geus, are very salutary in their insistence on rigour in method and interpretation. J. C. de Moor offers many interesting examples in his account of languages and scripts. J. Hofstijzer writes on Hebrew and Aramaic, and G. Mussies on Greek. This last is too brief, an excellent prolegomenon on the status of Greek in Palestine, but it effectively stops short of questions we really want to ask about the *kind* of Greek found in the NT, whether nearer to everyday language (Deissmann, Moulton) or theologically innovative (Turner). The contributions on the text are notably authoritative, that on the OT by the eminent Israeli scholar Emanuel Tov, and that on the NT an admirably clear and concise piece by J. Smit Sibinga.

The historical part raises the problem of the odd unevenness of the book in the sharpest form. The survey is divided into two very unequal sections, before and after Alexander. K. R. Veenhof's narrative of the earlier period extends over almost a third of the whole book, but is extraordinarily packed with detail, a huge pageant of civilizations, kings and campaigns. The 20 pages following, by M. A. Beek, another OT scholar, deal selectively with Alexander and his successors, before petering out in the neighbourhood of the NT with generalities about religions, roads and Judaism. The book then concludes with K. Roubos writing on the institutions of everyday life and of religion, mainly as represented in Judaism and the OT.

This book, then, is disappointingly unequal, more in its scale than its quality. It will be valuable for the OT student, but the best of the work specifically directed to the NT is contained in a mere 20 pages of Mussies and Sibinga. It will hardly be a tempting buy for the NT specialist. It is unclear at this stage what steps may be taken in following volumes to redress the balance. There are good bibliographies, largely of standard and technical works in English, French or German, attached to each sub-section. The book is very attractively illustrated, partly in colour, and there is a substantial index of the more important names and subjects.

Dr Thompson's book is written at a more popular level, with a clearer focus and appeal to a wider readership. The author, formerly Reader in Middle Eastern Studies in the University of Melbourne, is a well-known authority on biblical archaeology, and he is supported by a strong team, including Alan Millard and Derek Williams as text editor. All concerned are to be congratulated on the attractiveness of the final product. The volume makes an immediate impact in the colourful spaciousness of its format and the beauty and aptness of the photography, notably in the contributions of Sonia Halliday and her colleagues.

There is an inherent difficulty in the attempt to present the 'everyday life' of Bible times topically, for the subject spans millennia and a geographical spread from Rome to southern Mesopotamia. If the early materials were available, it would be natural to undertake the task chronologically, so that each vignette were an attempt at an integrated portrait of an actual way of life. But to say that is not to question the value of attempting the complementary task, which is no less important, provided only sufficient care is taken to avert cultural and chronological confusion. This prospect is eased by the relative stability and continuity in life and religious culture across wide areas of the ancient Near East. This task seems generally to have been negotiated with some skill.

The book has a threefold expressed purpose: to make some of the recent discoveries of archaeology available, to bring them alive, and to illustrate the grounding of the whole Bible in real life. After an introductory survey of background geography and history and on the function of archaeology, the other six main sections are organized thematically, on home life, food, industry and commerce, culture and health, warfare, and religion. The large majority of the book is concerned with the OT and the Palestinian scene, though other perspectives are not neglected. The evidence is drawn largely from the biblical text itself, which is freely cited, so that the reader may proceed consecutively, without constant reference to the Bible. The narrative is enlivened by the author's extensive knowledge of Palestinian life as well as archaeology, and by modern parallels.

This then is a most attractive volume in which to browse. Its specific value to the specialist student will be limited by its popular approach and lack of technical documentation, though there are useful sectional bibliographies of more popular works and encyclopaedia articles. It will be a most helpful source-book to enliven the presentation of preacher and teacher. There are good and clearly arranged indexes of places, people and subjects.

**Colin J. Hemer.**

Ernest W. Nicholson, **God and His People, Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament** (Oxford: University Press, 1986), xii + 244 pp., £25.00

One of the greatest needs of OT students has been for a book which conveniently surveys the study of 'covenant' in the OT, and puts the results into students' hands in a comprehensible form. This is such a book.

Nicholson's book is divided into three parts. Part One (chs. 1-4) surveys the history of the study of 'covenant' from Wellhausen to the present day. Nicholson traces four phases in scholarly opinion over the period. First, after Wellhausen, scholars differed about the antiquity of the covenant concept, but were agreed that it was a theological notion. Then in the second phase, under the influence of sociological study of the OT, scholars such as Noth achieved some consensus in interpreting 'covenant' as principally a social institution. This line of interpretation tended to place 'covenant' relatively early in Israel's history, and gave rise to the third phase which began in the mid 1950s with the work of G. E. Mendenhall, drawing attention to the parallels between Israelite covenant and Hittite vassal treaty. Nicholson argues that more recent work (such as that of McCarthy and Perlit) has taken us into a fourth phase. No complete consensus has arisen, but this recent work has returned to a position similar to that of Wellhausen: 'covenant' is a theological, rather than

social, concept, and it emerged late in Israel's history, with the Deuteronomic movement in the 7th and 6th centuries BC.

Part Two (chs. 5-9) is concerned with establishing the date of origin of the covenant concept in Israel. It examines in detail the key texts to do with 'covenant' from Exodus and Joshua, together with the covenant references in Hosea. Nicholson concludes that the Exodus and Joshua references give little help in deciding when the notion of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel came into being. But Nicholson concludes that the two references to covenant in Hosea are genuine. Not only that, but they seem to presuppose that Hosea could appeal to the concept of covenant as something known. Therefore 'covenant' pre-dates Hosea (and the Deuteronomists): 'All in all, the conclusion is warranted that the concept of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel originated at some point during the second half of the monarchical period' (p. 188). On Nicholson's analysis, although 'covenant' has its origins before Deuteronomists began their work, it only came into its own at their hands, as the Exodus and Joshua texts testify.

Part Three (ch. 10) looks at the theological significance of 'covenant' in Israel. Here sociological analysis has something to contribute, and shows us to what extent Israel's (eventual) covenant faith was distinctive. Nicholson traces a development in Israel from a religion which legitimated a divinely-ordered society to a religion which was a de-legitimizing agent; which challenged and relativized the social order in the light of the righteousness of transcendent Yahweh. This development is particularly associated with the 8th-century prophets, but it came to formal and systematic expression in Israel's covenant theology. This revolution in Israelite theology, whose legacy is 'covenant', set Israel's faith apart from the world-sustaining religions of antiquity. After this revolution, Israel's course would be set away from magic, sacrifice and ritual intended to ensure and maintain the right ordering of the world, and towards a chosen response of freely given commitment to Yahweh.

Students of the OT will appreciate the orderliness with which Nicholson treats a vast field of research, and the clarity with which he writes. If he had done no more than produce an ordered account out of the chaos of theological ferment, he would have done a great deal. But he has done more, in going on to make some original contributions of his own to the covenant controversy.

One of the problems of order, though, is that things do not always fit one's framework. So, Nicholson's third phase in the study of covenant (which placed it early in Israel's history, and argued from parallels with vassal treaties) is by no means entirely finished (see G. Wennham, 'The Date of Deuteronomy', *Themelios*, 1985). Nicholson is able to assume a 7th or 6th-century date for Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic school (he had already dealt with the issue in *Deuteronomy and Tradition* [1967]). Readers who have not followed him in this will not, perhaps, follow him in his reconstruction of the history of covenant. Even they, however, will find his survey of scholarly views a helpful introduction to a large topic. They should also find Nicholson's analysis of the significance of 'covenant' (Part Three) thought-provoking as a *theological* investigation, even if they do not find themselves in agreement with its historical aspect.

W. A. Strange, Aberystwyth.

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H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (Old Testament Guides; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 104 pp., £3.50, \$4.95.

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This little book packs a great deal of information and discussion into its four chapters, admirably fulfilling its task of steering the student through the busy traffic of scholarly books and articles on this pair of writings. This it does in mainly three ways: by the author's own source criticism; by his summaries and critiques of leading opinions as he goes through the material; and by his provision of reading lists at frequent intervals in his text. This last feature is particularly useful, since it is all too easy to overlook contributions to the debate in articles scattered through learned journals.

The debate itself is handled with considerable clarity, fairness and good sense. Even what is called the 'traditional' view, or a 'flat'

reading of the sacred text, is given a brief hearing from time to time, although it is perhaps significant that a conservative answer to a problem may be characterized as explaining it 'away'.

On the well-known historical issues the author steers (in his own words) 'a middle course' (p. 69) between the 'ultra-conservative' who has no quarrel with the biblical story as given and the radical critic who 'will be sceptical about any historical reconstruction'. On the rebuilding of the temple, his position is that no start was made until the arrival of Haggai and Zechariah in Ezr. 5, despite the apparent testimony of Ezr. 3:8-4:5 to the contrary. The latter is explained (away?) as a 'highly stylized presentation' (p. 53) composed by the editor not as a precursor in time to chs. 5 and 6 but as a complement to them, designed mainly to 'draw attention to parallels with the building of the first temple'. A list of such parallels with texts in 1 and 2 Chr. is offered; the reader would be wise to look them up and draw his own conclusions. He could also ask himself how a reader without the present guide could be expected to reach so well-hidden an interpretation of what happened 'in the second year of their coming to . . . Jerusalem' (Ezr. 3:8). 'The conservative view', we are told, 'is merely an assumption based upon the fact that Ezr. 2 follows Ezr. 1' (p. 52) — and, we should add, that Ezr. 3 follows Ezr. 2! Clearly, if the sequence of chapters is so misleading, either the ancient or the modern writer is being over-subtle at this point, and we must make our choice between them.

On the dates of the two reformers, Ezra (458) preceded Nehemiah (445); but the public reading of the Law described in Neh. 8 should be moved back to the book of Ezra, between chs. 8 and 9, 12 or 13 years before Nehemiah's arrival. (His presence in the text of Neh. 8:9 is simply dismissed in a parenthesis, p. 39 — a revealing, if all too familiar, attitude to an inconvenient datum. Prudently, Dr Williamson offers no argument at this point, since he is too good a Hebraist to suppose, with some commentators, that the singular verb in this verse, preceding rather than following its plurality of subjects, is a solecism.) It is also surprising to find so shrewd a writer accepting the old assumption that Ezra's public reading of the Law must have been his first rather than his climactic presentation of it. Not only is it far from self-evident that his teaching programme must start with a great rally or not at all (a hangover from the theory that he had come to Jerusalem to unveil a new law), but there is textual evidence in the canonical books as we have them to refute this assumption. In less than five months from Ezra's arrival, the leading citizens were confessing to him their conviction of sin, and expressing it in the archaic language of the torah (Ezr. 9:1-2). Indeed, to anyone who is not wedded to the technique of instant mass-persuasion, the notion of a twelve-year teaching ministry, crowned rather than commenced by a great assembly at an auspicious moment, has everything in its favour — besides calling for no mutilation of the text.

The source criticism in this guide is closely argued, but suffers from the usual tendency of this discipline to press its points too far, especially in assuming that an editor's silence at a given point must be due to that of his source, rather than to his judgment of what he needs to include. Gaps in the narrative are thus invitations to rearrange events to yield a tighter scheme; and these speculations soon turn into certainties which outbid the claims of the canonical text.

Happily, however, the final chapter, entitled 'Theology', puts the books together again, to study the teaching they are intended to convey through the form in which we have them — although the author readily admits that his critical analysis leaves its inevitable mark on his synthesis. (For this is redaction criticism, not a retreat into so-called 'ultra-conservatism'.) Among his special emphases is his evaluation of Ezra's lasting contribution to Israel in demonstrating how the ancient Law could be applied to the changing circumstances of the nation throughout history.

To sum up: this writer, while he takes regrettable liberties with the sacred text, always intends his criticisms to be constructive, and certainly gives a first-class survey of the main works of scholarship in this much-debated area. There could hardly be a clearer or a more judicious discussion of these complex conjectures; and the student, from beginner to researcher, will find here an expert informant and a source of up-to-date advice on the literature to seek out.

Derek Kidner, Cambridge.

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**Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ancient Judaism – Biblical Criticism from Max Weber to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 314 pp., £22.50.**

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The ebb and flow of a century of OT scholarship is reflected in Irving Zeitlin's *Ancient Judaism*, a book which derives its title and inspiration from Max Weber's work published first as a series of articles from 1917-1919. Weber enhanced the work of 19th-century positivists who had seen economics as the dominant force in the development of their social theory by showing how the religious dimension was crucial if even its economic perspective was to be understood properly. Weber's work met enthusiastic response from OT scholars in the 1920s, and so has left its mark on an era of biblical study. Weber was concerned with the interaction of society and ideas and believed that the 8th-century prophets worked a decisive change in the consciousness of Judaism whereby the sense of Israel's elevation and covenant emerged as the decisive unifying factor in the reconstruction of Israel and the emergence of Judaism during and after the exile. Whereas Wellhausen had emphasized the influence of the idea of the covenant, Weber analysed the social function of the covenant idea. Weber's attention to the social dimension was given additional force by Noth's idea of an ancient Israelite 'amphictyony'.

The new *Ancient Judaism* is caught in the flow of scholarship which is returning to positions taken up by Wellhausen. It does not want to take that course and so is tossed about in a rough sea. Although Zeitlin is concerned with the factors that influenced Israel's self-understanding, he is not as sceptical as Weber about the formation of that identity prior to the emergence of the classical prophets. Thus Zeitlin emphasizes that the creation of the Israelite state in the time of the Judges was in direct resistance to the hegemony of Philistia. In this sense the young David can be seen as in the tradition of the Judges but surpassing them and Saul in his ability to focus the aspirations of Israel and transmute the tribes into a kingdom. Throughout Zeitlin points out Israel's refusal to forsake her identity by maintaining a social and political organization different to the Canaanite 'city-state' pattern, to the point of rejecting adoption of their technology for battle. All of this reflects Zeitlin's dispute with much 20th-century OT scholarship and his acceptance of a conservative view of the text.

Indeed, Zeitlin's whole understanding of the Old Testament emphasizes the origin of 'ethical monotheism' before the entry into Canaan and thus the formation of a distinctive nation of 'Israel'. Therefore it is possible for Zeitlin to read the particular orientation of Israel's worship of Yahweh as a resistance to cultural adaptation to the religion of the surrounding nations, even during the exile. The significance of this, which he does not emphasize, is that Yahweh himself is the protector of his covenant people. Thus the force of God as elector of Israel is missed in a discussion which displays only part of Weber's legacy by not giving a prominence to the theology of the prophets.

In the current revival of interest in Weber's thesis Zeitlin's book may well be caught in one of the eddies a strong current produces. On one side its arguments and scholarship appear insufficiently resilient to meet the force of E. W. Nicholson's statement of the covenant in OT theology in his recent *God and His People*. On the other side it is buffeted by more vigorous attempts to develop a sociological understanding of Israel's history. The contending options in OT scholarship should give pause to any who seek to embark on such a troubled sea.

**Gerald Hegarty, Leicester.**

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**F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles. A Sociological Approach* (SNTS Monograph Series, 56; Cambridge: CUP, 1986), xii + 246 pp., £22.50.**

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In the past ten years or so Paul's theology, especially his relationship to Judaism, has become a highly controversial topic in NT studies. In

this book Watson launches into that controversy with one of the most important and adventurous contributions to date, which is sure to spark off further controversies in its wake. He sets out to demonstrate that 'the view of Paul's controversy with Judaism and Jewish Christianity which derives from the Reformation is seriously misleading' (p. ix) and, by analysing the relevant texts in their historical and social contexts, he advances the radical hypothesis that 'Paul's sole aim in discussing Judaism and the law is to maintain and defend the separation of his Gentile Christian churches from the Jewish community' (p. 22, my emphasis). In attacking Reformation theology he launches a devastating critique of Luther and many Lutheran expositors of Paul (especially Bultmann and Käsemann) who have helped to establish the present consensus that Paul, in attacking the works of the law, was attacking man's legalistic attempt to earn salvation by his own efforts. Although it seems to me questionable to lay the 'blame' for this consensus quite so heavily on the Reformation (it is clearly foreshadowed not only in Augustine but even in Ephesians and the Pastorals), Watson is surely right to follow in the steps of F. C. Baur, K. Stendahl and E. P. Sanders in directing our attention to the Gentile issue as the root of Paul's theology of justification. What makes this book so distinctive is its combination of two factors: (i) a number of bold historical hypotheses about Paul's ministry to Gentiles which open up new interpretations of his letters, especially Romans; and (ii) a 'sociological approach' which analyses Paul's churches as sects and explains his theological statements as attempts to legitimize practical decisions already taken in the establishment of Gentile churches.

(i) All of Watson's historical reconstructions are presented with commendable clarity and a chain of plausible reasoning. That he has managed to produce strikingly novel but not wild or idiosyncratic results is a measure of his originality and his rigorous methods of argument. Nonetheless, in many cases he appears to me to go just too far beyond, or even against, the evidence. His most important thesis (in his second chapter) is that there was no law-free mission to Gentiles before Paul (the evidence in Acts 10-11 about the Cornelius incident and the Hellenists' work in Antioch is discounted as Lukan fiction); that Paul himself in an early stage of his Christian activity preached only to Jews; and that, when he failed to win many Jewish converts, he (together with Barnabas and the Antioch church) began the mission to Gentiles, not imposing the law on them so that they would find it easier to convert. Without going into all the necessary details here I should, perhaps, indicate where I think this reconstruction is weak. Watson's dismissal of Acts 10-11 is, seems to me, overly sceptical; at later points in his book he makes significant appeals to the evidence of Acts without explaining why he considers it to be so uneven in its trustworthiness. In order to argue for an exclusively Jewish-Christian period in Paul's life, Watson has to sidestep Paul's explicit references to call as apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16; Rom. 11:13; etc.); these are subsequent reflections about his call which 'cannot be safely used as evidence for Paul's self-understanding at the time of his conversion', p. 30), while appealing to verses like 1 Cor. 9:20 and Gal. 5:11 as evidence for an early stage of Christian mission to Jews. It does not seem to me that these latter verses require any such hypothesis and, in fact, the logic of Paul's conversion runs directly contrary to this. Before his conversion Paul persecuted the Christians out of zeal for the law (Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:6) and, as Watson himself states in a different connection, 'persecution expresses the view that the norms of the minority group are incompatible with membership of the wider community' (p. 62). Thus when Paul came to join that 'minority group' he must have already realized that its norm (faith in Christ) was incompatible in important respects with law-observing Judaism. This does not, of course, prove that he began his law-free mission to Gentiles at once, but it does indicate that he saw the contrast between the law and faith in Christ from the very beginning (and not just later as a way of justifying his creation of Gentile churches); and it does cast doubt on Watson's contention that Paul's Christian ministry began as part of a 'reform movement' within Judaism.

After some incisive and illuminating discussions of Galatians and Philippians (reviving the Baur hypothesis that Paul's real or anticipated opponents there were actually emissaries of the Jerusalem church), Watson's other major historical reconstruction is the historical context of Romans (his ch. 5). Through an analysis of Rom. 14-16 he concludes that there were two Roman Christian

congregations 'separated by mutual hostility and suspicion over the question of the law' (p. 97). One was Jewish-Christian ('the weak') and was the original Roman congregation now out of favour with the rest of the Roman-Jewish community after the riots in AD 49 mentioned by Suetonius; the other was Gentile-Christian ('the strong'), all converts or associates of Paul and persuaded by him that the law was not an essential part of Christian living. The purpose of Romans is to encourage these two groups to 'set aside their differences and worship together' (p. 101; Rom. 15:6-7 is especially important for this argument). Paul is writing chiefly to persuade the Jewish group to recognize the legitimacy of the Gentile group, and thus of his own Gentile mission; this would mean in effect a final break with the Jewish community' (p. 102). In subsequent chapters Watson makes a detailed analysis of the contents of Rom. 1-II, arguing at each point that Paul is not advancing pure theory but primarily addressing the objections and preconceptions of the Jewish Christians in Rome, providing 'the theoretical legitimation for the social reorientation called for in Rom. 14:1-15:13' (p. 107).

It is impossible to do justice to the detailed reasoning Watson employs or to give sufficient discussion of the (often considerable) value of his reconstruction. He has certainly produced by far the most plausible of the various attempts to interpret Romans on the basis of the situation in the Roman churches, and his account gives the letter an attractive coherence of content and historical context. If I remain finally unpersuaded by parts of Watson's thesis it is because I suspect that realities in the Roman churches were more complex than he allows (Rom. 16 indicates at least *three* house-congregations) and because I cannot see the letter as being mainly directed to Jewish Christians. The emphasis in Rom. 14-15 is at least as much on the obligations of 'the strong' (14:1, 13-21; 15:1); it seems odd to talk of Paul requiring a 'final break with the Jewish community' when 'the weak' are already not even able to get access to kosher meat (Watson's explanation for their vegetarianism); and ch. 11 is a disastrous 'own goal' if the main thrust of the letter is to persuade the Jewish Christians that the election promises to Israel are no longer valid. It may be that Watson, in focusing so much on the 'social function' of Paul's arguments, has not made sufficient allowance for Paul's own theological concerns which sometimes seem to have functioned at quite a high level of theoretical enquiry and developed a momentum of their own which went beyond the immediate necessities of the situation he addressed.

(ii) Watson's sociological approach is refreshingly free of sociologists' jargon and does not give the impression of imposing a preconceived model on the texts. The purpose of such a sociological perspective is surely of vital importance: 'to examine how Paul's theorizing is related to the concrete problems which he faced' (p. 19, in explicit opposition to all those who tend to isolate theology from history). The key model used by Watson is the way that reform movements within a religion sometimes transform themselves into a sect ('a closely-knit group which sets up rigid and clearly-defined barriers between itself and the parent community', p. 19). Thus the argument of Galatians and Romans can be re-expressed as the debate about whether the church should be seen as a reform movement within Judaism (the view of the Judaizers and the Roman-Jewish Christians) or as a sect, differentiated from the Jewish community (Paul's view). This is certainly a fruitful way of looking at the issues facing the early Christians and Paul's own radical conclusions. But it has one major drawback: the definition of terms. Watson himself admits that the distinctions between reform movement and sect are 'fluid' (p. 39), and it is particularly difficult to define the characteristics of a sect. At one point (in the notes on pp. 190-191) Watson criticizes Scroggs' list of the seven typical characteristics of a sect. But if this list allows such widely differing applications it must be too vague. Reference to B. Wilson's characterization of different types of sect might have clarified the issue somewhat.

The other main feature of Watson's sociological approach is his tendency to regard Paul's theological statements on Israel and the law as 'a secondary theological reflection on a primary historical and social reality' (p. 31), that is, as attempts to legitimize or justify the practical decisions already taken in creating Gentile-Christian congregations. This thesis runs like a golden thread through the book and springs out of the sociologists' conviction that apparently theoretical statements often have a hidden purpose in legitimating particular actions. Where Watson uses this insight to insist that

Paul's theology is rooted in his concrete social situation and cannot be easily cut loose and turned into abstract Lutheran theology or existentialist philosophy, he has made some very worthwhile points. But there are moments when his arguments verge on a sociological reductionism. It is surely true that some of Paul's theological convictions, those he inherited from Jewish Scripture and apocalyptic and those he reached on the basis of his conversion, affected the practical policies he pursued; they are not all, or at least not all solely and simply, a subsequent reflex of those policies. (Some of the best sociologists, like P. Berger, are well aware of this 'dialectic' between ideas and practice.) At the close of his book Watson asks whether Paul's theological efforts to legitimize sectarian Gentile communities can be of any 'profound universal significance' or whether they should be 'rejected as a cul-de-sac' (p. 181). While sharing some of his disquiet with the current Lutheran answer to that question, I would argue that Paul, even while grappling with his specific Jew-Gentile issues, was raising and beginning to answer some of the most profound theological questions still on our agenda.

In entering into debate with this book at such length I mean to indicate that it is of enormous significance for Pauline studies. It deserves to be widely read and extensively discussed even if not all its theses can be uncritically adopted. Its wealth of material covering so many important issues guarantees its significance for many years to come. It is a first-rate contribution to a debate of first-rate importance.

**John M. G. Barclay**, University of Glasgow.

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**John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians*** (London: SPCK, 1986), 194 pp., £6.95.

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Literature on the social world of the early church is a growth industry. But among the many fine works being produced, this one by Stambaugh and Balch is highly recommended. In line with its title it is a basic descriptive book of the social world in which Christianity was established. Ch. 1 sets the scene by providing a historical framework and by detailing Roman administration and law. The next two chapters deal with mobility in the ancient world and the economy. The major proportion of the book is devoted to a description of the Jewish and rural society with which Jesus would have been familiar, and the Romanized and urban society in which Paul conducted his mission.

There is not a wasted paragraph in the book. Every one is packed with fascinating detail which brings the real world of the gospels and epistles alive. The authors base their description on references to primary sources but these are not unhelpfully obtrusive as they tell their story. The evidence of the NT itself is woven into the fabric they construct. For the most part the NT seems to be accepted as a reliable historical document and quoted as such. Fascinating little details emerge (the neighbourhood barber dispensed the most accessible medical care; the crown given to the winners of the Isthmian games, which may have been attended by Paul, was a crown of celery) as well as major descriptions, and these illuminate the NT text again and again, helping us to understand its original meaning. There may be little here which is not already available in the dictionaries or commentaries, but it is good to have it collected together in one continuous narrative and in a book which has a useful index.

The authors do not assume their readers know too much and have therefore succeeded in providing a basic introduction to the social world of the early church. Though clearly aware of the sociological theories which have been constructed on the material they write about, they exercise a very discreet caution about such theories. They occasionally allude to them positively, such as their references to Theissen's work in Corinth. But the theorizing is light and they are not afraid to say that the evidence is ambiguous when they believe it to be so, as, for example, in reference to Marxist-based views that the ancient economy was based on the exploitation of the slaves. Similarly, theorizing about the Bible is also light. Occasionally one would have liked to probe further, such as when they claim that the term 'saviour' was not applied to Jesus Christ until relatively late by

the early Christians. But such comments are unusual. Normally the NT is cited to illustrate a general point made.

The book provides a comprehensive survey of the ancient world. More perhaps could have been said about 'wandering moralists' and certainly about millenarianism. But you can always add to any work. It sets the emerging Christian sect in its social environment well. It draws out what it had in common with other social institutions and religious groups in a helpful way. Perhaps it does not draw out sufficiently the distinctiveness of the Christian sect, although it does refer to its distinctiveness at a number of points of detail as, for example, the fact that slaves are addressed directly rather than reflecting about them in the third person. But in justification it needs to be said that the discipline of sociology, to which this book is related, is concerned with what social groups have in common rather than their uniqueness.

If preaching is to build a bridge from the world of the NT to the world of today then books like this are a must. These two authors have collaborated well to produce the best general description of the social world of the first Christians so far.

**Derek J. Tidball**, Plymouth.

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**Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read The Fathers*** (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985/London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 280 pp., £7.95.

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Introductions should be written by masters. This one is. Ramsey, who has obviously spent years in patristic studies, has produced the finest one-volume introduction to the study of the Fathers that exists today. The great patologies, most notably those of Quasten and Altaner/Stuiber, or the surveys of early Christian doctrine like Kelly, are either too large or too technical for average beginning students or interested non-specialists. This volume, therefore, fills a great need.

It fills the need well. Ramsey has organized his chapters around themes. At first his outline appears lacking since there is no single treatment of the Spirit, but that concern disappears when one reads the chapter on God. My only suggestions for the plan of the book are that more might have been said concerning the early understanding of sacraments, and that there is no index of themes.

The reasons for praise are many. The aids for beginning students are seldom to be found within the pages of an introduction. Not only does the first chapter define the terms and the task, the last 27 pages set out a reading programme in the Fathers, a carefully selected bibliography of works to deepen the understanding, and chronology that juxtaposes the place and time of each Father with important religious and historical events. Such a ready reference is so obviously helpful that it is difficult to understand why it does not appear in other introductions.

Ramsey writes well enough. No reviewer would agree with every turn of phrase, but giving this volume to students or friends will not increase their lack of literary sensitivity as so much theology does. Each chapter covers the ground intended, and insists upon the uneven terrain. This is accomplished not only by treating the expected significant figures of the period, but also by drawing attention to unusual features in this landscape. One anticipates Ambrose and Augustine, Origen and the Cappadocians, but Amoun, Arnobius of Sicca, Chromatius of Aquileia, etc. are gems seldom mined from the earth, let alone polished. These delights make the reading something more than an uneventful treasure hunt, even by specialists. A second edition, however, should add more information about female figures of the period.

In short, no one truly interested in the Fathers should be without this volume.

**Frederick W. Norris**, Emmanuel School of Religion, Tennessee.

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**Maurice Wiles, *God's Action in the World*** (London: SCM, 1986), viii + 118 pp., £5.95.

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In 1974 Professor Wiles's *Remaking of Christian Doctrine* set out a theology closely resembling 18th-century deism, though less aggressively confident: God creates the world, but does not intervene in it. This is a follow-up, restating Wiles's position. To some extent it is a defence against other views (not only traditional orthodoxy; he has process theologians in mind too), but for most of the book Wiles takes his position for granted and is amplifying rather than defending.

Generally speaking, he holds that where Christians have spoken of divine action in particular events, they have either been mistaken (as with most miracle-stories) or, more often, should ideally have spoken of these events as specially fulfilling God's purpose. We see, after the event, that the life of Jesus or the conversion of Paul were of immense significance in this fulfilment; and we describe them as divine acts of incarnation or of calling, though really they are but part of the one inclusive act of creation.

The book adds little to what Wiles has already said, and it is not always easy to follow his reasoning. He tends to raise a point, digress into related matters, and then return to the original point, a method probably more suited to lecturing (the book is the text of the Bampton Lectures for 1986) than to reading.

He is probably on his strongest ground in ch. 6, 'Providence and Personal Life'. Elsewhere his only real arguments for his position are that the world seems orderly and that it is hard to *identify* the places of God's activity. But here he has another — the apparent arbitrariness of God's dealings with mankind. Why do many die in infancy, or without hearing the gospel, if God is acting freely in human lives? This is a strong point, though Wiles (perhaps because he is amplifying rather than defending, perhaps because of the constraints of the lecture form) hardly deals at all with the efforts Christian theologians have made to meet the point, which is not of course new.

God, according to Wiles (and to many who are more orthodox), respects human freedom. But Wiles seems unable to imagine any position in between complete refusal to intervene in our world and the destruction of freedom. God cannot, for instance, suggest the restoration of Israel to Cyrus without becoming 'the all-controlling God who does not respect the freedom of the world he has created' (p. 62). Surely, one feels, this is exaggeration? Even the freedom of this one act need not have been compromised (*cf.* Est. 4:14); and supposing it was, Cyrus' *normal* liberty was unaffected — and other people's too. Indeed, one might feel tempted to stand Wiles's argument on its head. If God has purposes for the world (as Wiles agrees he has), is it possible for him to fulfil them without intervening, except by a total predetermination of the entire process, a predetermination which Wiles rejects for both theological and scientific reasons?

There are a number of places where defects in Wiles's deism seem particularly obvious, yet not to him. For instance, on p. 35 he considers two models for God's relationship to the world: that which sees God as the potter and the world as the clay, and that which sees God as the soul and the world as his body. Both, he suggests, point to his own position: the potter simply endows the clay with distinctive properties, and the soul is not continually maintaining the pumping of the heart. Yet Jeremiah uses the 'clay' model precisely to say that God *does* intervene (Je. 18:1-11), and our souls are hardly passive spectators of most of our lives in the way they are of the heartbeat.

More serious perhaps, because symptomatic of the really fatal weakness in Wiles's whole position, is his handling of the resurrection (pp. 90-92). He is right to say that Jesus could conquer death without needing the empty tomb or the resurrection appearances. But if these never took place, or had natural explanations, we have no reason to believe that Jesus did conquer death. A 'resurrection' might be possible, but not the only resurrection we have evidence for. And this problem over evidence applies to the whole of Wiles's new deism. What reason have we to believe that God has any purposes for us, and what evidence for what they are? The old deists believed in natural theology: reason could prove that God existed, and was good. But Wiles lacks this confidence. His belief in God's purposes, and his identification of them, are simply watered down from the biblical view of God which he rejects. Christians believe God has revealed his

purposes to us. Wiles does not. Nor does he appeal to natural theology. Why then does he believe even what he retains?

**Richard Sturch**, Islip, Oxford.

**Paul K. Jewett, Election and Predestination** (Grand Rapids/Exeter: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1985), 147 pp., \$8.95/£5.95.

Perhaps best known for his work on women's ordination, Paul Jewett again turns to a contested and highly charged debate. Compared with some other tomes, this book is of modest length but it covers a lot of ground as Jewett moves at rapid pace, though a repetitiveness disturbs the flow in one or two places. Jewett first gives an historical overview which serves as a frame of reference in evaluating the issues, as well as showing the complexity and persistence of the debate. He argues that every major theologian from Augustine to Barth has affirmed the importance of the doctrine and have basically agreed on its content (p. 3). The first point is reinforced in the text, but his second seems to be undermined as a diversity of interpretations emerges. We are used to hearing that Calvin and Calvinists stress predestination, but the quote on p. 77, 'predestination, when thus explained, is the foundation of Christianity . . . the sum and the matter of the gospel; nay, it is the gospel itself', is from Arminius. So there may be consensus that this is an important doctrine, but the 'thus explained' of Arminius is very different in content from, say, Barth.

Next, there is a chapter on the biblical material (too briefly dealt with) which shows that the problems associated with election are not all of the theologians' making.

Jewett then considers corporate election and here gives special attention to the relationship between God's chosen people, the Jews and the church. He rejects the view that the church's election supplants Israel's, seeing it as supplementary. In his consideration of election and the individual, Jewett devotes special attention to the distinctive work of Barth. He rejects the universalistic tendencies he sees in Barth, criticizes Barth's exegesis and the tendency in Barth to make the divine choice the only choice.

His attempt to put things together is in the section headed 'Efforts at Understanding'. He concedes that the supralapsarian view is the most logically satisfying but finds it morally intolerable and believes that it compromises the scriptural teaching on God's love. Arminianism is criticized for contradicting Scripture in a more overt way, through poor exegesis. The solution must lie somewhere in between. He states a preference for infralapsarianism though he concedes that it too, does not helpfully meet the problem of reprobation.

After some comments on the relationship of eternity to time, and on the universal in the particular, he concludes on the theme of wonder and worship. Election is not a doctrine for sterile debate, contentious strife, but is 'the cornerstone of the doctrine of grace' and so should move us to wonder and worship.

This is a careful, fair and faithful study, but might be improved in my view by (1) looking at other modern work than Barth, e.g. process theology; (2) a clearer explanation of the place of logic in theology; (3) a look at what role moral criteria (however defined) play in the hermeneutical task. Jewett declares that we have moved far from our biblical moorings today in our neglect of this theme of election, and his book should help redress that as he spells out something of the pastoral and kerygmatic force of the doctrine. One interesting typing error (p. 14) is where we are told that Arminius was born in 1650 and appointed professor of divinity at Leyden in 1603. He would have needed a lot of foreknowledge for that!

**Gordon Palmer**, Glasgow.

**Oliver O'Donovan, On the Thirty-Nine Articles. A Conversation with Tudor Christianity** (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 160 pp., £5.95.

This book is the latest in the Latimer Monograph Series, which is

designed to tackle issues of theological concern from an Anglican Evangelical point of view. As an experienced teacher of theology both in England and in Canada, Professor O'Donovan is well qualified to write about the subject of the Thirty-Nine Articles, which are supposed to be the doctrinal foundation of Anglicanism. Professor O'Donovan's personal testimony at the beginning of the book is a telling statement of the role they now play in actual fact, since he admits that he scarcely looked at them until his Canadian students asked him what was distinctive about Anglicanism!

The Anglican Communion outside England has long had a greater awareness of its confessional distinctiveness than the Mother Church has had, and it is encouraging to see that exposure to non-English Anglicanism has helped to produce a book like this – in Oxford! The cover tells us that this book is now the only study of the Articles in print which, this reviewer is glad to say, is not *quite* accurate! There is a very thorough study of the Articles by the Greek Orthodox Professor Scouteris, of Athens University, which is obtainable (in Greek) from Athens – a fact which demonstrates that the Articles have an ecumenical importance which has scarcely been noticed by Anglicans themselves.

Professor O'Donovan's book is different from earlier writings on the Articles in that it neither seeks to expound them, nor to defend or attack them. The purpose is to converse with them, to try to understand what Tudor Christianity was like and why it moved in the direction that it did. Accepting the historical character of the Articles in this way allows Professor O'Donovan to appreciate what they were trying to say in the sixteenth century, without necessarily committing him to accepting them without reservation today. Perhaps this is the only way the Articles can now be read, and if so, this book does a good job of rehabilitating them for a modern audience. But it is only fair to warn the reader in advance that this is what the book is doing, so that he will not be surprised at some of the criticisms which Professor O'Donovan levels at the Articles from time to time.

Given the author's starting-point, it is surprising and gratifying to discover that he finds so much in the Articles to commend. He brings out quite admirably how they maintain a *via media* which is not a colourless compromise, how they refrain from making injudicious statements about things like predestination, and how they testify to the best in Reformation teaching without cutting the church loose from its patristic and mediaeval heritage. His exposition of their teaching on original sin is particularly masterly, and he points out with great clarity how Cranmer and his successors differed both from Augustine and from many in the second generation of the Reformation, who wanted to push the church into an uncompromising Puritanism. The comparisons with other Reformation documents, and especially with the Westminster Confession, are illuminating and highly complimentary to the Articles which, according to him, display a greater theological balance in matters of epistemology (in particular).

One of the difficulties with a book of this kind is that a historical conversation is a one-way activity. Parts of the book would better be termed a *reaction* to Tudor Christianity, especially where they touch on matters where the modern church is furthest from its Elizabethan ancestor. These include questions like church-state relations, the lack of emphasis in the Articles on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the virtual absence of a doctrine of creation. Whether one ought to assume from this silence that the Reformers lacked a deep understanding of these matters is difficult to say, and here Professor O'Donovan probably goes too far. One would like to see, for example, some reference to the other writings of the Reformers which might support this assertion, on the understanding that the Articles themselves were never intended to be a systematic theology in their own right.

For some strange reason, Professor O'Donovan seems to have a low opinion of the classical creeds of the early church, though he recognizes that the Reformers were keen to uphold them as perhaps the chief witness to the patristic tradition. The reader senses here, as elsewhere, that we have moved onto something else, and are in dialogue not so much with the Elizabethans as with theologians of our own time. It is, however, a reminder that to appreciate the riches of this book one must be fairly conversant with the modern theological scene as well as with the Articles themselves.

At the end of the day, this book is by a theologian writing for other theologians, not for the general public. To follow its arguments and

appreciate its many telling points (as for example, in his criticism of the marks of the church), one must know one's theology. But this is all to the good. It must be hoped that Professor O'Donovan's work will have a great impact on Anglican theological circles and speak to those in other denominations who want to have a better understanding of what Anglicanism has traditionally stood for in the Christian world.

Gerald Bray, Oak Hill College, London.

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Alan P. F. Sell, **Theology in Turmoil. The Roots, Course and Significance of the Conservative-Liberal Debate in Modern Theology** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 199 pp., \$5.95.

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The recent resurgence of 'popular' theology, with virgin birth and resurrection exalted to headline status, has sent Christians of all confessions back to examine what they believe, and why they believe it. Consequently the labels of convenience have assumed the role of flags of allegiance within the church, and the things which divide us have become more evident to the world than those which unite. If *Theology in Turmoil* teaches us anything, it is that there is nothing new in all this. The issues which are the object of such impassioned debate today were being treated to a similar scrutiny over a century ago, and then, as now, they were the occasion for division within the Christian community.

Dr Sell's overview of the liberal-conservative debate begins with the problems raised by Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel, all of whom, in their own way, posed the epistemological question 'How far does the thinking subject establish the standards of objectivity?' The answers which they gave, the author believes, set the agenda for later immanentism, the tendency to locate the theological centre of gravity in man rather than God. This tendency is illustrated by reference to the rise of modern biblical criticism, with its far-reaching dogmatic disjunction between 'Historie' and 'Geschichte', fact and interpretation; also the various manifestations of romantic evolutionary thinking, among them the interpretation of the Incarnation as the particular fulfilment of a general propensity of man for union with God. A painstakingly careful treatment of the theology of Ritschl leads into the final two chapters in which the debate proper between 'liberals' and 'conservatives' is documented and assessed. The picture which emerges is one of a confusing variety of subtly different positions within both theological camps, making the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative' awkward to define. Nevertheless, lines of demarcation are drawn, and consideration largely restricted to those within their confines. This results in the unfortunate exclusion of several notable modern theologians who have sought a third, yet by no means a neutral, position.

In the Preface the author expresses his hope that this book will be of value to the general reader, the student and the scholar alike. Yet this is not a book which could be read easily by someone with little or no knowledge of the debates of philosophy since the Enlightenment. From the outset a complex vocabulary is employed which, in the absence of a glossary, denies the casual reader any easy access to its substance. Nor is this the book for the reader seeking to wrestle theologically with the issues at stake in the debate. The book itself provides no answer to the central question 'What is the Christian gospel?', although a variety of answers are documented within it. Yet the essentially historical nature of the book is its undoubted strength, and for the student seeking to explore this area further, the wealth of factual and biographical detail, together with careful critical comment, will provide an indispensable research tool.

Trevor Hart, University of Aberdeen.

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William Oddie (ed.), **After The Deluge: Essays Towards the Desecularization of the Church** (London: SPCK, 1987), 193 pp., £6.95.

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The main thesis of this collection of essays is that the church in the West faces a major crisis, greater even than that at the time of the Reformation. In his introduction William Oddie, the editor, pinpoints a growing gulf between the 'faithful' and those who often speak for the church at a national or institutional level. He draws attention to the failure of the church to attract new converts and to the increasing loss of the committed from the institutional church. The unifying theme for all the essayists is that the root cause of this malaise is the church's flirtation with secular society, allowing her agenda and her methods of understanding to be determined by Western post-Enlightenment culture. Dean Inge spoke of the danger of the church that is married to the spirit of the age finding herself widowed in the next generation. Today's church is at special risk because of the rapid contemporary change of ideas.

William Oddie traces generally the background of secular thought invading the church. From the contemporary scene he selects David Jenkins and traces the roots of both his political thought and his radical theology in secularism and especially the idea of a non-interventionist God. Oddie's plea, a plea reiterated in the book, is for a return to the traditional Christian approach to understanding, reflected in Augustine and Anselm especially, namely that faith must be the starting-point of the church's intellectual journey rather than its hoped-for conclusion.

Wayne Hankey, a Canadian Classics Professor, tackles the issue of biblical foundations. He shows how disbelief, especially in the miraculous and the supernatural, has determined the results of biblical criticism over recent decades. He challenges the appropriateness of such an approach with C. S. Lewis's words: 'Everywhere except in theology there has been a vigorous growth of scepticism about scepticism.' He challenges too the impact of secularism in Praxis-oriented theology. Roger Beckwith, Warden of Latimer House, highlights a distinctively biblical view of wisdom, dependent on God and his self-disclosure rather than on human insight and resources, defending such a view of wisdom against any charge of anti-intellectualism. An Oxford Nuclear Physics Lecturer, Peter Hodgson, explores the relationship between science and religion, showing how modern science sprang from a distinctively Christian world-view. He argues that 20th-century scientific understanding, especially physics, by no means rules out a Christian world-view; various scientific views of creation are reconcilable with a Christian view of God's relationship as creator and sustainer to our physical universe. James Munson traces some secular roots showing how politics came to be central to the new secular society. He traces the church's developing involvement with the political arena especially in Non-conformist churches. The final essay, by the Bishop of London, challenges whether a political ideology, even a supposedly Christian one, can ever be compatible with the gospel. He examines several areas where the presuppositions and methods of an ideological approach are in conflict with Christian truth.

This collection of essays is a timely reminder of the danger of dated secular thought determining the methods and results of biblical study and Christian understanding. In its desire to be 'with it' the Christian church is in danger of losing hold of her distinctive biblical message and of failing to make a spiritual impact where there is recognized spiritual need. Those engaged in theological study need to question inherited presuppositions and be sure they are not simply following the 'spirit of the age'. The essayists are right to call for a renewed commitment to faith as the presupposition of theological study, a presupposition leading to God-given understanding. However, I find some difficulty with the approach of some of the contributors. The style is sometimes quite polemical, resulting in some unwarranted conclusions. Is scientific achievement in the USSR really less significant because of the absence of Christian commitment? Is the decline in Non-conformity attributable solely to an abandonment of the traditional understanding of the gospel in favour of socio-political concerns? Is commitment to the ordination of women to the priesthood simply an expression of secularism invading the church? Two of the essays hint that the relationship between the Christian



church and society is not completely straightforward, but it would be good to have seen a greater recognition of the difficulties involved historically in working out this relationship, a greater recognition of the complexity of hermeneutical issues, a greater recognition that among Christians committed to the authority of Scripture as God-given there are today many different solutions to various complex issues, such as the place for and nature of Christian socio-political involvement. Again, I wonder who the book is directed to. There is a tendency in some of the essays to assume a given position without arguing in such a way as to convince the would-be critic. For all that it is good to read a book that challenges the secular presuppositions that so often lead to liberal theology and a purely 'social gospel'.

John S. Went, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

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Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State* (Grand Rapids/Cape Town: Eerdmans/David Philip, 1986), xxvi + 269 pp., \$16.95.

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The relationship between church and state has historically depended on the answer to the questions: which state, which church, which chronological age? The function of Christians as individuals and as a corporate body in relationship to the state has had many forms. While most Christians have agreed that the state is instituted by God for the good of mankind, the question of involvement with the state is one which Christians have disagreed on.

Charles Villa-Vicencio, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, realizes this problem, but nevertheless searches for a common theme. He finds it in the concept of the church speaking prophetically to the state throughout history. The church has the duty to call the state truly to be the state. All government is ordained by God and the church must declare this fact to the ruling authorities. This also means that the church must oppose the state when it is not carrying out its mission of peace and justice for all its citizens.

A selection of historical and contemporary texts is presented to substantiate the thesis of the prophetic role of the church. The task of the church in every situation is to be aware of the possible emergence of 'the moment of prophetic resistance to the state' (p. xi). Because of the danger of being absorbed into the culture, this moment is not always recognized by the majority of the church.

The book is divided roughly in thirds, by the three sections of texts. The first deals with the time from the early church through the Puritan reformation. The second (and longest) sketches the church in the 20th century, starting with the Barmen Declaration of 1934 and covering major statements of the Roman Catholic Church, Black theology, African theology and Eastern Orthodoxy. Readers will be surprised at the relevance for today of some of the older documents. The concluding section introduces major South African statements that show the developing prophetic encounter with the state.

There are some splendid texts reproduced which yield many excellent quotes. From Tertullian's *Apology*, 'On valid grounds I might say Caesar is more ours than yours' (p. 13). Or Luther, *Secular Authority*, 'To err in this direction, however and punish too little is more tolerable, for it is always better to let a scoundrel live than to put a godly man to death. The world has plenty of scoundrels anyway and must continue to have them, but godly men are scarce' (p. 51). The collected wisdom found in the book is certainly worth studying.

The selection of South African texts is excellent, though it could have been augmented by some statements from the 19th century which show even more clearly the position of prophetic opposition of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) to the state. As it is, the statement of the DRC calling for justice is worth citing: 'Only when the government and the people are inclined, in a serious and non-partisan way, to enquire into the real motives and purposes of this resistance, giving due consideration to all the factors that have contributed to the creation of this extremely tragic situation, whether these factors be real or reputed, will peace return' (p. 208). This statement

was penned in 1915, when it was the Afrikaans of the DRC who were in rebellion against the government. The suggestions for bringing peace still apply.

The last text in the book is the Kairos Document written by a group of Black theologians. It is openly critical of both the state and the church's response to the oppression of the present regime. In outlining the inadequacy of 'church theology', the Kairos document finds the fundamental problem in the 'type of faith and spirituality that has dominated church life for centuries' (p. 261). This, claim the authors, is a faith that is basically other-worldly and a spirituality that 'tends to rely upon God to intervene in his own good time to put right what is wrong in the world' (p. 261). Villa-Vicencio correctly identifies the perspective of the Kairos Document as a new departure in South African church-state relationships.

This book continues Villa-Vicencio's engagement in the theological analysis of the current South African scene. He has previously co-edited *Apartheid is a Heresy and Resistance and Hope*. It is perhaps fair to say that the main impetus comes from the South African situation. It can be seen as a call to the church (in South Africa and elsewhere) to be the church in response to the state. The problem is that the church perceives its response to its own position in society. Therefore in the text cited above with regard to the DRC, when it protested in 1915, it was protesting against what the DRC constituency regarded as an unfair government. The reason the majority of the DRC are not protesting now is that they are convinced that the present government is just. This cultural myopia needs to be overcome by God's grace and the church's repentance.

One notable lack is the absence of an index. A book like this demands the facility of quick cross-referencing. Another limitation is that there is no discussion on the use of violence. Villa-Vicencio notes this omission but rightly says such a discussion would require another book. Because violence is not discussed, it is difficult to decide what action should be taken to oppose unjust governments if they refuse to listen to the prophetic church. This would seem to be the main issue that is facing those who do recognize the injustice of the state.

The choice of the texts and the introductions to each text are superb. The clarity of presentation of the issues makes the book very useful for future reference and I can easily see its adoption as a textbook in many seminaries.

James J. Stamoelis.

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Phil Parshall, *Beyond the Mosque: Christians within Muslim Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 256 pp., \$9.95.

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Dr Phil Parshall has done us all a service by comparing the concept of community (*ummah*) in Islam and Christianity. The Arabic word *ummah*, said to be derived from *umm* (mother), is probably related to the Hebrew *ummah* (nation, see p. 26). The author wishes to equip his reader to be 'in a better position to counsel the convert from Islam on how to remain within Muslim society and at the same time share his newfound faith in Christ' (p. 22).

The first three well-written and interesting chapters deal with the Foundation of Islamic Community, Diversity within Muslim Community and Muslim Community in the Islamic World. I question the sentence on p. 128: 'Prostitution and pornography are minimal in Islamic communities'. Pornography may be, but among the 90 million Muslims of the country where I live every town has its red light area and evening queues. I agree that 'Historically one problem with Islam has been its reluctance to engage in self-criticism' (p. 132). It is useful to have such strong evidence for the denial of the rumour that Neil Armstrong heard the *azan* (call to prayer) on the moon (p. 144). Parshall notes that 'As more Muslims embrace fundamentalism the cause of Islamic *ummah* is strengthened' (p. 148). On p. 183 Parshall mentions the frequently quoted verse from the Qur'an: 'God cannot beget nor be begotten', and call this an attack on the incarnation. In fact it is an attack on a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the incarnation.

Chapter 4 deals with the Structure of Christian Community. It draws material from mainly North American Protestant evangelicalism and is somewhat limited and inadequate in both its view of the church and in its lack of references to the contemporary Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Episcopal churches.

One comes with the greatest interest to learn what Phil Parshall has to say in his concluding chapter on Christian Presence within the Muslim Community. One is surprised that his findings are not that radical but they are certainly very helpful, partly because he himself has experimented with and tested various approaches. We should take note of his plea on p. 220: 'More prayer, research, and creative thinking are called for.'

Parshall writes as though it is mainly the western missionary who is sharing the faith of Christ in the Muslim world. Little is said of individual national believers, existing churches, missionaries from the Third World and the host of expatriate workers concerned with cross-cultural communication who live and work in Islamic lands. He continues the debate about homogenous unit churches. True, we have them in the west but are they not a sign of the churches' weakness and failure? Then what about women (p. 187)? Parshall emphasizes winning the male leaders. One wonders what his assessment would be of all the zenana work in the Indian subcontinent in the last century and the early part of this. Today I know of a house church in North Africa composed entirely of women. Perhaps this is taking the homogenous unit too far. Mothers, however, influence children, both male and female, probably more than fathers. Christian witness among women may be pre-evangelism but sometimes it is more. I agree with Parshall about avoiding the term 'Son of God', but my problem about this is that I know of 200 Muslims who have come to Christ in a town where the only two servants of Jesus Christ (foreign women) proclaimed him Son of God from the start. God sometimes surprises us.

I am very grateful to Phil Parshall for his book. The subject of *ummah* needs probing, and his personal spirituality, humility and sharing are very helpful. May we join with him in his prayer on p. 212, 'As we cry out to the Lord for a new movement in the Muslim world, let us be prepared to follow where he leads us'.

**Vivienne Stacey, I.F.E.S.**

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Alastair V. Campbell (ed.), **A Dictionary of Pastoral Care** (London: SPCK, 1987), 300 pp., £12.50.

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It is an ambitious and risky project to collect together over 300 short articles by 180 authors to compose a *Dictionary of Pastoral Care* which will live up to its claim to be an 'essential reference work' for every minister, pastor and professional carer. But to a great extent Alastair Campbell has succeeded in achieving his aim. The attempt was certainly worthwhile because although one or two such dictionaries exist in the USA there is nothing like it available in the United Kingdom.

The pressures of the ministry unfortunately mean that few ministers have the time to read many books on the counselling situations they face. So these concise and clearly written articles will be welcomed. Their brevity should not be mistaken for superficiality. The articles have depth to them and are a masterly blend of practical information, psychological and psychiatric insight, biblical theology and spiritual wisdom. Short bibliographies are also included to enable those who care to pursue the subject in greater depth.

A wide range of subjects is included, from abortion to worship via apathy, bereavement, evangelism, incest, sleep, stress, the health services, group therapy, faith and heaven and hell.

The stance of the dictionary reflects a solid churchmanship and solid scholarship. The former determines the inclusion of articles on such issues as ascetical theology, confession, eucharist, ordination, spiritual direction and women's ordination. The latter determines the cast of some of the articles. Under poverty, for example, we are treated to an essay on its causes and how that determines whether your approach is a welfare one, an educational one or a more radical

political one. It is good to get the broader spectrum but it would be helpful too to know what you do when confronted by an apparently destitute person in your vestry! The article on the charismatic movement seemed to me to be a missed opportunity. It provided a potted history of the movement and an essay on its ecumenical character, but under a heading 'Significance for pastoral care' it simply said, 'it all depends . . .'. A number of recurring pastoral issues regarding the nature of spiritual experience, faith, healing, demons, the unity of the church, *etc.* are constantly thrown up by the movement but are not mentioned here.

In another way, too, the dictionary could have been more grounded. I immediately looked for articles on anorexia, alcoholism (which is only briefly covered under addiction), child abuse and debt, only to find that these topics of daily concern to the pastor were not there.

Theologically, the dictionary will have much to offer evangelicals although they will not be happy with it all. John Wesson's article on conversion will be welcome. Leslie Virgo's articles on homosexuality will be less so. Although it provides the reader with an excellent survey of contemporary facts and views on homosexuality, it does not set it in any moral framework nor does it refer once to the Bible's teaching on the matter.

The article on the pastoral use of the Bible begins by saying that the Bible is often misused or neglected in the counselling situation. It develops the theme of misuse by warning against a confrontational approach in counselling where lists of verses from the Bible are given to settle the problem, often prematurely. It sees the 'Gideon's Bible' approach as having emergency value only but being a poor model for pastoral care. Certainly the approach can and is used insensitively by some but we must not throw the baby out with the bath water. Such an approach has a long and honourable tradition both within wisdom literature, ethical lists mentioned in the epistles and in the history of the church. I am sorry that the total neglect of the Bible by many did not receive equal attention. Positively, the use of the Bible as a diagnostic tool and the value of reflecting on its images and themes in relation to one's own experience were helpfully explored.

The pastoral care offered by many ministers is superficial and the number and complexity of problems which now confront them threatens to be overwhelming. This dictionary will certainly be of great service to all pastors. It will provide a handy reference work to areas which are new to them and stretch their understanding in areas which are already familiar.

**Derek J. Tidball, Plymouth.**

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Roger F. Hurding, **Roots and Shoots: A Guide to Counselling and Psychotherapy** (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), 484 pp., £8.95.

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In its relatively short history the field of counselling and psychotherapy has grown like an unattended garden. Scattered throughout are a few blossoms of rare beauty, but the weeds have grown too. Some once-healthy plants have been crowded out by newer varieties or aggressive intruders, and a few grafts and mutations have been added to complicate the collection.

Using a somewhat similar analogy, Roger Hurding has given a history of the 'roots and shoots' that have grown in what looks like a therapeutic weed patch. The author has provided a rich and valuable guidebook that enables readers – both professional counsellors and novices – to make their way through the diverse species, to identify the major roots of each type of therapy, and to evaluate the health and usefulness of the numerous varieties of therapeutic treatment.

The purpose of this hefty (464-page) volume is stated in the beginning. The author has 'written a book which seeks to trace the development of today's counselling and psychotherapeutic practice from the soil of the Enlightenment and the ensuing growth of the secular psychologies. It is argued that the rise of these "listening arts" has, to a large extent, rivalled and, at times, taken over the caring ministry of traditional Christianity. And yet, the tree of pastoral care

is still there – crowded but not choked, hemmed in but not stifled' (pp. 9, 10).

To accomplish his goal, Hurding divides the book into two parts. The first, 'The Rise of Secular Psychologies', identifies the historical roots of pastoral care, gives a definition of counselling ('that activity which aims to help others in any or all aspects of their being within a caring relationship'), and analyses the major trends of behaviourism, psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, existential psychology, transpersonalism, and some of the newer therapies. Part two, 'Christian Reaction and Response', summarizes and evaluates the major Christian approaches to counselling, shows how they often build on the insights of secular systems, and ends with the author's own conclusions about what we can learn from Christ, the wonderful counsellor.

The chapter on sinkers, swimmers and strugglers gives a good example of Hurding's insightful analyses of psychotherapeutic diversity. The church, he maintains, has always been susceptible to the prevailing psychology of its environment, but we respond to secular trends in different ways. Some people flounder in the waters, swallow the secular waves, and *sink* into the psychology of the times leaving hardly a trace of their Christian distinctiveness. Anton Boisen in the United States, Leslie Weatherhead in the United Kingdom, and the early leaders in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) movement are identified as theological individuals who assimilated their thinking into the psychological culture.

In contrast, *swimmers* are those who strike out boldly against the flood and swim vigorously away from trouble that might come from involvement with psychology. Jay Adams, Paul Vitz, William Kilpatrick, and other recent 'anti-psychology' writers take this position. So, in one sense, did O. Hobart Mowrer, one-time President of the American Psychological Association. Highly critical of Freudian theory, Mowrer proposed a somewhat religious approach to therapy, even though he rejected most of orthodox Christianity.

The *strugglers* are described as 'brave souls' who 'have proved fit enough to engage in dialogue' and who 'find themselves swimming more confidently in the continuing stream of orthodox pastoral care, refreshed by insights shared with their new companions' (p. 212). Hurding, I suspect, would like to be identified with this group, but he lists three other modern examples: theologian Thomas Oden, psychologist Malcolm Jeeves from St Andrews University, and (I was delighted to note) somebody named Gary Collins.

It was interesting for me to read Hurding's summary and critique of my own work. I felt he was accurate, precise, fair, and sensitive in his analysis. Other better known and more influential thinkers in this field probably would share my conclusion that this volume gives valid, useful overviews and critiques of individual counsellors and their methods.

At times the book gets verbose and the author takes a while to get to his point. The book title, *Roots and Shoots*, is not very descriptive and the several diagrams are not always clear or helpful. These are minor criticisms, however, and they might be expected in a book that attempts to summarize such a massive amount of complex material in a concise and clear way. As a whole, Hurding's work is well documented, clearly written, graciously irenic, and free of the polemic and harsh condemnation that characterizes so many books – including Christian books – in this field.

Best of all, perhaps, is the author's clear biblical perspective and firm evangelical orientation. These basic assumptions do not get in the way of the excellent summaries and sensitive critiques of counselling approaches, but Hurding's consistent Christian point of view makes this work especially valuable to pastors, Christian counsellors, and church lay people.

In a concluding section the author summarizes what his work has attempted to do:

Arguing from a biblical theology and anthropology, including a comprehensive view of general and special revelation and the permissibility of both inductive and deductive reasoning where they accord with scriptural insight, we have sought to lay out an assumptive basis for Christian methodologies of therapy. In turn, albeit briefly, we have examined the model of Christ with respect to the aims and methods of counselling, declaring that there can be no *one* biblical approach but rather a spectrum of styles that vary with the counsellor, client and the precise counselling situation. In

other words, God is not to be tied to any one methodology. It is we who categorize and, in our enthusiasm, threaten to narrow the field of divine activity . . . (pp. 404-405).

Christian counsellors 'draw from the same repository of wisdom and knowledge within the created order as do the secular systems', Hurding concludes, but Christians nevertheless have a distinctive calling. Ours is the challenging task of 'bringing something of God's love and remedy to needy men and women'. To do this, believers need to think carefully about their assumptions, aims and methods in the light of biblical anthropology.

As an overview and evaluation of these counselling assumptions, aims, methods and theories, this book is first rate. It is difficult to find in North American bookstores but I have ordered copies from England for my students to read. Like any person who takes the time to study this book carefully, my students surely will profit from the experience.

Gary R. Collins, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

## Book Notes

Cyril J. Barber, *The Minister's Library* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 510 pp., £19.95.

While a big library is no sure sign of success in the ministry, it is imperative that the minister continues to study so that he may grow in his own understanding. Many book lists recommend scholarly works that are useful for research but may not meet the need of the busy pastor. Barber's work, while by no means ignoring the scholarly material, also focuses on the books useful for ministry. Basically an annotated bibliography, Barber lists and suggests books in every area of theology from commentaries to comparative religion. Another valuable feature is the discussion of classification systems so that all that knowledge can be organized on your bookshelves. Every theological library should have a copy of Barber's book available for reference and many might decide it worth adding to their own library.

Helmut W. Ziefle, *Theological German: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 283 pp., \$14.95.

While translations are useful, there are occasions when one must read the text in the original. For those who need to read German, Ziefle's book will make their task easier. There is no grammar discussed, only three sections of exercises. The first is selections from the Bible, the second from German theologians starting with Luther, and the third a modern German biography. English translations of less common German words are provided on the page opposite the text. Each section contains questions to test the reader's comprehension. An answer key is included with the book, so that this can truly be a self study guide.

Stephen F. Noll, *The Intertestamental Period* (Madison, WI: Theological Students Fellowship, 1985), 91 pp., \$3.25.

More than just a bibliographic survey, Noll's work serves as a brief introduction to the Intertestamental period. His introductions to each section of bibliography are marvels of precise precis. The 483 items listed are helpfully annotated and provide an excellent introduction for further study. TSF is to be thanked for sponsoring this monograph.

Gerald L. Borchert, *Paul and His Interpreters* (Madison, WI: Theological Students Fellowship, 1985), 123 pp., \$3.25.

This is an annotated bibliography that covers virtually every conceivable area of Pauline studies. Over 1,000 entries range across the entire theological spectrum and cover articles and books, including chapters in Festschriften. It is not exhaustive, but the researcher will find more than enough material for most projects.

## BOOK REVIEWS

- A. S. van der Woude* **The World of the Bible** (Colin J. Hemer)
- Ernest W. Nicholson* **God and His People, Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament** (W. A. Strange)
- H. G. M. Williamson* **Ezra and Nehemiah** (Derek Kidner)
- Irving M. Zeitlin* **Ancient Judaism – Biblical Criticism from Max Weber to the Present** (Gerald Hegarty)
- F. Watson* **Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach** (John M. G. Barclay)
- John Stambaugh and David Balch* **The Social World of the First Christians** (Derek J. Tidball)
- Boniface Ramsey* **Beginning to Read The Fathers** (Frederick W. Norris)
- Maurice Wiles* **God's Action in the World** (Richard Sturch)
- Paul K. Jewett* **Election and Predestination** (Gordon Palmer)
- Oliver O'Donovan* **On the Thirty-Nine Articles: A Conversation with Tudor Christianity** (Gerald Bray)
- Alan P. F. Sell* **Theology in Turmoil. The Roots, Course and Significance of the Conservative-Liberal Debate in Modern Theology** (Trevor Hart)
- William Oddie* **After The Deluge: Essays Towards the Deseccularization of the Church** (John S. Went)
- Charles Villa-Vicencio* **Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State** (James J. Stamoolis)
- Phil Parshall* **Beyond the Mosque: Christians within Muslim Community** (Vivienne Stacey)
- Alastair V. Campbell* **A Dictionary of Pastoral Care** (Derek J. Tidball)
- Roger F. Hurding* **Roots and Shoots: A Guide to Counselling and Psychotherapy** (Gary R. Collins)



ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ  
προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.