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# Editorial: Responding to the God of history

Fact is stranger than fiction. 1984 came and went with all its Orwellian fantasies unfulfilled, though the prophets of doom at the time gave us lurid countdowns on how close we were to the fiction becoming fact. The winter of 1989-90, on the other hand, is already being hailed by historians as likely to rank along with dates like 1689-90 in England, 1776 in America, 1789 in France and even 1917 in Russia, in the world-changing events it has brought. The collapse of communist domination in eastern Europe and the voluntary renunciation of constitutional right to rule by the Communist Party in Moscow, coming at the same time as major steps in South Africa towards the ending of racial injustice there, have left us gasping in astonishment at events we would have deemed almost unthinkable a short time ago. Some theological reflections suggest themselves.

A major effect of the convulsions in Europe, noted even by secular commentators, has been the dissolving of the popular territorial image of good and evil. The Iron Curtain had for a generation symbolized not merely the political reality of a divided Europe, but also a convenient moral and spiritual frontier for those who coloured the west angelic and the east diabolic, which was certainly the mythology purveyed by countless spy movies and novels. Without denying whatever relative truth the myth may have embodied (as myths usually do), it needs to be said that Christians can never succumb to a territorial (or racial) definition of good or evil. Just as the kingdom of God is not territorially defined, neither is the kingdom of darkness. There always has been an 'evil empire', but it was never confined to a single continent, as the simplistic Star Wars mentality (in its cinematic or its militarist form) would have us think. Jesus taught us that the wheat and the weeds grow side by side in the field of the world, and the task of distinguishing them is ultimately a task for angels (the real ones) and reserved for the final judgment. Meanwhile we do well to follow Paul's advice to 'judge nothing before the time'. It may have been a bad year for the devil. But it hasn't been so good for the confident prophets of doom either, with their assured scenarios of satanic communism's world domination heralding apocalyptic tribulations.

We are told to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Hard enough to do in personal relationships, and even more difficult in the world of international affairs, where one segment of humanity's rejoicing may become another's weeping. Who could fail to rejoice at the sight of ecstatic Germans celebrating the collapse of the Berlin Wall, with all the related prospects for political freedoms and economic opportunities which are opening up to almost all of eastern Europe? But who will pay for those economic opportunities? It is a complacent self-delusion to think that western economic power and affluence is a simple direct result of the west's own effort or merely the proof of the superiority of market capitalism over state communism. The wealth of the west is as dependent now in its maintenance as it ever was in its development upon the unfair and exploitative world economic system which loads all the dice against the poorer nations of the south. However, in spite of

the system (or, in fact, as part of it), the western north has at least endeavoured to contribute to what it calls development in other parts of the world through various kinds of aid. The motives are rarely altruistic, but at least it happens. The question arises now, in the light of so much promised aid to eastern Europe and democratizing Russia, how will the rest of the world fare? If the First World embraces the Second World, who cares for the Third World then? Mammon will always prove a more enduring rival to the living God than Marxism. It would be ironic and tragic if the white and northern segment of humanity hugged its 'blessings' ever closer to its continental chests while the south grew even more excluded in its poverty and oppression. And for how long would the south tolerate such ever starker global disparity? Our biblical theology and ethic must compel us to face such questions if we take seriously our commitment to humanity as a whole in interpreting the flow of contemporary history.

Lecturing on Isaiah 40-55 during some of the most astonishing of these recent events prompts another reflection, namely the speed and surprise of the way God acts in history. What the exiles in Babylon had longed for for a generation began to happen so suddenly that they could not take it in, and indeed appear to have objected to the way God was answering their hopes. Similarly today, walls long thought and declared impregnable simply crumbled. Dictators boasting their security one day were fleeing the next.

He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.  
No sooner are they planted, . . .  
than he blows on them and they wither (Is. 40:23f.).

Thus spoke the prophet about the transience of human power before the sovereignty of Israel's God. And who had done it? The insistent question in Isaiah 40-55 is answered on a human level by Cyrus, before whom the nations of the world trembled and tried to strengthen their own and each other's idolatries (41:5-7). But behind him stood God himself. Indeed, the prophet affirms. God had raised him up for that very purpose and was the giver of all his success, victories and progress. It was too much then for some devout Jews to accept that the God of Israel should use a pagan king for his saving purpose. It is doubtless astonishing for many who have prayed to God for generations to be delivered from the grip of atheistic or racist persecution that God should choose to use the very head of the oppressive system as the agent of changes that have turned the world upside down. Yet the biblically alert believer should not balk at this. For why should the God who used Nebuchadnezzar 'my servant' (Je. 27:6) and Cyrus 'my anointed' (Is. 45:1) not also use a Gorbachev (whose first name ironically means 'Who is like God?') or a de Klerk? The fact that it is said explicitly that Cyrus did not acknowledge Yahweh (45:4f.) shows us that God needs no acknowledgment on the part of those he chooses to carry out his purpose in history (as Pharaoh might now be willing to agree). Equally, the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was eventually

brought to some degree of conversion and submission to the God of Heaven (Dn. 4) shows us the importance both of faithful prayer for rulers (Je. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4) and of courageous witness to them at the opportune moment (Dn. 4:27).

But Isaiah 40 - 55 presents to us another figure than Cyrus, the political and military agent of his historical will for Israel at that time, and that is the mysterious Servant of Yahweh. He is identified with Israel and yet has a mission to Israel. Then, by God's calling and commission he is entrusted with a mission to be a 'light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth' (49:6). The work of Cyrus on the level of world politics was like a catalyst enabling the ongoing fulfilment of God's wider redemptive purpose for humanity through his servant people. And such is the mission of those who share the identity, election and calling of God's Servant, as we do through baptism into Christ. In fact it was this very verse (Is. 49:6) which Paul used as the theological undergirding of his own mission to the nations in Acts 13:47. So as we look at world events, our task is not merely to marvel at God's sovereign control of leaders and nations but also to face the resulting challenges and opportunities for mission that such events lay before us. And, as for OT Israel, that needs to begin with a radical repentance for the moral and spiritual failure and ineffectiveness that all but disqualifies us to be his servant at all. The appeal of Isaiah 40 - 55 was not merely that Israel should regain her freedom, but that she should regain her identity and mission as the people of God for the sake of the rest of the world. A Cyrus could send them back to Jerusalem. Only the Servant could bring them back to God.

But where is repentance to be found? A final reflection on the events of recent months was stirred within me by the Soviet response to events in Czechoslovakia. I well remember the sense of moral outrage, worsened by impotence, when Warsaw Pact troops squashed the hopes of the Prague Spring in 1968 - coupled with the sense of *déjà vu* from my childhood memories of the news of Hungary in 1956. It was therefore all the more moving to read that Russia formally renounced that action as having been not merely a mistake but fundamentally and morally wrong at the bar of human rights. It may not fit some definitions, but I would class that as repentance. And the amazing thing was who was doing it! Has such a formal renunciation of past sins or massive violations of human rights been forthcoming from any of the 'Christian' powers, past or present? But once again I wonder why I should be so surprised. The Bible gives us plenty of examples of the repentance of the unquestionably wicked (from Nineveh and Manasseh to the prostitutes and tax-collectors of Jesus' day), while warning us of the awesome, impervious capacity for self-congratulation and self-vindication on the part of the 'righteous', which has not been without illustration in recent events either.

What, then, is our duty in response to such facts and reflections? First, to be humble. Our God is mightily unpredictable and a master of surprise. How tawdry now must all neatly worked-out schemes appear which some so confidently devise for the divine rubber stamp? Second, to be discerning. The realities of good and evil are so intertwined in our world that we need more than Solomonic wisdom to disentangle them. Simplistic categorizing of nations or ideologies is naïve and unbiblical. Third, to be self-critical and aware of the desperate need for repentance and change in so many areas of our own corporate life, in church and society. Fourth, to be prayerful for Christians and churches caught up in the floods of such torrential change in some parts of the world, that they may not only stay firm on the Rock who controls history, but through their witness bring others to the same security (Is. 44:8).

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This issue of *Themelios* contains an index of all articles in Volumes 1-15 and of book reviews in Volumes 11-15. The last index was published in issue 10.3. Readers will also be interested to know about a thematically arranged index of *Themelios* articles. This will be particularly useful to students wanting to find relevant articles in *Themelios* on specific subjects they are studying. Copies of it are available from The RTSF Secretary, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP. Please send a cheque or postal order for £1.00. We are most grateful to Andy Williamson, a former RTSF Executive Committee member, for his initiative and hard work in preparing this topical index.

The index shows the wealth of material available in back issues. Most past issues are still available but achieve nothing on shelves in a store. Recent subscribers may like to top up their valuable collection of *Themelios* by purchasing back issues. These are available in complete volumes at the current subscription rates (see inside front cover). For more than one volume or multiple copies of any volume the following discounts are available: 2 or 3 volumes - 30%; 4 or more volumes - 50%. A list of contents of previous issues may be obtained from the RTSF Secretary.

Finally, it is a pleasure to announce that, through an arrangement with the Evangelical Literature Trust, we are now able to offer a special reduced subscription rate to residents in the Two-Thirds World. This will be £1.75 (plus postage) per volume (three issues, which will be sent together when each volume is complete, to save postage). Orders for subscriptions at this subsidized rate should be sent directly to the Secretary of ELT at The Church House, Stoke Park Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk, England, IP2 9TH. Similarly, back issues may be ordered by Two-Thirds World residents at the reduced rate of £0.50 per volume from ELT. We are most grateful to ELT for facilitating in this way the wider spread of the ministry of *Themelios* in other parts of the world.

# Intertestamental Judaism, its literature and its significance

Roger Beckwith

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The term 'intertestamental', though very widely current because of its convenience, is a term reflecting the Protestant conception of the biblical canon. This is the conception anciently championed by Jerome, that the OT of the Christian Bible is identical with the Hebrew Bible of the Jews, and so ends its narrative (if not the composition of its books also) in the period of the return from the exile. Between the time of Nehemiah and the time of Christ is an interval of about 430 years, and within these limits the intertestamental period properly lies. However, because of the use regularly made of intertestamental evidence as historical background to the NT, it is customary to extend it to the end of the first century AD, and to include among its literature books written even later, if, like the oldest rabbinical works, they record oral traditions from NT times.

The Roman Catholic OT canon, by contrast with the Protestant, includes narratives from as late as the second century BC (1 and 2 Maccabees) and a book stated in its prologue to have been written in that century (Ecclesiasticus). From the Roman Catholic standpoint, therefore, the period in question is not so much intertestamental as simply post-exilic. Reaction against the Roman Catholic canon has sometimes caused Protestants to ignore the Apocrypha, which it canonizes, but those of a more sober spirit have seen them as, first, containing the most ancient extant interpretation of the OT; secondly, as forming an important part of the historical background which helps us to understand the NT; and, thirdly, as including material which, though not inspired, is on a par with the most edifying religious literature in existence. No Protestant would willingly forego all non-biblical religious literature. Literature which conforms to the teaching of the Bible, and expounds or illustrates that teaching, is undeniably helpful. It is not therefore wise to forego a knowledge of the Apocrypha, even if one's church does not use them liturgically.

The Apocrypha, however, are not the whole of intertestamental literature, nor our only source of knowledge about the intertestamental period. The histories of Josephus, which cover the whole period (in parts sketchily, in parts very thoroughly), are an obvious case in point; and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been a great accession to existing knowledge and existing literature, which has taken place well within living memory. No area of biblical studies has been untouched by this extraordinary discovery, and most of them have been deeply affected, but the fullest light that it has thrown has been on the intertestamental period itself.

Modern literature on intertestamental subjects is partly written by Jews (whose knowledge of Judaism is unrivalled, but who are less directly interested in NT background) and

partly by Christians; but study in this field is increasingly becoming a joint enterprise. Most of the Christian literature is in English or German, with some in French or other languages. The Jewish literature is mostly in English or modern Hebrew. It would be foolish to neglect the modern literature, which is now so abundant and sophisticated, though only a few of the more important titles can be mentioned here;<sup>2</sup> but it needs to be emphasized that to read the modern literature is no substitute for reading the ancient texts themselves. Over and over again one finds OT and NT scholars referring to intertestamental literature in a way which reveals that they have not looked the passage up, or have not read it in its context, or have no idea of the age or nature of the document they are citing, but that they are simply following a secondary source. Evangelical scholars are certainly not blameless here. Only very few of them (such as D. W. Gooding on the Septuagint, F. F. Bruce on the Dead Sea Scrolls and Richard Bauckham on the Pseudepigrapha) can speak from knowledge in this field. But not to read the intertestamental literature, even that substantial part of it for which one now has the help of English translations, is a gratuitous self-deprivation for which nothing can really compensate. To read it gives one the 'feel' of the period in a unique way, rather like visiting the old city of Jerusalem. Moreover, it acquaints the reader with many illuminating facts and ideas which are rarely mentioned in the secondary literature.

## Intertestamental history

The period from Nehemiah to Christ falls into four epochs: the period of Persian rule, until about 331 BC; the period of Greek rule, under the Hellenistic successors of Alexander (first the Ptolemies of Egypt, then the Seleucids of Syria), until 143 BC; the period of independence, under the Maccabean or Hasmonean dynasty, until 63 BC; and the period of Roman rule thereafter. The ancient Jewish authorities for the history of this period are the *Antiquities* and *Jewish War* of Josephus, and, as regards the earlier Maccabean era, the first two books of Maccabees. Worthwhile modern accounts include N. H. Snaith, *The Jews from Cyrus to Herod* (Wallington: Religious Education Press, 1949); W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (CUP, 1984 *etc.*, still continuing); and, for the latter part of the period, A. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (ET, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959). The final part of the period is treated in detail in F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (London: Oliphants, 1969), and in two large works which include much more than just history, and will need to be mentioned again. One of these is Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, the English translation of which, after retaining its usefulness for a hundred years, has now been thoroughly revised and modernized by G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black and M.



Goodman (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-87). The other is a large project which, despite its Latin title and Dutch place of publication, is composed in English: the *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* (Assen: Van Gorcum). The two volumes on history appeared in 1974-6 (*The Jewish People in the First Century*, eds. S. Safrai and M. Stern). Three of the volumes on literature have since been added, and there are more to come.

For social history, J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (ET, London: SCM, 1969), should be consulted. It is invaluable.

In addition to books there are journals, which similarly cover all fields of intertestamental study, not just history. Some biblical journals include a good deal of intertestamental material (*Revue Biblique*, *Vetus Testamentum*, etc.), but even more so do journals on Jewish studies, of which the most useful for our purpose are perhaps *Revue de Qumran* (in French, English and German), *Hebrew Union College Annual* (in English and Hebrew), *Journal of Jewish Studies*, *Journal for the Study of Judaism and Tarbiz* (in Hebrew, with English summaries). Archaeological journals of relevance include *Israel Exploration Journal* and *Bulletin of the American Schools for Oriental Research*.

Finally, there are reference books. The twelve volumes of *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901-6) continue to be of great value, though they have now been complemented, without being superseded, by the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: EJ, 1971-2 and yearbooks thereafter). For the vocabulary of rabbinical Hebrew and Aramaic, biblical lexicons have to be supplemented by M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903). The intermediate Hebrew and Aramaic of the Dead Sea Scrolls is now developing its own tools.

### Intertestamental religion

The Judaism of the intertestamental period was a religion of separation to the law. This was the achievement of Ezra — something which no religious leader of the Jews had successfully achieved in the time of their independence under the monarchy, when they were constantly lapsing into idolatry; but which the judgment of the exile and the miracle of the return somehow made possible, even in an age when the Jews were regularly under the rule of pagan foreigners. There is no doubt that the Jews were affected by their foreign overlords in their culture, language and thought, and especially by their Greek overlords; but this influence only produced a crisis when it directly challenged the Jewish religion. It was a challenge of this kind by the Hellenistic Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes which provoked the successful Maccabean revolt. The Hasidæans, or 'Pious', then took up arms against the Hellenizers (1 Macc. 2:42; 7:12-17; 2 Macc. 14:6); but as soon as religious freedom was achieved, the influence of Hellenism returned. An account of this influence which tends to maximize it is given by M. Hengel in his *Judaism and Hellenism* (ET, London: SCM, 1974), while a somewhat minimizing account is given in the new Schürer; but even those ancient Jewish writers who are most influenced by Hellenism, such as Philo of Alexandria, differ more in degree than in kind from other Jewish writers,

and can hardly be said to form a separate school. In religious thinking, the developing conception of the after-life which characterizes an intertestamental book like 1 Enoch, and the developing conception of the angels and demons which characterizes an intertestamental book like Tobit, are probably in some measure due to the influence of Greek and Persian ideas respectively.

A religion of separation to the law (as embodied in the Pentateuch) was almost bound to develop different schools of interpretation of that law. By the time of the third Maccabean leader, Jonathan (high priest 152-142 BC), the three contending parties of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes had emerged from the earlier Hasidæans, and the basic distinction between them was their rival interpretations of the pentateuchal law, though they differed also in their beliefs on eschatology, spirits and predestination. The traditionalist Pharisees were probably the earliest school of thought to emerge, as well as the largest, being followed by the Sadducees and Essenes as movements aiming to reform the traditional interpretation by direct appeal to Scripture; but other reconstructions of the history are common, and in any case the movements did not become contending parties until the time of Jonathan. Even in the temple, where the Sadducees held the high priesthood from 100 BC onwards, Pharisaic influence was powerful. An important account of the Pharisees is L. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees: the Sociological Background of their Faith* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), and of the Sadducees, J. Le Moyne, *Les Sadducéens* (Paris: Gabalda, 1972), while the Essenes are best treated in the literature on the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are generally reckoned their work. Perhaps the writer may also refer to his own article 'The Pre-History and Relationships of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes: a Tentative Reconstruction' (*Revue de Qumran* 11:1, Oct. 1982).

Much intertestamental literature reflects Pharisaic tendencies, and much Essene. No unmistakably Sadducean work has survived.

The Zealots, who were so active in the first century AD in fomenting rebellion against the Romans, seem to have been drawn partly from the Pharisees and partly from the Essenes. Except in their refusal to recognize any king but God, they were not a distinct school of thought.

The characteristic religious institution of the intertestamental period was the synagogue. It may have begun somewhat earlier, but in intertestamental times it spread to virtually every Jewish centre, both in Palestine and in the Dispersion. It provided non-sacrificial worship every sabbath day, consisting of the reading and exposition of Scripture, and prayer. The teachers of the synagogue were usually lay scribes or elders of the Pharisaic school, who now fulfilled the duty of 'teaching the law' which in the time of Ezra had been fulfilled by priests and Levites. The synagogue was not in opposition to the temple but complemented it, though for the greater part of the lives of most Jews it provided their regular centre of worship, which was accessible to them even when the temple was not. It was this that made it possible for Judaism to exist, as at Qumran, apart from the temple, and later to survive the destruction of the temple. On the history of Jewish worship, the standard work is now J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977), which

extends further than its title suggests. Reference may also be made to my *Daily and Weekly Worship: from Jewish to Christian* (Nottingham: Alcuin/Grove, 1987).

Intertestamental religion, as reflected in its literature, is at its best the true faith of the OT, but its most frequent weakness is in the area of soteriology. Both Jesus and Paul charge their opponents with shallow conceptions of sin and salvation, and there is plenty of evidence, in rabbinical sources especially, to justify this charge, despite the attempt of E. P. Sanders to disprove it by novel and unconvincing interpretations both of the Jewish material and of the Christian (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, London: SCM, 1977; etc.).

### Intertestamental literature

The literature of the period is commonly divided into seven main categories (apart from the NT and the earliest patristic literature, which themselves have much to teach us about Judaism). The categories are these:

(i) *The Apocrypha*. These are books often found in Greek and Latin biblical manuscripts, but not Hebrew. Some of them were originally written in Greek, possibly in the Dispersion, though others originated in Hebrew or Aramaic, probably in Palestine. Considerable parts of the original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus have now been recovered. The biblical manuscripts in which we find these books are of Christian origin, and they probably got into these progressively after AD 200, when Christians (still without their Bible between two covers) were in some cases becoming a bit vague about the distinction between the OT books and other edifying Jewish books which they read. Tobit, a pious story with a Persian background, is perhaps the oldest of these books (third century BC?). The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus are both wisdom books, the latter written by a scribe of the early second century BC. 1 Maccabees is an excellent history, written about 100 BC. 2 Esdras (4 Ezra) is the latest of these books, a semi-Pharisaic apocalypse, written about AD 100, with later Christian chapters added at the beginning and end. R. H. Charles (ed.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), is probably still the best critical edition.

(ii) *The Pseudepigrapha*, i.e. books under false names. Not all of these are in fact under false names, whereas some of the Apocrypha are. They include the very old story of Ahikar (the Aramaic fragments of which were found at Elephantine, and date from the fifth century BC), and the Letter of Aristeas, giving a partly legendary account of the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek at Alexandria (probably second century BC). Also included are apocalypses and similar pseudo-prophetic works, the oldest of which (1 Enoch, Jubilees and perhaps the Testaments of the Twelve Prophets) date from the third to second century BC and are of Essene outlook, embodying Essene interpretations of the Pentateuch and Essene eschatological beliefs. There are two new English editions: J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983-5), and H. F. D. Sparks (ed.), *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), the latter being rather misleadingly named. Also indispensable (however eccentric) is J. T. Milik's edition of the Aramaic fragments of 1 Enoch from Qumran: *The Books of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

(iii) *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. These were discovered in our own generation, preserved in jars, mostly at Qumran in the Judean desert, now believed to have been an Essene centre. Though fragmentary, they are often substantial, and were written between the third (or fourth) century BC and the first century AD. They include Hebrew biblical manuscripts a thousand years older than any we previously possessed, Essene apocalypses in the original languages, and previously unknown sectarian works. The Manual of Discipline (or Community Rule) and the Damascus (or Zadokite) Document consist of regulations for the lives of their communities. The Temple Scroll is a pseudonymous interpretation of the pentateuchal law, comparable to Jubilees. There are also biblical commentaries, often understanding the text as foretelling their own sectarian history, and liturgical works. The Dead Sea Scrolls quote the OT with conventional formulas implying divine authority, in the manner later found in the NT, Philo and the Mishnah. The texts are slowly being edited in the volumes *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955, etc.) and elsewhere. The best translation of the new texts is probably G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), and the best introductions, which complement each other, are F. M. Cross Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (London: Duckworth, 1958), J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (ET, London: SCM, 1959) and G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (London: Collins, 1977). On the interpretation of the texts, the writings of J. M. Baumgarten are of particular value: *Studies in Qumran Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), and there are many articles in journals. On the relation between Qumran and Christianity, the writings of F. F. Bruce give judicious guidance. On the much discussed Qumran calendar, first found in 1 Enoch, reference may be made to my own article 'The Earliest Enoch Literature and its Calendar' (*Revue de Qumran* 10:3, Feb. 1981). On Qumran exegesis, see F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960).

(iv) *Bible translations*. The greatest work of Hellenistic Judaism was the Septuagint translation of the OT, which began with the Pentateuch about 275 BC, and from which the religious Greek of the NT is largely drawn. Some books of the OT were translated much more literally than others, possibly because (as with the Aramaic targums) some of the translations were designed to be read in the synagogue, others not; but the question also arises whether what looks like a paraphrastic translation may not sometimes be due to a divergent text of the original, a question much discussed in the writings of D. W. Gooding and E. Tov. The existence of some divergent Hebrew texts of Septuagintal type has been put beyond doubt by the Qumran discoveries. The Septuagint was often revised, as by 'proto-Theodotion' in the first century AD, and there are later Greek translations; and what has survived in manuscripts as the 'Septuagint' is not always the Old Greek version. The Septuagint has generated a very large literature, to which S. P. Brook *et al.*, *A Classified Bibliography of the Septuagint* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), provides a guide. The surviving Aramaic translations, or targums, are of later date, but especially those on the Pentateuch reflect early tradition, and, though derived from the synagogue liturgy, do not always contain the same interpretations of the text as are found in the rabbinical literature. The Qumran Targum on

Jew and the newly discovered Targum Neofiti on the Pentateuch are of particular interest. Targumic renderings seem sometimes to be echoed in the NT.

(v) *Philo*. The first Jewish writer of this period who has left extensive writings, Philo was an older contemporary of Jesus, an Alexandrian Jew writing in Greek. Most of his works are expositions of parts of the Pentateuch, interpreting the text in the light of Greek philosophy. He has also left several accounts of the Essenes and an account of the related Therapeutae. His works are edited, with an English translation, in the Loeb series (Heinemann).

(vi) *Josephus*. The second voluminous Jewish writer, Josephus, was a historian, living in the latter half of the first century AD. He was a Palestinian priest and Pharisee, and a leader in the first Jewish revolt of AD 66. His works are in Greek, though this was not his first language. They are edited, with an English translation, in the Loeb series. His *Jewish War* and *Life* are chiefly concerned with the first Jewish revolt. His *Antiquities* retells the history of his nation from Adam to the destruction of the temple in AD 70. *Against Apion* is an apology for his *Antiquities* against Greek critics.

(vii) *The rabbinical literature*. This was an attempt to write down Pharisaic oral tradition (previously memorized) after Pharisaism had triumphed over its rivals. The earliest parts are legal: they are the Mishnah (c. AD 200), the Tosephta, the *baraitas* or quotations from similar but lost compilations, preserved in the two Talmuds, and the Halakik Midrashim (or legal commentaries) on the last four books of the Pentateuch, all these probably dating from the third century AD. The Talmuds themselves (the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud) are later commentaries on the Mishnah, produced by the rabbinical schools of Palestine and Babylonia. The rabbinical literature quotes rabbis back to the first century BC and even earlier, and in the older compilations these attributions should not be lightly disregarded. The rabbinical literature is written in Hebrew and Aramaic, but much of it has now been translated into English: the Mishnah by H. Danby (London: OUP, 1933), the Tosephta by J. Neusner (New York: Ktav, 1977-86), the Babylonian Talmud by I. Epstein *et al.* (London: Soncino, 1935-52), *etc.* Other parts have been translated into French and German. There is a vast secondary literature in many languages.

A general guide to all this literature can be found in the new Schürer and in the relevant volumes of the *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum*, mentioned earlier.

### The significance of intertestamental study

At the beginning of this article, three uses of the study of intertestamental literature were mentioned. It remains to illustrate these uses.

#### (a) *The intertestamental literature as religious literature of worth*

Like the surviving religious literature of any other period of history, the intertestamental literature is not all equally well written or edifying. It was no accident that the early Christians read the books which we call Apocrypha much more than the rest of the literature, with the result that these books (but very little else of the literature) began to be included in biblical manuscripts. Judith is a stirring romance

of religious zeal. Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus are classics of wisdom-piety (the latter including also, in ch. 43 and chs. 44-50, a beautiful religious nature-poem and the great catalogue of 'famous men'). 1 Maccabees is not just good history but a narrative of heroic faith which has few equals. Outside the Apocrypha, Josephus's accounts of the actions and character of Herod the Great are painfully graphic; but not much else in the literature deserves mention from this point of view. 1 Enoch has been described as one of the world's twelve worst books (and for that reason alone one would be tempted to think that the Epistle of Jude quotes it only as an *argumentum ad hominem*, though there is also the more substantial reason that otherwise Jude is unique in the apostolic circle in treating pseudepigrapha with this sort of respect). The Mishnah must be one of the dullest books in existence: there are reasons why it has to be read, despite its length, but the prudent reader only attempts a small portion at a time!

#### (b) *The intertestamental literature as the earliest interpretation of the OT*

The oldest of the intertestamental literature is not much (if any) younger than the youngest of the OT literature, and sometimes there is a direct dependence, either in the works as a whole or in particular passages. Where this is so, there are strong historical grounds for using the intertestamental work to interpret the canonical. Even when the difference of age is much greater, and no direct dependence can be seen, the interpretation indicated by the intertestamental literature may still be historically prior to any other, and, as coming from the same nation and the same religious community, is entitled to respect. The Pharisaic interpretation of the pentateuchal ceremonial, as embodied in the rabbinical literature, must be weighed against what we know of the Sadducean, Essene and Samaritan interpretations, and against what recent scholarship has deduced from archaeological discoveries and from parallels in other Near-Eastern cultures of antiquity; but it remains very important. There are few expositions of Leviticus more illuminating than that of C. D. Ginsburg in Ellicott's *Bible Commentary*, based upon the rabbinical literature.

Those developments of religious thought in the intertestamental period which are usually attributed to Persian or Greek influence, particularly those relating to angels and demons and to the life to come, are probably from another viewpoint interpretations of the OT. The foreign influence is sometimes very apparent, as when Tobit gives a Persian name to a demon, or when Wisdom (followed afterwards by Philo and Josephus) asserts the immortality of the soul. Nevertheless, the developments were probably justified in the minds of those who made them as interpretations of the OT. The OT does speak of angels and demons, however little it tells us about them, and it does hint (in the Prophets and Psalms) at a future life for believers more significant than the shadowy existence of Sheol. The intertestamental developments are in some ways *speculative* interpretations of what the OT has to say, and an important consideration for Christians is whether the NT endorses them. In some respects the developments are rejected by the NT, and in others ignored, but in others again they are endorsed.

(c) *The intertestamental literature as background to the NT*  
This final use of the intertestamental literature is the amplest of the three. To begin with, the intertestamental literature

(with some help from Greek and Roman sources) traces the history of the Jews from the fifth century BC to the first century AD, which connects the two Testaments.

Then again, it explains what has happened to OT institutions which reappear in a modified form in the NT. Why are scribes and not priests teaching the law to the people? Why is the passover meal held outside the temple court, using wine as well as the instituted elements, and with the participants reclining rather than standing? These are questions of a kind that can only be answered from the intertestamental literature.

Yet again, the intertestamental literature enables us to put the NT narratives into a historical setting. Though old, A. Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883) makes use of it for this purpose in a uniquely illuminating way.

Lastly, the intertestamental literature throws direct or indirect light on a host of phrases and passages of the NT. Strack-Billerbeck's *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1922-61) is the standard guide here, and it would be worth learning the German language just to be able to use that book. Help can also be gleaned, however, from G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (ET, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), *Jesus-Jeshua* (ET, London: SPCK, 1929), *Sacred Sites and Ways* (ET, London: SPCK, 1935); I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (CUP, 1917-24); and D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1956).

<sup>1</sup> *Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (SPCK, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller bibliography, see S. F. Noll, *The Intertestamental Period: a Study Guide* (IVCF, USA, 1985).

## Faith and philosophy in the early church

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Why should *Themelios* bother itself with an article on philosophy? Is not the subject abstruse and irrelevant for those preparing for ministry or mission? In fact, however, philosophy is an invisible force which has shaped the minds of the people we evangelize and pastor, and simply to ignore its impact upon both the world and the church is like going into battle wearing a blindfold. An introduction to the subject seems, to me, essential for all who want to be alert in God's work.

The work of early Christian theologians provides a classic set of case histories in the relationship of Christian belief to its intellectual setting. A short article like this cannot possibly do justice to the intricate and pervasive interaction of Christian and Greek thought (sometimes called Hellenism) in early Christian writers. For that matter, no single sentence can ever capture what ancient Greek philosophy was. Although giant figures — Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (particularly the last two) — dominated the scene, systems sprouted profusely. There was no such thing as *the* Greek philosophy though there were dominant systems. It was, however, variations of Platonism (discussed below) which counted for most in the earliest stages of Christian doctrinal development. Whilst the ideas of Aristotle enjoyed great currency at the emergence of Christianity, it was really Platonist thinking that touched the majority of Christian writers most in key doctrinal development. This article offers only a selective, fragmentary treatment of that process, highlighting some prime samples.

All important early Christian thinkers showed in their writings a contact with some philosophical mood of their day. It could never have happened otherwise. Already the interaction between Judaism and Greek thought had produced a great Hellenistic Jewish figure in Philo of Alexandria whose influence spread beyond the Jewish to the Christian world

of thought, especially to Alexandrian Christianity in the Greek-speaking apologists Clement (c. 155-c. 220) and Origen (c. 185-c. 254). The alliance was not so surprising considering that some Greek philosophers harboured important ideas congenial to the OT. Of these, the belief in an absolute One (Plato) or First Mover (Aristotle) superior to the created order took supreme place. The impact of this united voice over against popular polytheism subtly disposed Christians, as well as some Jews, towards the Greeks. In the second century particularly, defenders of Christian belief sometimes greeted congenial traits in philosophy as part of the same revelation (see, for example, Justin's *1 Apol.* 46 and Clement's *Stromata*).

In short, the foremost Christian spokesmen thought from the philosophy 'at the bottom of their minds'.<sup>1</sup> As Prestige reminds us, second- and third-century Christians instinctively worked with the rational method of their day.<sup>2</sup> However, like Philo, they used it to call people to what they saw as a 'higher' and better way than the Greek schools. Certain key figures, such as Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) and Augustine (354-430), actually reached Christian faith only after a tour of philosophical schools and constructed their Christian theologies with one eye on a disapproving Hellenism. Others, like the Latin-speaking African apologist Tertullian (c. 160/70-c. 215/20), sometimes scorned aspects of the Greek philosophical tradition whilst displaying considerable direct and indirect dependence upon it.

The options open to a pagan philosopher ran into many varieties but Christian thinkers of the early period interacted mainly with two strains of Platonism. The first was *Middle Platonism* (dating from the first century BC). The term merely locates a species of Platonism rather than a single school, since there were also varieties within Middle Platonism. However, certain tenets gained a grip upon the popular mind, giving a sort of shared religious framework. It certainly included the original Platonic division of the sensible world

(the material, visible and transient) and the intelligible world (the rational, spiritual, invisible and eternal). This division opened up into a yawning gap between the One and the Many, the Eternal and the Corruptible, the Changeless and the Changeable, which was no light matter since the Platonic quest sought by philosophy a possession of Truth and the absolute Good.

However, many in its school had managed an uneasy synthesis with Stoicism (dating in its developed form from the third century BC). This seems at first an unlikely partnership since Stoicism taught a materialist view of all reality. Even the nearest thing to 'God', a pervasive 'World-Soul' or spirit which was diffused through all creation, was material though a highly refined kind. This rational principle, pervading and guiding everything, fell into the hands of Platonist thought as the Logos, the ideal mediator between the divided realms of the sensible and the intelligible. Stoic ethics too spread widely and finally invaded Christian soil prepared by the rigorous conditions of persecution. The moral ideal to the Stoic was the *apatheia*, freedom from the emotional life for the pursuit of rational discipline, the real philosophical and moral goal. We can find echoes of this Stoic idea amongst early Christians in a number of doctrines. These included, for instance, divine impassibility (in their case the belief that God is not vulnerable as the creatures are to feelings), salvation through enlightenment, and a tendency to give little place to the human soul of Jesus.

The second strain of Platonism was *Neoplatonism*. It owed much to the Middle Platonists but attempted a solution to that school's chronic dualism between the 'sensible' and 'intelligible' worlds. It sought the answer in the famed 'exodus and return' view of 'being'. The multiplicity of the sensible world overflowed from the undivided One outwards through strata of 'being' and then returned by the same way to the One. A kind of trinity appears at the source in the form of the One, the Mind (the principle of intelligence in the world) and the Soul (the principle of animation). This elegant and brilliant scheme, whose architect was Plotinus in the third century, brought with it a new religious quest, the challenge of mystical return to the One through the hierarchy of being. Views vary on the question of just when this form of Platonism began to influence Christian writers. Although Origen was a contemporary of Plotinus it is likely that Middle Platonism can account for most of his Platonist features, though Middle Platonism in any case contained some of the seeds of Neoplatonist thinking.

J. M. Rist questions the assumption that fourth-century Christian writers, such as the Cappadocean Fathers who were prominent in the development and defence of Trinitarian orthodoxy (discussed further below), simply took over this quasi-trinitarian and mystical tradition from the Neo-Platonists. He argues that although the important Trinitarian theologian Gregory of Nyssa (330-c. 395) clearly depends upon Plotinus, Gregory's elder and more dominant brother, Basil of Caesarea (c. 329-379), received his education from the Middle Platonist school and used Plotinus hardly at all.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless Rist recognizes affinity of thought and remarks that Basil's work shows how 'neoplatonically' a Christian can talk without any Neoplatonic source being used. In what areas, then, did these Middle and Neoplatonist traditions affect the Christian thinkers?

### God in relation to the world

The doctrine of God took the strain of Middle Platonist pressure in the early years. Some exaggerated Platonist systems which took root in Christian circles were finally neutralized in great measure by the apologists Irenaeus (c. 175-c. 195) and Tertullian. These rivals to traditional thinking included second-century 'heretic' Marcion's notion of an evil creator opposed to the true God and his Christ, as well as the more flamboyant Gnostic systems which speculated on journeys of the soul through various spheres towards the Good. This unbending dualism even made an impact on some of the best Christian writers. Justin Martyr seemed to concede the Platonist ditch between the 'sensible' and 'non-sensible' spheres when he opted for a nameless and unutterable God. The resulting tendency towards 'apophatic' theology (speaking of God only in negatives, of what God is *not*), grew quite acute in those teachers most indebted to a training in Middle Platonism, namely Clement and Origen. This road led right into the heart of the church's Trinitarian and Christological thinking.

### God as Trinity

The dilemma posed by dualism to Christian thought, namely that of shutting God out of his own creation, made its greatest impact upon Trinitarian thinking. An answer to that dilemma seemed already to hand in the notion, clearly present in Philo and other schools, of the Logos as an intermediary between God and the world. The Son of God of the NT soon lay under threat of becoming a being from a middle territory somehow in place to bridge the deep gulf between Eternal and Corruptible, between Being and Becoming, between the One and the Many. The formula offered at the beginning of the fourth century by the anti-Trinitarian Arius, of Christ as a secondary and created being, was not the bolt from the blue it may often seem.

Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) receives the blame, or credit, for having early 'domesticated' the Logos idea<sup>5</sup> by identifying the Logos with the mediating Son. He has earned a reputation for inheriting Logos theology neither from John's gospel nor from Philo but from his own instinctive Platonism.<sup>6</sup> But undoubtedly the most thorough Platonizing trend appears in Origen who saw in the Logos the answer to a perennial problem: the relation between the One and the Many. The Logos, he decided, contained in itself the multiplicity of aspects (*epinoia*) which account for diversity in the world, the sphere of the 'Many'. This world of diversity contrasted sharply with the 'One', the incomposite Father in complete unity and simplicity.<sup>7</sup> Although qualified in other ways by Origen, the Greek doctrine of the supreme Undivided One took on a life of its own, and in the hands of Arius it finally detached the Logos altogether from the Father, from the One, the Eternal and Simple. The road from apologist to heretic was paved with Greek intentions. Yet the various Christian systems contained much that was distinctively Christian and weighty enough to restrain entrenched Platonism.<sup>8</sup>

It took the sharp edge of the Arian debate to arouse a Trinitarianism more uncomfortably aware of philosophy's problematic elements. Athanasius, the chief defender of the Son's divine status against Arian thought, disrupted the church's experiment with Middle Platonist ideas. For him,

the notion of an intermediary spanning the gulf between unutterable being and multiple, restless creatures determined too much the identity of the Logos. For Athanasius, the demands of the Christian doctrine of redemption furnished the best guide to who the Logos really was: nothing less than divine being. In his early years Athanasius fought in particular for the *homoousios* ('same-essence' with the Father) of the Son, the same formula adopted by the Council of Nicea (AD 325). The Son's share in the Father's divine reality or being was for Athanasius the only safeguard of the Christian faith. Equally, for this same shielding of God's saving work in history, he came to assert also the *homoousios* of the Spirit, the one through whom the Logos brings life and sanctification.

But that was not the end of the influence of Platonism upon Christian thinkers. It was merely the end of an era, of a particular proneness and vulnerability at a key pressure point. Heavy residual Greek philosophy persisted in Trinitarian writing but less unquestioningly. Views vary on the degree of mental independence from Platonism's dictates in the fourth century. J. P. Mackey finds the great fourth-century defenders of Trinitarian orthodoxy, the Cappadocean Fathers (Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzen), firmly embedded in the Neoplatonist mindset. He considers that Gregory of Nyssa's habit of speaking of a mystical ascent to knowledge of the unknown through intermediaries suggests reliance upon a scheme of emanations which is now the property of the Arians.<sup>9</sup> Certainly these Greek theologians espoused a *mystical* notion of philosophy as a vocation. That is, it was 'a way of life',<sup>10</sup> a way upwards by enlightenment, towards the knowledge of the incomprehensible God. This approach has enjoyed a long life in the mystical traditions of both Eastern and Western Christianity but peaked for Western *Trinitarian* theology in the work of Augustine. Almost all scholarship is agreed that Neoplatonism with its mystical, contemplative quest towards the One as well as its positive view of human potentiality animated Augustine. The general Neoplatonic scheme of *One, Mind and Soul* promoted well Augustine's favoured 'psychological' model of the Trinity, based on an individual's 'psychology' or experience of *Memory, Understanding and Will*.

Yet Gregory of Nyssa was a product of the Athanasian *homoousios* tradition, whilst the Platonist scheme rested on a plurality of *ousiai* or 'essences' as its first axiom. The ascent for Gregory, therefore, was not through realms and hierarchies of *being*, but through stages of perception and renewal.<sup>11</sup> A gulf remains 'between the self-existent Trinity and all its creatures'.<sup>12</sup> J. M. Rist says of Gregory's great contemporary, Basil, that there 'is not a trace of the influence of Neoplatonic speculation in that area of Trinitarian theology from which the Council [of Nicea] had excluded Platonism forever'.<sup>13</sup> That was just it. The decision of Nicea for the Son's identity as *homoousios* with the Father had removed the main shaft of the Platonist view of reality in the Christian context. Some of the machinery kept spinning, notably the pursuit of *gnosis*, of divine knowledge through progressive enlightenment, because it was still congenial to the Christian vocation of the NT. But a new de-Platonized core of Trinitarianism was in place.

The impact of Greek religious thought upon the doctrine of the Trinity receives varied assessment. A. Harnack, in his

famous *What is Christianity?* (ET 1901), even dismissed the whole patristic development of Christian thought as 'Hellenization', an alien distortion of the pristine Christian faith. More recent assessments have been less sweeping. J. P. Mackey highlights more selectively the 'divine ineffability, the true extent of divine immutability, divine creative activity and its suggested intermediaries, responsive human *eros* and the distinct *hypostaseis* which can be described in its return to the One, the source of all. . . .'<sup>14</sup> We have seen that all of these indeed supplied, at various stages, a womb and nourishment for the embryonic Trinitarian dogma. They do not, however, explain the persistence of Trinitarian thought through several centuries and different stages of Platonism. This springs from a stubborn conviction of the divine status of the Son and the efficacy of the Holy Spirit which the church detected in the NT tradition.

G. W. H. Lampe has claimed that classic Trinitarianism came to birth by a process of moulding the Logos of Middle Platonism into the shape of the personal and divine Son of God present only in a developed form of Christian thought.<sup>15</sup> However, the vigour of the Trinitarian idea through all the phases of philosophical fashion suggests a more basic drive. Moreover, his case encounters a further problem in the *increase* of Trinitarian speculation after Nicea. The march of the Niceans weakened Middle Platonist preoccupation with the Logos as a secondary order of being, yet in fact strengthened the Trinitarian doctrine that is supposed by Lampe to rest upon it.

#### Divine immutability

In the background of early Christianity there lurked an assumption possibly more subversive to Christian distinctiveness than all the baits offered by Platonism to Trinitarian development. It was the cardinal Platonist doctrine that underlay them, the notion of God's unchangeableness and its twin, the *impassibility* of God. For Platonists of every shade, and there were many, God was free of 'feelings', for these admitted change and pointed to inferiority and corruptibility.<sup>16</sup> The reluctance of Justin to give names and attributes to God and the apophatic way of talking about God tended to yield only a list of 'in's' and 'imm's': incorruptible, incomprehensible, immutable, immobile, immaterial . . . *impassible*.

It is often assumed that Christian writers absorbed all of these uncritically and without a struggle, a quite natural conclusion in the light of Clement's identifying of the Platonist God with the biblical God. But there were enough points of tension to generate contradictions in the Christian writers so that they could never be wholly comfortable with such an unbiblical idea as a God, for instance, who did not act in the world. Impassibility, however, had its own particular plus values, a few of which remain with us today. Even in modern British culture we find admiration for the person who is 'cool'. In ancient thought passions not only pointed to changeableness, and therefore mortality, but also to vulnerability. It was not altogether unsound or inconsistent with the Bible to recognize in God a potency and sufficiency which, by shielding him from vulnerability, guaranteed him and his strength to the believer. The Psalms are full of such confidence, and undoubtedly the early Christians admitted *impassibility* (*apatheia*) into their vocabulary with an unconsciously constructive instinct.

Yet from time to time other convictions came to expression. Although Origen had spoken approvingly of God's impassibility, he also came to speak of the same 'impassible' God suffering with compassion, and even ascribed emotions to the Father on account of the Son's suffering and the displayed passibility of the Son in the incarnation.<sup>17</sup> It was, in fact, the question of the incarnation which exposed the problems which would be entailed for Christian belief in a comprehensively immobile God.

### The incarnation

The central mystery of Christian faith was always the person of Jesus himself. Belief in the incarnation formed a strategic scene of tension between the NT tradition and the Greek atmosphere into which it was born. Systematized Gnosticism, early in the second century, took to a rigorous conclusion the Platonist assurance that the One stood apart from the Many, the Unchanged from the Changeable, the Incorruptible from the Corruptible. For many Gnostics the physical identity of Jesus only seemed (Greek *dokein*, hence 'docetic') normal. Christ was sent from the heavenly, the divine, sphere and therefore could not possibly unite himself to a material form since all material reality was intrinsically evil. True incarnation was impossible and all the physical traits and activities of Jesus were just an elaborate illusion to make possible the revelation of secret knowledge which Jesus brought.

The second-century apologist Irenaeus launched a comprehensive assault upon Gnostic views from which they never really recovered, though it was necessary later in the century for Tertullian to repeat some of these arguments. Tertullian also tackled a variant strain of Platonic doceticism in the work of Marcion and in doing so wrote the first really trenchant defence of the true humanity of Christ. Marcion's dualism took a leaf out of the Gnostic book, dumping the creator (demi-urge) in with the intrinsic evil of creation itself. For Marcion, Christ came from much further out, from the good God challenging the OT's vengeful creator as much as he challenged the demonic world. It is important to recognize that although the soil and roots of these species of thought are Platonist, we are really dealing with mutants. These are hardly respectable representatives of the chief forms of Middle Platonism. When Tertullian attacked Plato he was really pouring scorn upon something that passed for a Platonist school. Yet it is true that the threat to belief in the real humanity of Jesus stemmed from that unbridgable abyss fixed, for Platonist thinking, between two spheres. Even the One could not cross it. True incarnation was therefore unthinkable. Tertullian, himself probably the product of a standard Platonist education, drew from the NT 'rule of faith' a counter-revolution in Christology: assertion of a full, fleshly, ensouled Logos.

As in the question of the Trinity, fundamental Christian conviction somehow proved tenacious in the face of potential philosophical subversion. The Christian mind instinctively knew to defend the real entrance of God into the human dilemma. It knew Christ as both Lord and brother in untainted solidarity with human beings. The idea of salvation-via-incarnation finally became non-negotiable in the famous maxim of Athanasius (*De Incarnatione* 54, but echoing a sentiment in Irenaeus): 'he became human that we might become divine' (in the sense of united to the divine).

However, the Greek way of thinking showed persistence too. Origen, for instance, took on board the Platonist recognition of pre-existent soul as a mediating element in its dualism, since the soul partook of both the 'intelligible' sphere (as rational), and of the 'sensible' sphere (as being involved in motion, which belonged to change and corruption). A startling formula for the divine-human Christ became possible: pre-existence extended to the humanity (the soul) as well as the deity (the eternally begotten Son) in a perfect fusion. This solution to the problem of Christ's dual identity was both brilliant and dangerous, for although it compelled Platonist thinking to serve Christian thought, it also marginalized the humanity of Jesus as a mortal physical and emotional life in this world. It designed a unity of natures in Christ detachable from real physical incarnation. Origen espoused the idea of redemption through Christ's role as bringer of knowledge and revelation. For him the *historical* Christ, a time-conditioned form, was to be relativized when at last the eternal truth became known.<sup>18</sup>

Origen's idiosyncrasies passed away quickly but what remained was a muted recognition of the full incarnated life of the eternal Logos in this world, a hallmark of Platonist instinct. Great names have fallen under suspicion on this score. Foremost amongst these must be Athanasius.

Most patristic scholars agree that even if Athanasius reserved a place in his Christology for the features normally attributed to the human soul, yet the soul as a distinct unit carried no weight-bearing load for the work of salvation in his theology. In the tradition of his predecessors in Alexandria, he seemed rather to have placed the Logos alone at the centre of the saving programme. In every sense the divine Logos was the answer to the human dilemma. In Platonic thinking the Logos and the world-soul 'participated' in both the ideal supra-sensible sphere and the concrete material world. In the other direction, the features of the concrete material world equally 'participated' in, or drew from, original 'Forms' or patterns. So in Athanasian thought, it was all up to the Logos as one participating both in the divine sphere and the human sphere (both the *individual* manhood and the *pattern* of humanity) to correct and purify rogue human nature. The Logos undertook that mission even to death as the defeat of death. None but a divine Logos could possibly see the programme to its end. A tension appears in the work of Athanasius. On the one hand he seems docetic, bypassing human consciousness and experience since the Logos is the subject of Christ's life, and on the other hand recognizing real suffering and death which he located exclusively in the agency of human experience. A now familiar picture takes shape in which the Platonist ethos finds itself in uneasy company with a NT tradition which will not go away.

The rivals of the Alexandrian tradition in a school of thought centred on Antioch protected the deity and impassibility of the Son by balancing on the edge of a dualism between 'the God' and 'the Man' in Christ. But in fact the old Middle Platonist view was approaching extinction in the Christian camp. Nicea had proved more critical and decisive for it than appeared at the time. Fierce disagreements divided the schools of Antioch and Alexandria, the former stressing the completeness and integrity of both the human and divine in Christ, the latter straining after ways of placing the saving Logos at the centre of Christ's experiences as the unifying



focus of them. Yet both sides were committed to the principle of incarnation, untrammelled by prejudices about the appropriateness of a divine Logos in intimate contact with an unruly world.

### Verdicts

This brief review of early Christian thought in its philosophical setting has been very selective and we could have found other sparks from the Platonist fire warming the hearths of Christian theology. The chief points of interest, however, do concern God's relation to the world, the incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity. Here, we have seen that compatibilities between Judaeo-Christian principles and Greek theology eased the process of Christianization of thought and even supplied a conceptuality through which Christians could argue their concerns. To this degree they owed a debt to the Hellenistic world. We have seen also that it took time, and ultimately the Nicean crisis, for the areas of conflict to spill out to view. During this time there was a real possibility that some Christians would surrender the new and challenging in Christian belief to the established and the familiar, or at least modify or assimilate the new to the old. What prevented this was the critical centrality of those NT beliefs to Christian identity and to the special salvation idea.

As a generalization, the 'subversion' theory of Harnack survives today mainly in very modified forms, though in specific matters the verdict, bold in its day, still attracts many. Did the Christians in fact abandon a pristine simple messianic faith by stages until something unrecognizable as the original emerged? Or was it rather that they simply took over terminology and commandeered it for new concepts? Certainly in Christian hands the Greek terms, not all derived from a philosophical vocabulary, acquired new applications and novel uses.<sup>19</sup> The distinguished patristic scholar, Heinrich Dörrie, felt that Christian thought only ever took over peripheral material from Platonism such as language and literary form.<sup>20</sup> E. P. Meijering, however, a specialist in early Christian interaction with Platonism, believed that the relationship was not so superficial. Platonism lived in the heads and the hearts of the early thinkers.<sup>21</sup> C. J. de Vogel offers a third and sound way. According to him, early Christians felt an affinity with much in Platonism and received its teachings sympathetically but not uncritically. But on the matter of the progress of dogma, he is confident that 'Christian doctrine developed according to its own intrinsic laws', since the core of Christian faith was alien to Platonism and it was Christian *faith*, based not on enlightened human reflection but upon revelation in Christ.<sup>22</sup>

### Philosophy and Christian faith today

Philosophy today only partly resembles the discipline that the patristic writers knew. Some of the agenda remains the same, such as examining exactly what we mean by 'knowledge' (epistemology) and 'self-consciousness', finding categories in which to express new ideas, analysing conceptuality. Some have argued that the only appropriate field left to philosophers is this last one, the rigorous enquiry into what any statement actually means, indeed its claim even to be meaningful, without concluding some factual addition to the body of human knowledge. Philosophy fell prey to this emasculation because of the modern growth of the sciences

which transferred to themselves fields previously the territory of philosophers. Cosmology is an obvious example, anthropology another. What Christian thinkers need to mark now are some underlying assumptions of major schools. It is easy to make concessions, for instance, to G. W. F. Hegel's principle of the absolute dynamic of all reality, and surrender all ground for the self-consistency of God and the real identity of ourselves. Whilst Hegel has lost ground with the philosophers, he enjoys, through the work of German theologians, a formidable revival in theology. Equally, some have taken on board Kant's boxing-up of all knowledge into the knowledge of the material world along with the regular conditions for experiencing it. For Kant the subject of 'God' falls into the category of the unknowable metaphysical world. All talk of God, therefore, even that based upon the claim of revelation in Christ, is so indirect as to provide no grounds for faith. It is existentialism, however, which has been the most fertile field of philosophico-Christian synthesis, perhaps because it appeals to individual decision, a feature of early Christian preaching. Its influence has reached into all fields of Christian theology, the biblical as well as the dogmatic.

Do such hazards mean that no constructive relationship between theology and philosophy is possible? It may help to observe at least three possible dominant tendencies. *The first tendency* is that of conscious, radical, full-blooded espousal of a known philosophical framework. A good modern example here is process theology, whose distinguished British exponent, Professor W. N. Pittenger, has openly admitted his commitment to the process philosophy of A. N. Whitehead, and has argued for a full abandonment of the traditional frameworks to accommodate the new. Pittenger's claim is that everyone has some such commitment overtly or covertly.<sup>23</sup> There is, however, a vast difference between adapting philosophy to a Christian application and un-bending allegiance to a comprehensive philosophical system. *The second tendency* is simply an unconscious adoption of some distinctive assumptions current in philosophical thought. Such, as we have seen, were many of the early Christian writers, and such are most of us today, taking the tinge of modern secularism and individualism (even existentialism) into our Christian conceptuality. Like the early writers, we would benefit from critical analysis of our thought on this score. Some, no doubt, have even seen in evangelical fashion, devotion, communication and public worship, unacknowledged debts to other thought-systems, such as those where spontaneity, autonomy and individualism assume key positions. *The third tendency* is a kind of restrained synthesis where a theologian's sympathies for a particular philosopher live in uneasy tension with more traditional convictions. A fine example of this tension is Karl Rahner, whose devotion to Heidegger surfaces in both method and content but finally has to compromise with a strong traditional Roman Catholicism.

The challenge facing us is that of sympathetic but critical interaction with modern philosophies, whilst ultimately relying wholly upon none. This practice has a long tradition and even marks the Reformed theologians of the nineteenth century. The degree of indebtedness to philosophical writings varied, but it is doubtful if there have been any important theologians, even in very conservative quarters, who escaped it altogether. The exercise can still be fruitful for those skilled enough to tackle it, so long as they recognize at



the outset that Christian revelation asks, as host, any philosophy to take the shape of Scripture, observe its codes, honour its purpose, glorify its Christ. The interaction requires that in the process of critical encounter, philosophical method will yield, at the crunch, to a 'biblicizing' of itself. Hesitation here betrays prior allegiance to a philosophy already posturing to rule, not to serve, the NT content. To be sure, critical analysis and fresh conceptuality can discipline our biblical and theological work. They can raise our perceptions. They can supply a rigorous test of our authenticity, our clarity and our integrity. But ultimately, to displace the Bible's own frameworks and tests is to abuse the hospitality of the host. In our thinking as well as our doing none of us can serve two masters.

<sup>1</sup> C. J. de Vogel, 'Platonism and Christianity: A Mere Antagonism or a Profound Common Ground?', in *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985), pp. 1-62, 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1975), p. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> For a full survey, J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. 80 BC to AD 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> John M. Rist, 'Basil's "Neo-Platonism": Its Background and Nature', in Paul J. Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), pp. 137-220.

<sup>5</sup> H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: University Press, 1985), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> See J. W. Trigg, *Origen: the Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (London: SCM, 1983), pp. 97-98. See also E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1955), p. 39. Prof. Frances Young summarizes well the same trend appearing in the Origenist Eusebius of Caesarea, in *From Nicaea to Chalcedon. A guide to the literature and its background* (London: SCM, 1983), p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> See the comment of R. Grant, *Gods and the One God. Christian Theology in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: SPCK, 1986), p. 109: 'The Logos doctrine does not necessarily exhaust the theological ideas of any of the apologists.' Also J. W. Trigg, *op. cit.*, p. 15: 'The Logos theology for all its popularity in Origen's time was transitional. The Church ultimately rejected it because it limited Christ's dignity.'

<sup>9</sup> J. P. Mackey, *The Christian Experience of the Trinity* (London: SCM, 1983), pp. 148-149, 152.

<sup>10</sup> F. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> I. P. Sheldon-Williams, 'The Greek Christian Platonist Tradition from the Cappadocians To Maximus and Eriugena', in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), pp. 444-445.

<sup>12</sup> F. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>13</sup> John M. Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> *The Christian Experience of the Trinity*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>15</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, *God As Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), pp. 120-134.

<sup>16</sup> Mackey, *op. cit.*, p. 112, thinks it possible that Aristotle, as heir to, and modifier of, Plato, may have been more responsible than Plato himself for the impassibility doctrine.

<sup>17</sup> R. Grant, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-93, who points us to *De Principiis II, Commentary on Matthew* and the *Homilies*. Grant, interestingly, explains the tension by Origen's discovery of Ignatius who in his Roman letter speaks of the 'passion of my God'.

<sup>18</sup> T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith. The Evangelical theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1988), p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> See the standard introduction to this subject: G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1975), *passim* but especially p. xiv; G. L. Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies* (Leicester: IVP, 1984), pp. 83-91, particularly p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> H. Dörrie, *Platonica minora* (Munich, 1976), pp. 508-523, cited by de Vogel, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> E. P. Meijering, 'Wie Platonisierten Christen', *Vigiliae Christianae* 28 (1974), pp. 15-28.

<sup>22</sup> C. J. de Vogel, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-31.

<sup>23</sup> W. N. Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered* (London: SCM), p. 87 (cf. p. 104).

## Evangelicals and spirituality

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'Spirituality' has recently become a subject much talked about by evangelicals. Many evangelical theological colleges now offer courses in spirituality; evangelicals are seeking out spiritual directors, and going on guided retreats; and most Christian bookshops have a section on spirituality. Many evangelicals will know what to expect from books on the subject. They will often emphasize Catholic and Orthodox, rather than Reformed, traditions of prayer; they may well recommend techniques of prayer that stress a quietist, mystical element. They may give the impression that the way to intimacy with God lies in abandoning conscious effort and intellectual endeavour, and learning instead a way of responsive relaxation. And they will offer guidance on many other disciplines besides that of prayer: meditation, visualization, contemplation, fasting, and a personal rule of life.

It is important to realize from the beginning that the use of the word spirituality to refer to certain specialized techniques

and approaches to the devotional life would not have meant anything to Christians of the NT church, or indeed of the church of any era until the later Middle Ages. 'The earliest known use of the Latin word *spiritualitas* remains very close to what St Paul meant by "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*): Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are meant to be "spiritual" in the sense that they are meant to be "led by the Spirit" and to "live by the Spirit".'

Spirituality in its original sense is therefore for all Christians of every age, temperament and theology; in its modern usage, spirituality includes teaching on special types of devotion which appeal mainly to one group within the church, and which are certainly not necessary means of grace for all Christians.

However, having acknowledged that this latter use of the word is unbiblical and can be misleading, this article will use the term 'spirituality' principally in its modern, technical sense. 'Spirituality' in this sense is of great interest to many evangelicals. Is this because of a genuine hunger for God, and

a desire to go deeper into different ways of praying and listening to God than the traditional 'quiet time' taught? Or does part of the interest come from a dissatisfaction with the biblical, reformed faith, and a hankering after what is novel, strange, and gives a pleasing sense of belonging to a spiritual elite? Evangelicals have become divided on the issue, with some rejecting the whole subject as unbiblical, and others, uncritically perhaps, trying every new technique with enthusiasm. This article will try to assess what, if anything, may be of value to evangelicals in this particular tradition of spirituality.

### How does God speak?

The central issue is our understanding of the way that God speaks to us. Broadly speaking, there are two different ways of seeing this, one or other of which is implicit in books on spirituality. The more mystical (and perhaps the prevalent approach today) is to try to listen to God's voice primarily through an inward light, or direct prompting of the Spirit: such an approach will put most stress on clearing aside any distractions, or even the barrier of our rational minds, so that we can be open to God's still, small voice within. Evangelicals, however, are committed to the understanding that God has spoken uniquely and most clearly through his Son Jesus Christ, and through the Scriptures that bear witness to him. Far from setting aside or bypassing our rational minds, we must therefore use all our mental faculties and our understanding to study Scripture, and listen to God's voice in it. We certainly cannot hear God without the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating our minds, but he will normally do this by enabling us to understand the truths taught by Scripture, and applying them to our lives. Our first responsibility is to use every aid given us to study the Bible (including commentaries, sermons and devotional literature), and to seek the principles of interpretation which the Bible itself gives us.

Most evangelicals would agree on this central principle of special revelation, but recently some have questioned whether this way of listening to God is completely adequate. They have asked if evangelicals, by stressing rational understanding of Scripture so much, have not cut themselves off from other ways in which God speaks to us. Can he not use direct, inward promptings; the beauty of the natural world; visions and dreams; tongues and prophecies; or private messages from Scripture, unrelated to the original context and meaning?

A short answer is that of course God can use all these ways, and can reveal himself to us in any way that he chooses (including the mouth of a donkey, Nu. 22:21-23). Scripture itself gives examples of God giving such direct promptings: Nehemiah 2:12; Acts 16:7; 21:11; 1 Corinthians 14; 2 Corinthians 2:13. Evangelicals, however, should beware of too quickly abandoning the surest and clearest way in which God promises to speak to us (through Scripture) in favour of secondary ways, which he has not promised to all people at all times: such ways are 'extraordinary, exceptional and anomalous'.<sup>2</sup> They are certainly not more spiritual than the hard work of applying ourselves to interpret Scripture, and they are not therefore to be sought in the same way.

Nevertheless, evangelicals have something to learn here from Christian writers of other traditions of spirituality. Evan-

gelicals have rightly stressed the use of the mind in listening to God, but sadly they have not always realized that God's words must penetrate more deeply than the mind, to affect conscience, heart and will as well. The result has been a generation of evangelicals with a good knowledge of Christian doctrine, but with a shallowness in spirituality, and little realization of the depth of fellowship and intimacy with himself to which God calls us. The purpose of Bible reading is not finally to increase our intellectual understanding, but to bring us into a living encounter with Jesus Christ; such a meeting cannot leave us unchanged, but will expose our sin and spiritual poverty, and show the way to a transformation of our lives and witness.

That is one reason why evangelicals are turning to books on spirituality (many from Catholic or Orthodox traditions). They want to learn to meditate on Scripture, to dwell on and chew over God's words, so that they do penetrate from mind to heart. J. I. Packer has said: 'Meditation is a lost art today. Christian people suffer grievously from their ignorance of the practice'.<sup>3</sup> We need to learn again how to bridge the gulf between intellectual understanding and heart-warming devotion.

### The use of techniques

Several books on spirituality recommend various techniques for quieting the mind in preparation for meditation and prayer. These usually include concentrating on various bodily sensations; listening to all the sounds that can be heard; and fixing the attention on breathing, being aware of air as it goes in and out of the nostrils. The aim of such exercises is to deal with the problem of mental and outward distractions that plague most Christians when they try to pray. It is an impossible and fruitless task to try to *empty* the mind of distracting thoughts; the better approach is therefore to *fill* it with neutral or pleasant stimuli (such as an awareness of sounds and bodily sensations). Through these means, it is said, the mind can be quieted so that it is ready to hear the still, small voice of God.

It is obvious that this approach has much in common with the techniques of Eastern meditation. However, Eastern and Christian meditation are radically different in their aims. Eastern meditation tries to quieten the mind, and experience a mystical consciousness. Christian meditation does not try to bypass the mind, and its aim is not an altered state of consciousness, but to hear the voice of God. This comes to us, not simply from within, but from Scripture interpreted by the Holy Spirit.

There are dangers in a book like *Sadhana*, by Anthony de Mello,<sup>4</sup> which contains advice on several such techniques. Although Anthony de Mello does draw attention to some dangers, he seems sometimes to suggest that such techniques are themselves a way to intimacy with God. However, if such techniques have any value at all, it must be recognized that it is only a limited one. It is dangerous to confuse them with prayer: at best, they can be only a preparation for prayer.

There is therefore a danger in such techniques if they become a substitute for Christian meditation and prayer, rather than a preparation for it; and they may also be dangerous for people who have come to Christ out of a background in Yoga or Eastern mysticism, and still feel its

attraction. In that case, the kind of approach suggested by Peter Toon in *Meditating upon God's Word* (pp. 30-31) may well be preferable. He advises that the most important preparation we can make is to spend time consciously recalling God's presence, and remembering what we are by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Richard Foster comments wisely: 'Personally, I have very little interest in technique, but a great deal of interest in helping people come into relationship with God. Specific suggestions are helpful only to the extent that they bring us more fully into relationship so that we behold the "glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).'<sup>5</sup>

But I should certainly not rule out the use of exercises in concentration by all Christians, as long as the aim which Richard Foster describes is kept firmly in mind. We all need to find a way of dealing with the problem of distractions that make prayer difficult, and these techniques suggest one way. The exercise of concentrating on sounds for a period of twenty minutes is in itself neutral, and may sometimes be helpful, particularly at those times when our minds are full of the events and anxieties of a busy day.<sup>6</sup> If at such times we attempt to rush into Bible reading and prayer without proper preparation, we may well be discouraged by finding that the thoughts that fill our minds make concentration impossible.

While we may hesitate about the wisdom of using particular techniques, we should not lose sight of the important truths that those who advocate such techniques are stressing: the value of solitude and of silence. We see the stress that Jesus himself placed on solitude and silence in his invitation to the apostles: 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest' (Mk. 6:31). This plan was almost immediately foiled by the crowd, and Jesus made himself available to them in compassion for their needs (v. 34). But it is very interesting to notice that Jesus did not let the needs of the crowd and of the apostles frustrate his own need for communion in solitude with his Father. At the end of the day, he dismissed them all, and went up the mountain-side alone to pray (v. 46). The prayer of *unavailability* is a necessary part of spiritual discipline.

We cannot of course, simply by learning to use solitude and silence, force God to reveal himself to us. On the other hand, if we habitually neglect solitude and silence, if we are always surrounded by people and noise, we must not be surprised if eventually we make ourselves deaf to God's voice when it does come to us. And solitude and silence are not natural to us; everything in our culture militates against them. They therefore have to be learned, and given a deliberate priority in our lives. This is perhaps especially true for evangelicals, who by temperament and conviction often over-stress activity.

More than that, we have to realize that it is not only because of the pressures of secular society that we fear silence; it is also because of our unacknowledged fear of what we may hear in the silence — the legion of repressed fears, feelings of guilt and inadequacy that have to be faced before we can hear God speaking to us in the midst of them. Most of us need help in this area, and even if we decide not to use particular techniques, we need to find our own way of seeking the solitude and silence that may be the occasion of God's speaking to us.<sup>7</sup>

### Imaginative contemplation

A book that has recently had a great deal of influence is *God of Surprises* by Gerard Hughes.<sup>8</sup> Its aim is to make accessible to the modern reader a classic work on spirituality which most Christians would otherwise find quite impossible to read: the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola. In this book, the evangelical will find recommended a way of using Scripture which will probably seem quite strange to him. This is 'imaginative' or 'Ignatian' contemplation, in which the reader takes a scene from one of the gospels, and uses his imagination to relive it, as if it were taking place before his eyes, and he were an actual participant in it. Gerard Hughes gives a brief example of this, using the healing of the demoniac in Mark 5:1-20 (p. 39), and a much fuller example using the parable of the prodigal son (pp. 79-83). Anthony de Mello gives an equally full example in *Sadhana*, with the story of the healing of the paralysed man in John 5 (pp. 80-82).

This approach to Scripture raises problems for many evangelicals. It may seem quite unreal to them to try to see themselves at a time and place where in fact they were not actually present. And they also ask if to use this method is not to break the second commandment, which prohibits the making of images (mental as well as physical) in our worship of God.

In assessing these objections, it is as well to remember that our imaginative faculties were given to us by God, and that we cannot help using them to some degree as we read Scripture. The images come unbidden to our minds as we read descriptions of scenes as vivid as the feeding of the five thousand, or the stilling of the storm. Furthermore, the Bible itself seems actually to encourage us to use our imaginations: why otherwise would it include such vivid picture books as the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, and why did Jesus use parables as his main form of teaching?

We must therefore recognize that, while there are genuine dangers in undisciplined use of the imagination, the answer lies not in trying to abandon the imagination, but in making sure that it is controlled by and subject to our rational minds. Christian meditation differs from non-Christian 'not in the absence of the intuitive, but in the presence of the rational'.<sup>9</sup> Practically, this means that we will avoid *beginning* a study of Scripture with the imagination. First of all, we need to study Scripture with all the faculties of the rational mind and memory, using biblical principles of interpretation and all the help we need from commentaries. It will then be quite safe (and necessary) to let the impact of the passage sink deeper, from mind to heart, and the use of the imagination is one way of allowing this to happen. 'The imagination is not to be feared: it is to be welcomed and used, but used in service of the intellect and memory, not as their master.'<sup>10</sup> The danger of image-making, or idolatry, is avoided if the objective truth of Scripture controls the imagination, rather than vice versa.

The use of this particular kind of imaginative contemplation is not of course mandatory for all Christians: it is not a 'necessary means of grace', and some will find it more beneficial than others. But all Christians should want to pursue the aim towards which Ignatian contemplation is directed, even if they prefer to use another method to get there. And that is that reading Scripture becomes not simply an intellectual exercise, but an occasion for a personal encounter between the reader and Jesus Christ. 'We must

move back and forth until we have identified ourselves with the many people who surround Jesus. For as long as we fail to recognize *ourselves* in these people, we fail to recognize the *Lord*. . . . The best thing to do is always to take up your position at exactly the same point where one of the persons who meet him or appear in his parables stands; to stand, for example, where John is in prison addressing doubting questions to him, or the Canaanite woman, who desires nothing of him but the crumbs that fall from the Lord's table, or the rich young ruler, who will not forsake the god Mammon and so goes away unblessed.<sup>11</sup>

### Meditation<sup>12</sup>

Another way of using Scripture that may seem strange to evangelicals is the kind of meditation that forms part of the 'Benedictine' method of prayer. In this, the Christian first reads a passage of Scripture, until he alights upon a particular verse or phrase which seems to come to him out of the passage with special force. This is the verse he chooses to meditate on; that is, he begins to murmur the words persistently over and over again (either mentally or aloud) until, through constant repetition, they sink deep into his heart. This period of meditation leads in time to a response to God in prayer.<sup>13</sup>

André Louf says this is *meditatio* — 'not meditation, that is consideration or reflection in our more rational sense of the word, but in the primitive sense of a constant repetition, a persistent murmuring of the same words'.<sup>14</sup> A metaphor which was often used in the Middle Ages to describe this kind of meditation comes from the word *ruminari* — a *chewing* of the word. It suggests the picture of sleepy cows incessantly chewing the cud. So we too are encouraged to chew the Word, patiently engrossed upon it until it becomes part of our very being.<sup>15</sup>

To some evangelicals, this may seem suspiciously close to the Hindu or Buddhist use of a mantra — an incantation which the worshipper repeats continuously until he achieves an altered state of consciousness through the repetition. But the key issue once again is the use of the mind. For the Hindu or Buddhist worshipper, the meaning of the words is not crucial: it may not even be known to the worshipper, and it is the very act of repetition, rather than comprehension with the rational mind, which induces the altered state of consciousness. Anthony de Mello (who has been heavily influenced by Hinduism) comes close to suggesting the same thing: 'What is important, however, is that you keep repeating these words (even if you do so mentally) and reduce your reflection on their meaning to a bare minimum'.<sup>16</sup>

But the wiser writers on spirituality stress that it is of the utmost importance not to abandon the use of the conscious intellect. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh says that the attitude of the Christian during meditation and prayer is something different from either activity (working very hard to bring God down to where we are) or passivity (sitting doing nothing at all). It is more like the vigilance of a soldier standing guard at night: 'in a way he is inactive because he stands and does nothing; on the other hand, it is intense activity, because he is alert and completely recollected. He listens, he watches with heightened perception, ready for anything.'<sup>17</sup>

This seems to me to be a very good way to describe the attitude to aim at during meditation.

The Christian will not try to empty his mind. Instead, he will murmur the words again and again with complete mental alertness, waiting to see how the Holy Spirit will apply them particularly to himself. It may be that people or events, or feelings of guilt, anxiety or longing in himself will come into his mind, and he will be given the insight to see how the words of Scripture apply very directly to them.

It is interesting to compare the Orthodox use of the 'Jesus Prayer' ('Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me, a sinner'), which the Orthodox are encouraged to carry with them through the day, murmuring the words repeatedly and as often as they can. The meaning of the words is crucial: it is because they sum up the gospel itself that the Orthodox Christian is taught to concentrate on what they say, and to go deeper and deeper into the truth they teach.<sup>18</sup>

This is very different from the complete passivity of the Buddhist. On the other hand, it also challenges a weakness in some evangelical spirituality. Evangelicals have rightly stressed that we must bring to our Bible reading and prayer all our self-discipline, our intellectual abilities, our watchfulness and energy. But the corresponding danger in this is obvious: we may forget that when we have done our utmost, and prayed with all the knowledge and force of which we are capable, our prayers and our attempts at intimacy with God are perfectly useless unless God himself chooses to come to us. In this respect, we need to learn from Catholic and Orthodox writers (as well as from Paul himself: Rom. 8:26) that true prayer begins when we come to the end of our best efforts, and admit our helplessness to the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

### A personal spirituality

What, then, should be the evangelical response to the modern interest in spirituality? My belief is that it should be one of qualified welcome. It is as foolish to dismiss it all as a perversion of the gospel, or a manifestation of the New Age movement,<sup>20</sup> as it is to accept all that it teaches uncritically.

It is very important for every evangelical Christian to work out for himself a personal spirituality: a discipline of Bible reading and prayer which will be for him the best approach to God. What will such a personal spirituality look like?

First of all, it will be *evangelical*. That means that it will take very seriously the doctrines of sin and human depravity, and the need for conversion. The great weakness of most modern Catholic books on spirituality is that they show hardly any awareness of these doctrines. The evangelical, on the other hand, will come with great humility and self-suspicion to listen to God. He will put much stress on the doctrine of revelation, and, rather than rely on any inner light or voice within, will trust in Scripture interpreted by the Holy Spirit.

The evangelical will therefore not neglect books on spirituality by contemporary evangelical writers. When asked (at the Evangelical Ministry Assembly at St Helen's, Bishopsgate, in 1986) to recommend modern authors on spirituality, J. I. Packer put first the works of Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones, second, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* by Richard Lovelace,<sup>21</sup> and (some way behind), the books of Richard Foster. To these, I should add the books of J. I. Packer.

himself (particularly *Knowing God*). Dr Packer has also written a very instructive description of the contrasting evangelical and Catholic approaches to prayer in the chapter he contributed to *My Path of Prayer*.<sup>22</sup>

Richard Foster has a very deep knowledge of spiritual disciplines of different ages and traditions, and he is perhaps the most accessible evangelical writer on the subject. There is much that is helpful in his books, but they need to be read with discernment and caution; occasionally (perhaps because of his Quaker background) he recommends exercises which are at best eccentric and at worst positively dangerous. An example is the meditation in which he encourages you, among other things, to 'allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body'.<sup>23</sup> This seems dangerously close to the occult experience of astral projection. It is at any rate not what Paul means by 'a spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44), or being 'caught up into the third heaven' (2 Cor. 12:2).

Secondly, a personal spirituality will be *catholic*. Evangelicals, while affirming that their own tradition of spirituality is a good and true tradition, will also acknowledge the poverty of modern evangelicalism in this area. They will not therefore claim a monopoly of the truth, but will look to other ages and other traditions to enrich their own spiritual life.

'Exercise the charity,' Alexander Whyte exhorted, 'that rejoices in the truth' wherever it is found, and however unfamiliar may be its garb. 'The true Catholic, as his name implies, is the well-read, the open-minded, the hospitable-hearted, the spiritually-exercised Evangelical; for he belongs to all sects, and all sects belong to him.'<sup>24</sup>

This implies, first of all, that the modern evangelical will not restrict his reading to modern works. He will make sure that he becomes acquainted with evangelical classics of previous centuries, such as *The Confessions of St Augustine*; *Religious Affections*, by Jonathan Edwards; *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* by Richard Baxter; the letters of Samuel Rutherford; *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan; *A Lifting Up for the Downcast* by William Bridge; or the Journals of John Wesley and George Whitefield.

It is very likely that, as he reads these great works by evangelicals of the past, he will be surprised to find techniques taught in them that he had supposed to be of modern or Eastern origin. Much of contemporary evangelical suspicion of spirituality is due to the fact that we have lost contact with the spiritual heritage of the past. Our ignorance of the devotional aids thought important by our spiritual forefathers means that we are often needlessly suspicious of teaching that they would have regarded as self-evident. Modern evangelicals are the children of an over-rational age, and need to test the limitations of their spiritual practice by returning both to the Scriptures and to the ancient masters of spirituality.<sup>25</sup>

He may also want to learn something of the stress on solitude, silence and receptivity in modern Catholic and Orthodox books, which redress the balance against an over-emphasis on activism in evangelical works. Good authors to begin with are Gerard Hughes, Henri Nouwen, André Louf, Jean Vanier, Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh; and Thomas Green.

Jean Vanier, who has founded 'L'Arche' communities for the mentally handicapped all over the world, is outstanding as a writer who shows that true Christian spirituality is not a retreat from the world, but the source of power for service in it. He has profound insights to give on community life, the ministry of the weak to the strong, and on the basic human need for intimacy, fruitfulness and joy.<sup>26</sup> He deserves to be read by all evangelicals. Henri Nouwen has been much influenced by Jean Vanier: he reveals his debt to him in his book *In the House of the Lord*, and he gives wise teaching on our relationship to ourselves, to others, and to God in *Reaching Out*.<sup>27</sup>

Another author worth reading is Thomas Green. *When the Well Runs Dry* is based on the spirituality of Teresa of Avila, and is exceptionally helpful for understanding spiritual dryness as a necessary and positive part of Christian growth.<sup>28</sup> A minor classic (and the best antidote to activism that I know of) is *The Stature of Waiting* by W. H. Vanstone.<sup>29</sup>

It will also be a *personal* spirituality. The wise Christian will realize that the spiritual life is a matter, not only of theology, but of character, temperament and background as well. What is a right discipline for other Christians may be quite wrong for him. It is therefore important for him to read widely and to test different approaches to the spiritual life to find out what is best for him.

Finally, it will be a *flexible* spirituality. A rule of life which works well at one time may eventually become stale and need to be abandoned. Or a spiritual discipline which is appropriate for the undergraduate with a relatively free pattern of life will probably be very inappropriate when that undergraduate becomes a working wife and mother. Too many Christians labour under a false sense of guilt because they find themselves unable to sustain a rule of life that in fact is no longer possible for them.

It is therefore important that in this area we are not independent or self-reliant. We all need help from others whom we can trust to give us objective, honest help, whether to challenge us when we are lazy, or to encourage us when we are conscious of weakness and failure. It is a good development that evangelicals are now much more open to looking for a spiritual director (an older, wiser Christian who will give help in the spiritual life), to joining a group which will together try out and assess different spiritual exercises, and to going on guided retreats.

If we are willing to be guided, disciplined and taught by others about the spiritual life, we shall be safeguarded from the dangers of a spirituality that can easily become selfish, narcissistic and introverted, and we shall be led to a deeper intimacy with God. And when we meet the living God, we will very often find that the result is not the inner peace, stillness and calm for which so many long. Instead, it is that we are disturbed, challenged and uprooted from our complacency, to go out again into the world. Perhaps that is the surest mark of a genuine spirituality.

<sup>1</sup> Simon Tugwell O.P., *Ways of Imperfection* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> J. I. Packer, *Hot Tub Religion* (Tyndale House, 1987), p. 126. (Published in Britain by IVP under the title *Laid-back Religion*.)

<sup>3</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), p. 20; see also Peter Toon, *From Mind to Heart* (Baker Book House, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Anthony de Mello, *Sadhana* (Image Books, 1984). See especially pp. 28-36.

<sup>5</sup> Interview in *Christianity Today* Vol. 31, No. 13, 18 September 1987, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones recommends listening to the music of Mozart as a means of relaxing the mind before sermon preparation. This is a similar use of a neutral technique. (D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1971; Zondervan, 1972, p. 183.)

<sup>7</sup> See Sister Margaret Magdalen CSMV, *Jesus, Man of Prayer* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), pp. 39-57; Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (Collins, Fount Paperbacks, 1980), pp. 25, 60.

<sup>8</sup> Gerard Hughes, *God of Surprises* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> Ed Clowney (quoted by James Sire in interview in *Christianity Today* Vol. 31, No. 13, 18 September 1987, p. 18).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Toon, *Meditating Upon God's Word* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988), p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *The Waiting Father* (James Clarke, 1968), p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Meditation involves much more than is described in this section. The best introduction to the subject is given in two books by Peter Toon: *Meditating upon God's Word* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988) and *From Mind to Heart* (Baker Book House, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> Anthony de Mello, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-111.

<sup>14</sup> André Louf, *Teach us to Pray* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974), p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47. See also Sister Margaret Magdalen CSMV, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>16</sup> *Sadhana*, p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, 'Living Prayer', in *The Essence of Prayer* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), pp. 91-92.

<sup>18</sup> Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, 'School for Prayer', in *The Essence of Prayer*, pp. 154-165. See also Henri Nouwen, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-136.

<sup>19</sup> For a very wise discussion of this point, and its implications for the use of techniques in prayer, see André Louf, *Teach us to Pray*, pp. 86-91.

<sup>20</sup> This is what Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon come close to doing in a book which gives important cautions, but is extreme in seeing modern spirituality as part of the great Apostasy: *The Seduction of Christianity* (Harvest House Publishers, 1985).

<sup>21</sup> Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Paternoster Press, 1979).

<sup>22</sup> David Hanes (ed.), *My Path of Prayer* (Henry E. Walter, 1981). Dr Packer describes there how much he owes to a spiritual classic by P. T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer* (now unfortunately out of print).

<sup>23</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by J. M. Houston in his appendix, 'A Guide to Devotional Reading', to an edition of *Religious Affections* by Jonathan Edwards (Multnomah Press, 1984).

<sup>25</sup> C. S. Lewis wrote: 'It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between' (*God in the Dock*, quoted by James Houston, *op. cit.*).

<sup>26</sup> Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979); *Man and Women He Made Them* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Henri Nouwen, *In the House of the Lord* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986); *Reaching Out* (see n. 7).

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Green, *When the Well Runs Dry* (Ave Maria Press, 1979).

<sup>29</sup> W. H. Vanstone, *The Stature of Waiting* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982).

## Survey of NT articles 1988 and 1989

David Wenham

Of the writing of theological articles there seems no end! The following are just some that struck this reviewer's eye. First, two relating to NT Christology: in *JTS* 39 (1988), pp. 28-47, James Barr challenges a widely held opinion when he shows that "Abbā isn't "Daddy"; Abba is correctly translated by Mark and Paul as 'Father', being an adult word (though used by children as well). In *NovT* XXXI (89), pp. 125-141, Joel Marcus looks at 'Mark 14:61: "Are you the Messiah-Son-of-God?"', arguing that the double term is a 'claim to commensurability with God' (not simply a claim to Messiahship), hence the charge of blasphemy against Jesus.

The impact of E. P. Sanders' book *Jesus and Judaism* is evident in several articles. Sanders argued that the so-called cleansing of the temple of Jesus was not a cleansing, but an acted parable portraying the destruction of the temple and the end of the sacrificial system. This view is criticized by Craig A. Evans in *CBQ* 51 (1989), pp. 237-270, 'Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction'; Evans suggests that there was plenty to cleanse in the temple, and says, 'I cannot help but wonder if in his attempt to portray Judaism in a more positive light, Sanders has not lost sight of the possibility that there were things which Jesus . . . strongly condemned.' Sanders makes a lot in his book of Jesus' relationship to sinners, arguing (among other things) that repentance was not important in Jesus' teaching. Bruce Chilton in *TynB* 39 (1988), pp. 1-18, 'Jesus and the Repentance of E. P. Sanders', takes him to task on this and other points.

Other interesting articles on the synoptic gospels include a major study by Chrys Caragounis on 'Kingdom of God, Son of man, and Jesus' Self-Understanding', *TynB* 40 (1989), pp. 3-23, 223-238, and an examination by Raymond Brown of 'The Burial of Jesus (Mark 15:42-47)', *CBQ* 50 (1988), pp. 233-245; Brown's reflections on Roman and Jewish burial practices and about Joseph of Arimathea's role in Jesus' burial are of considerable interest, even if some of his conclusions about the gospel traditions are unnecessarily sceptical.

Johannine studies have been dominated for some while by the approach of scholars such as J. L. Martyn and W. Meeks, who see John's gospel as having been written in the aftermath of the Council of Jamnia (about AD 85) when, it is suggested, the Christians were finally expelled from the synagogue. Meeks detects a defensive sectarianism in John's gospel, for example in John 3, where the Jewish teacher Nicodemus is portrayed as failing to understand the truth. W. C. Grese in his article "Unless One is Born Again": The Use of a Heavenly Journey in John 3', *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 677-693, questions this reading of John 3, seeing it rather as revealing 'how outsiders can become members of the community, able to understand the enigmatic message of the gospel'. This view would fit in with the undoubted missionary interest of the fourth gospel: compare 3:16 with 20:21. Charles H. Cosgrove in 'The Place where Jesus is: Allusions to Baptism and the Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 35 (1989),

pp. 503-511, is cautious about the Jamnian theory – wisely, in view of John Robinson’s potent critique of the theory in *The Priority of John* – but agrees that the gospel was written against a background of sharp conflict between Jews and Christians, and argues that baptism and eucharist are referred to in John 3 (‘water and the Spirit’) and John 6 (‘flesh and blood’), because some people wanted to be secret disciples – like Nicodemus – and not to associate with the public worship of the church. This view may be reading too much into the texts, but it is good to be reminded that the sacraments had a bigger role in the early church – as an expression of faith not as a supplement to it – than they do in many modern churches: becoming a Christian was not just an inward decision, but also an outward confession (through baptism; cf. Rom. 10:9).

Another intriguing and almost persuasive recent article on John’s gospel and also the Johannine epistles is Martin C. De Boer’s ‘Jesus the Baptizer: 1 John 5:5-8 and the Gospel of John’, *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 87-106. The author takes a fresh look at the question of the secessionist party referred to in 1 John, and suggests that they believed that Jesus was a baptizer – in water and the Spirit – and that he was Son of God; but they failed to take seriously his death – ‘the blood’ – and their continuing need for cleansing from sin. Another article to note is Ruth Edwards’ ‘Χάρις ἀντι Χάριτας (John 1:16): Grace and the Law in the Johannine Prologue’, *JSNT* 32 (1988), pp. 3-15, in which the author persuasively argues for the translation ‘grace in place of grace’, showing that the author of John saw Moses in a positive light.

Paul’s attitude to the law is examined helpfully by K. Snodgrass in ‘Spheres of Influence. A possible solution to the problem of Paul and the Law’, *JSNT* 32 (1988), pp. 93-113. The law functions negatively in the sphere of sin, positively in the sphere of Christ and the Spirit. For another more general article on tensions in Paul’s thought see J. C. Beker’s ‘Paul’s Theology: Consistent or Inconsistent?’ in *NTS* 34 (1988), pp. 364-377, arguing for coherence and contingency in Paul’s writings, for example in Romans. J. A. Ziesler in ‘The role of the tenth commandment in Romans 7’, *JSNT* 33 (1988), pp. 41-56, sees the prohibition ‘You shall not covet’ as the key to Paul’s argument about the law’s failure in Romans 7; whereas the non-Christian may keep other demands of the law perfectly, this ‘just requirement’ can only be done in the Spirit’s power. Thomas R. Schreiner, ‘The Abolition and Fulfilment of the Law in Paul’, *JSNT* 35 (1989), pp. 47-74, seeks to explain how Paul’s emphasis on Christian freedom from the law can be reconciled with his teaching on Christian fulfilment of the law. Perhaps the most helpful recent book on this subject is Stephen Westerholm’s excellent *Israel’s Law and the Church’s Faith: Paul and his recent interpreters* (Eerdmans, 1988); Schreiner argues that Westerholm (in an earlier article) underestimates the importance of commandments for Paul, and claims that Paul understands freedom from the law as (a) liberation from the Mosaic covenant with its particularly Jewish rituals that divide Jew and Gentile, and (b) liberation from the power of sin which used the OT law as a bridgehead. Schreiner argues for the formerly fashionable but now unfashionable view that Paul distinguishes between the ritual and moral law, the latter having continuing validity for Christians.

Paul’s attitude to women continues to worry scholars. J. Murphy O’Connor writes on ‘1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Once

Again’ in *CBQ* 50 (1988), pp. 265-274, and reiterates his view that *kephalē* (1 Cor. 11:3) means ‘source’ (not ‘head’ in the sense of authority) and that Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 is talking about length of hair (not veils or hats) – in opposition to men who were growing their hair long. However, O’Connor’s view of *kephalē*, which has been widely endorsed by other scholars, is seriously questioned by the notable Joseph Fitzmyer, who argues on the basis of Greek usage in the Septuagint (e.g. Is. 7:8-9), Philo and Josephus that ‘a Hellenistic Jewish writer such as Paul of Tarsus could well have intended that *Κεφαλή* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 be understood as “head” in the sense of authority or supremacy over someone else’. (Another recent article by Professor Fitzmyer is a reconstructed Aramaic original of Philippians 2:6-11, offered in *CBQ* 50 (1988), pp. 470-483.) Paul Barnett in ‘Wives and Women’s Ministry (1 Timothy 2:11-15)’, *EQ* LXI (1989), pp. 225-237, says that Paul’s putting of some limitations on women’s ministry is not because he considers women incapable of the offices concerned, but because of his concern about ‘what effect this incumbency would have on marriages within the church and indeed on the value of the mothering role’. Also related to the Timothy passage is a computer-aided look at the verb *authentēō* by L. Wishire in *NTS* 34 (1988), pp. 120-134.

NT ethics continues to attract attention. Reginald Fuller looks at ‘The Decalogue in the New Testament’ in an edition of *Interpretation* devoted to the Decalogue (XLIII (1989), pp. 243-256), and comments: ‘In the permissive society of today, a society in which vice is so often paraded as virtue and where the sense of moral obligation is feeble, it is time for the church to bring back the Decalogue into its liturgy and catechesis’. Pauline ethics in particular are discussed by Michael Parsons, ‘Being Preceded Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul’s Writing’ (*EQ* LX, 1988, pp. 99-127), and J. F. Kilner, ‘A Pauline Approach to Ethical Decision-Making’, *Int* XLIII (1989), pp. 366-379; Kilner speaks of Pauline ethics being ‘God-centred, reality-bounded, and love-impelled’. The divorce issue is touched on by M. N. A. Bockmuehl in ‘Matthew 5:32; 19:9 in the light of pre-rabbinic halakhah’, *NTS* 35 (1989), pp. 291-295; he makes the ingenious suggestion that the Matthean ‘except’ phrases were added to stop anyone arguing that Jesus’ teaching about the indissoluble nature of marriage meant that immorality could not harm the marriage relationship. Still on sexual ethics, D. F. Wright’s ‘Homosexuality: The Relevance of the Bible’, *EQ* LXI (1989), pp. 291-300, criticizes those who have tried to mute the Bible’s condemnation of homosexual acts; on Paul he comments, ‘I find it quite inconceivable . . . that he could have countenanced any model of same-sex genital relationship’.

We could go on and on – to mention Richard Bauckham’s attempt in his ‘Pseudo-Apostolic Letters’, *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 469-494, to derive criteria from Jewish and post-apostolic pseudonymous works which will help us to consider supposed NT pseudepigrapha, or Ralph Martin’s return to the subject of ‘Patterns of Worship in New Testament Churches’ in a volume of *JSNT* dedicated to the Sheffield scholar David Hill (37 (1989), pp. 59-85), or the whole issue of *Interpretation* (vol. XLVIII/2) devoted to evangelical hermeneutics, including an article entitled ‘All Israel will be saved’ on Christians and Jews by Donald Bloesch. But, leaving many good things unmentioned, we must conclude.

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Thurmer, John	The Son in the Bible and the Church	Howard Bigg	14.3
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Tuckett, Christopher	Reading the New Testament	Robert Willoughby	13.3
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Vardy, Peter	God of our Fathers? Do We Know What We Believe?	Tony Lane	13.3
Vaught, Carl G.	The Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Interpretation	David J. Falk	15.1
Verhey, Allen	The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament	Richard Higginson	11.1 ✓
Verhoef, P. A.	The Books of Haggai and Malachi	E. C. Lucas	13.3 ✓
Viladesau, Richard	Answering for Faith: Christ and the human search for salvation	Richard Sturch	14.3
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Wells, David F.	God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to faith	Christopher Hingley	14.3 ✓
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Wenham, David (ed.)	Gospel Perspectives – volume 5: The Jesus Tradition outside the Gospels	William G. Morrice	11.3
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Williamson, H. G. M.	Ezra, Nehemiah	Philip King	12.3 ✓
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# Book reviews

W. H. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19* (Word Biblical Commentary vol 28; Waco: Word, 1986), xlii + 321 pp., n.p. [The review editor apologizes for the late appearance of this review due to the original assignee defaulting.]

It is a matter of regret that the publishers have issued this volume in this form. Brownlee died before completing the work and it has been edited into the Word format by Drs L. Allen and G. Keown. The Introduction is Brownlee's article on Ezekiel from the second volume of the revised *ISBE*. But this merely highlights part of the problem — Brownlee's article was deemed to be sufficiently idiosyncratic, not least in its avowal of a Palestinian provenance for the book of Ezekiel, that the *ISBE* editors appended a balancing article by W. S. LaSor! No mention of this is made in the present volume, and of course the balancing article isn't here. A no less serious problem centres on the freedom with which Brownlee emends the traditional Hebrew text. One can scarcely quarrel with a responsible critique of the Massoretic Text on the basis of a thoroughgoing comparative study of it with the ancient versions. But the emendations here are on a highly subjectivist basis and far too often on alleged grounds of metre. Even if such wholesale emendation may be justified in some circumstances, it ought to be out of court in a series designed for, among others, 'seminary students and working ministers'. But it is doubtful if anyone lacking Hebrew and a thorough grounding in textual criticism will profit much. Of course there are good things in this commentary, but if you need a reliable commentary on Ezekiel, this volume will not satisfy that need.

David G. Deboys

P. D. Miller, Jr., P. D. Hanson, S. D. McBride, *Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), xxviii + 672 pp.

In many ways this is a model of what a *Festschrift* ought to be: a significant contribution to a defined subject area. Because of its size there is a breadth of coverage which makes this a unique volume. Split into two sections ('Sources and Contexts' and 'History and Character'), there is everything in the smaller first section from a consideration of 'The Origins of the Sacrificial Cult: New Evidence from Mesopotamia and Israel' by W. W. Hallo to surveys of the contribution of onomastic, epigraphic and seal evidence in reconstructing the religion of Old Israel by McCarter, Tigay and Avigad. In section two the nineteen essays include ones on the Abraham Narratives by G. Mendenhall, the Monarchy by J. J. M. Roberts, 'Liberation from Debt Slavery' by K. Baltzer, Josiah's reform by N. Lohfink, and 'The Place of the Covenant' by R. A. Oden. 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus' is not ignored, Phyllis Bird's essay being an appetizer for a monograph in preparation. The whole is capped by a provocative concluding essay, 'Tanakh theology: The Religion of the Old Testament and the place of Jewish Biblical Theology' by M. H. Goshen-Gottstein.

It goes without saying that not all contributions carry equal authority. D. N. Freedman's assertion that Genesis 49:25, 'blessings of breast and womb', 'must be a designation or title for a divine being, one also associated with El the Father God' and likely refers to 'the great Mother Goddess, the consort of El' (p. 324) ought to rank as a copybook example of eisegesis. Let the reader beware!

David G. Deboys

Michael Jacobs, *Faith or Fear: A Reader in Pastoral Counselling* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), 166 pp., £4.95.

One of the fastest growing areas in the world of Christian literature is that of pastoral care. Apart from a spate of books dealing with specific

issues we have recently seen the publication of *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care* and it seemed inevitable that someone would soon publish a 'Readers Digest'. Who better to do this than Michael Jacobs, lecturer in the Department of Adult Education in the University of Leicester and author of one of the best modern introductions to pastoral counselling: *Still Small Voice*. The author asked forty people engaged in pastoral work to send suggestions for a Reader in Pastoral Care. There was little overlap, thus indicating the difficult problems of choice. In the end the author opted for his own 'top ten' and although they may not be your choice they do at least introduce us to a wide spectrum of literature on the subject. Each of the thirty-seven authors ranging from Freud to Fowler is introduced by Jacobs.

The general title of the book addresses the question 'Is religious faith a defence against the tragedies of life or is it a healthy transcending attitude to a troubled world?' This theme is developed in different ways in the six sections of the book: The tradition; The psychological critique of faith and religion; The validation of religion and faith; The nature of pastoral ministry; Faith and personality; The critique of pastoral counselling.

We are challenged to look closely at the church's involvement in pastoral care and to ask along with H. W. Mowrer, 'Has the church sold itself for a mess of psychological pottage?' Is pastoral care the sole province of the ordained minister? Is theology the Cinderella of pastoral care? Should we not pay more attention to the world in which the client lives? Are not social issues as important as personal problems? Are not some forms of Christian education the cause of rather than the answer to man's predicament?

Perhaps the real test of any 'Reader' is that it not only reminds you of classic passages read long ago, of familiar friends, but it encourages you to reach out for authors unknown before or just mere names and begin to read them with profit. I believe this book will do just that.

Jack Ramsbottom, London Bible College

Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987) (English translation of *Psychologische Aspekte paulinischer Theologie*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), xiv + 433 pp., £19.95.

The breathtaking achievements of Professor Gerd Theissen of Heidelberg continue with this extraordinarily complex and fascinating book. Married to a psychologist, Theissen has, he tells us, been steadily exploring different approaches to the subject and ways of applying them to religious texts and phenomena, and this book is the result, taking five Pauline texts (in one case, a group of texts) as his starting points. Just as Theissen braved the scorn of the academic community with his *The Shadow of the Galilean* — and, in my judgment, got away with it — so he is well aware that he is doing the same thing here, treading where angels (and most others) have feared to enter.

But Theissen has again got away with it. Not that his theories, either in general or in particular, necessarily carry full conviction. Rather, he has attempted an astounding integration of two highly complex and difficult wholes, and the attempt itself compels admiration. If, in the end, we conclude that he has shot a rocket at the moon and fallen short, we are nevertheless grateful that the rocket was even fired, none like it having been seen before, and particularly for the brightly coloured stars that exploded from it as it went. Something like this needed doing: if anything, it needs doing still, at far more length, perhaps in a periodical and monograph series over a couple of decades; and anyone addressing the area will need to be phenomenally learned to better Theissen. The fact that the book prompts these reflections shows how high it must be rated. I read it alongside half-a-dozen other works of NT studies which I was also reviewing: they all appeared pale and thin beside this solid, thorough, robust piece of work, like (at best) cucumber sandwiches beside a substantial steak.

What is Theissen trying to do? Psychological exegesis: that is, seeking 'to describe and explain, as far as possible, human behaviour and experience in ancient Christianity' (p. 1). Starting with potentially 'favourable' sources, one can make deductions about the nature of early Christian experience, stated in psychological terms, or about the texts themselves as 'psychic acts' (this is not the only place where the translator might have had second thoughts, opting perhaps for 'psychological acts': but the task cannot have been easy). He begins, therefore, with the premises of 'a hermeneutically oriented psychology', as a framework within which various models are to be employed; this is the framework that enables the transfer to take place between the modern interpreter and the ancient text. He then sets out, in thirty-four packed pages, the three models he will use: Learning Theory (as known, for instance, in the work of Behaviourists), the Psychodynamic approach (Freud and Jung in particular), and the Cognitive approach. (If these subjects are foreign to readers of *Themelios*, they might perhaps do what I did: make a little map of the theories for quick reference later on in the book. Knowledge of them is not presupposed in what follows here!) Theissen then discusses the issues raised by integrating the three models within a hermeneutical scheme.

This brings him to the main part of the book, in which he takes various texts and applies the methods to them. First, however, in each case he subjects the texts to thorough and rigorous analysis in terms of its own line of thought and the traditions it embodies or reflects. This methodological rigour is impressive and satisfying even where one disagrees — as I often do — with the conclusions. Theissen has made every effort to avoid the problem of simply bouncing psychological theory off the texts without paying serious attention to what they are actually about at all sorts of other levels. When, in each instance, he comes to the psychological analysis, he brings the three models to the text and explores their possibilities one by one. He concludes the book with a brief epilogue discussing the effects of Paul's preaching in transforming behaviour and experience.

I have already suggested that the book has succeeded in one of its most fundamental aims — that of raising the questions of a psychological hermeneutic of Paul in a way that cannot be dismissed or marginalized. Does it succeed in its more detailed proposals?

I have to say, with some sorrow, that I find it unconvincing. I do not think the task is in principle wrong-headed or that it could never be done with the hope of accurate results: but I do not think that Theissen has yet achieved such results.

In the first place, there are bound to be serious questions of method. The strength of the book lies partly in the wide-ranging use of different psychological methods. But what are we to say of a method that then makes a virtue of playing all the methods through one after the other with each text, so that we not only have Freud and Jung side by side, each offering insights from his own perspective, but the two of them keeping company with those who, in real life, are still bitterly opposed to their whole enterprise? Theissen has done with the psychologists what John Hick did with religions: despite what they think, they are all simply different paths up the same mountain. It would, of course, be far riskier to opt for only one model or sub-model: Theissen's method keeps options open, and means that if we dislike, say, behaviourism we will not need to reject the book at once. But another option might have been to try out the different models and then to argue that one of them was in this case hermeneutically more appropriate. This would correspond to the practice of many psychotherapists and others who use different models and methods electively in sensitive response to particular different needs. It would also raise the question of controls and criteria: what counts as hermeneutically more appropriate? To this question Theissen suggests no answer.

Still at the level of method, I found myself wondering whether the title of the book should have referred, not to Pauline theology, but to Pauline religion. What is under investigation is, for the most part, the religious experience witnessed to or seen in the texts, not the theological argument or thought-patterns of individual letters or of Paul as a whole. And this reflection makes one realize that, if early Christian religion is the actual subject of investigation, there are at least five different things that we might be talking about: (a) the psychology of Paul himself; (b) what Paul himself said about the areas we call 'psychology'; (c) what was going on, psychologically speaking, when Paul wrote this or that letter, or the letters in general, to churches; (d) the

psychology of early Christians as a whole; and (e) what Paul said or thought about the psychology of early Christians as a whole or in particular cases. We could even let these interact interestingly on one another.

When we make such distinctions certain things, I believe, become clear. First, Theissen is in danger of sliding from one category to another. Second, we are only anywhere near *terra firma* when discussing (b) and (e). It is hard enough to be certain of one's analysis when talking to a co-operative client one knows well with whom one shares a cultural background and who can be quizzed on points of doubt. If we think it at all easy to do (a), (c) and (d) it may well be because, as C. S. Lewis said in another context, those who could blow the whistle are dead.

Theissen chooses a set of fascinating passages as the basis for the main section of the book. He begins with 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Romans 2:16 and 1 Corinthians 14:20-25, all of which speak of the secrets of the heart. He treats these, as he treats all the chosen passages, from three points of view: text analysis, tradition analysis, and psychological analysis. The first two in each case tend naturally to be less controversial: in these areas, Theissen is more or less a normal modern post-Bultmannian German reader of Paul. In the third case, he arrives after a long discussion at the bracing conclusion about the inner workings of Paul's life-world that the 'inner dialogue' which all humans hold with themselves has been transformed through 'a new central reference person', i.e. Christ.

He then moves on to 'The Veil of Moses and the Unconscious Aspects of the Law', a study of 2 Corinthians 3. Here the (to my mind) weakness in a post-Bultmannian reading of the text gets in the way rather more, since I do not think that in this chapter Paul is primarily contrasting himself, or Christ, with Moses: it is, rather, his hearers who are contrasted with Moses' hearers. (See my article in the Memorial volume for George B. Caird.) It is true that Paul does have a different view of Moses from that which he had in his pre-Christian days, and this now has, no doubt, deep resonances within Paul's own heart. But Theissen has read out of his own tradition, not out of the text, the idea that Paul's view of Moses is now deeply negative, and he cannot see (for reasons that, as he himself might well wryly admit, could themselves be subject to interesting socio-psychological investigation) that what Paul has done is rather to integrate the position he always held about Moses — that God's glory was revealed through him — with a fuller, but not contradictory, Christian position. This means that when we come to the psychological analysis I want to make all sorts of other moves to Theissen, who mainly sees the law as a punishing superego now overcome, or the system of law as producing a cognitive dissonance now surmounted. Nevertheless, the conclusion remains, I think, valid, as interpretation if not as exegesis: 'It is true of all Christians that as long as they have not integrated both their Jewish and Gentile heritage, they are not yet transformed into the image of God. As long as they are not, a veil still lies on their hearts too' (p. 158).

A digression is inserted at this point, in the form of a long discussion, in similar print, of the other passage in Paul where the 'veil' plays an important role — 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. It contains much that is fascinating, much that is bewildering: not least the conclusion, which for some (though not Theissen) could become mercilessly reductionist, that Paul's statements here symbolize a defence against unconscious sexual impulses, in part heterosexual and in part homosexual. This might be part of the truth, but I do not think it is the whole truth, and Theissen's warning against too readily judging and condemning Paul 'from the perspective of an uninhibited modern sexual ethic' (p. 174) is not, it turns out, a warning against anachronism or against assuming that the modern western world is right and Paul wrong, but only a note that 1 Corinthians 11 is not Paul's last word on the subject.

We often come, with a sense of inevitability, to Romans 7. Here Theissen has a field-day, even by his own standards, and so on virtually every page out of the eighty-eight devoted to the chapter there are exclamations marks, ticks, question marks, and/or enthusiastic underlinings in my copy. It is impossible to summarize the plethora of rich insights and (in my view) misleading ideas here. I find myself very close to him, though, at certain key points: 'Philippians 3:4-6 [which is often played off against Romans 7] reflects the consciousness of the pre-Christian Paul, while Romans 7 depicts a conflict that was unconscious at the time, one of which Paul became conscious

only later' (p. 235). Equally, I find some of his suggestions close to absurdity (though such a charge is difficult to advance in this field): e.g. that Paul is repressing an earlier desire for the death of God (p. 248), or that a close parallel exists between Paul and Freud himself (p. 250 n. 50). However hard it will be for exegetes to integrate his insights into their work, they certainly should try – as is done to a quite limited extent in the recent commentaries of Dunn and Zeller, and somewhat more in that of Ziesler.

The last two sections of the book deal with glossolalia (arguing that it is the language of the unconscious, but language capable of becoming conscious; here there certainly is reductionism which any self-respecting charismatic should challenge), and wisdom as spoken of in 1 Corinthians 2 (a higher state of consciousness in which a previously unconscious content may now be reflected upon). Theissen concludes with an Epilogue, exploring briefly the ways in which Paul's preaching effects transformation in behaviour and experience.

Almost every book by Theissen is a *tour de force*, and this is clearly no exception. He puts us all enormously in his debt, both when we agree with him and when we find him frustrating or even opaque. He has wrestled hard with giants in so many fields, and has returned to display the spoils of often successful battles. He is not over-confident about the new methods he has explored so creatively: 'anyone who thinks that this religion can be illumined historically and factually without psychological reflection is just as much in error as one who pretends that everything about this religion can be said in this fashion' (p. 398, the closing sentence of the book). It is to be hoped that this challenge will be taken up by many other scholars with Theissen's breadth and subtlety of mind; though saying that prompts the reflection that there are not many NT scholars who come anywhere near this prodigy. Heidelberg is fortunate to have him. He, incidentally, is fortunate to have T. & T. Clark as his publisher: apart from a string of misprints, and a few stylistic oddities in the translation, the book is beautifully produced, with the sometimes substantial footnotes properly at the bottom of the page. All in all, this is a book that many will find forbidding, but that all serious students of Paul should get to know. Its resonances, one way or another, are going to be with us for some time to come.

N. T. Wright, Worcester College, Oxford.

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Donald K. McKim (ed.), **How Karl Barth Changed My Mind** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), xi + 186 pp., \$9.95.

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This book reminds me of the delicious veal and rice paprika that my wife cooks. In it (the book, that is) twenty-six 'distinguished contemporary theologians' allegedly write about 'how Karl Barth changed my mind'. I say allegedly because there is a considerable variety in the essays, with autobiography, anecdotes and theological analysis. The majority of the essays are not really about 'how Karl Barth changed my mind'. But no matter. This is one of the most fascinating books that I have read for some time – fascinating for the insights that it brings into both Karl Barth himself and the authors of the essays. Some of these are 'true [Barthian] believers' who have kept the faith. Others began as Barthians but have since moved on (e.g. Hendrikus Berkhof, Harvey Cox). Others acknowledge their debt to Barth without pretending ever to have been 'Barthians'. J. H. Yoder's essay is about 'how [Barth's] mind kept changing' – in a free church direction. Clark Pinnock provocatively shows how Barth has made him a better exponent of classical apologetics. And so on. All of these contributions are interesting and stimulating.

But what of the veal and rice paprika? The different essays remind me of the ingredients. Some of the essays contain solid theological meat. Most noteworthy is T. F. Torrance's 'My Interaction with Karl Barth', which is a sustained theological autobiography with special reference to Barth. As the title hints, he is perhaps the only contributor in a position to write about 'how I changed Karl Barth's mind'. This is the most substantial essay in the book. *Ontion* provides a sharp taste. This is found in those essays which are frankly critical of Barth. Some authors (such as Hendrikus Berkhof and Donald Bloesch) state clearly where and why they disagree with Barth, which is helpful. Perhaps the bravest author is Dietrich Ritschl, who is the

only one to recount anecdotes unfavourable to Barth and the only one openly critical of him as a person.

A number of the essays contain anecdotes about Barth and these provide a light touch to the book as well as being interesting. They may perhaps be compared to the *cream* topping of the dish. Among these, the essays of Barth's sons Markus and Christoph and his secretary Eberhard Busch are noteworthy. John Hesselink gives a full account of the 'reconciliation' between Barth and Brunner and his role in bringing them together. As the name of the dish implies, the *paprika* supplies an important spicy dimension. This title perhaps applies best to T. H. L. Parker's essay in which he shamelessly employs his literary skills to produce a most entertaining and amusing essay, which is by no means lacking in substance.

The *rice* is perhaps the heaviest and least interesting part of the dish. It would be invidious to single out any essays for this role and it should be stated that none of the essays lacks interest. The rice is made more tasty by the *sauce* produced out of stock and tomato paste. Leaving aside the question of which is the sauciest essay, the extra taste is supplied by some of the other noteworthy contributions. Among these may be mentioned the essays of Geoffrey Bromiley, the most important translator of Barth into English, and Michael Wyschogrod, the 'Jewish Barthian'.

The value of this book lies not least in its diversity. The editor *could* have insisted upon greater uniformity and produced a series of theological autobiographies or of anecdotal reminiscences or of theological assessments. As it is, each author has given what he or she (yes, there is one woman) has to offer and the result is a fascinating, readable and illuminating volume. It will mean little to the reader unfamiliar with Barth, but for those with at least a basic knowledge of him it is a book well worth reading.

Tony Lane

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Alan P. F. Sell, **Defending and Declaring the Faith: Some Scottish Examples 1860-1920** (Paternoster, 1987), 280 pp., £8.95.

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This book is a contribution to historical theology. Dr Sell takes a sixty-year period and analyses the way in which a select group of theologians grappled with the issues facing them, issues both theological and philosophical.

His 'sample' is a group of eight famous Scottish theologians. They are: John Kennedy of Dingwall (1819-84), Robert Flint (1838-1910), John Caird (1820-98), A. B. Bruce (1831-99), James Iverach (1839-1922), James Orr (1844-1913), D. W. Forrest (1856-1918), and James Denney (1856-1917).

The author chose those sixty years because they represent the period from Darwin to Barth. He chose the theologians on the basis of several criteria including the fact that they were all Presbyterians and that they were representative of many strands within the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, as well as the more obvious fact that they were all scholars of the first calibre.

The author's own summary is most helpful: 'We find that Kennedy, staunchly confessional, is in many ways a seventeenth-century man; Flint, though alive to the swirls of evolutionary thought, is often methodologically reminiscent of Butler. By contrast Caird is the pre-eminent example of a theologian who sought to express Christian truth in terms of the prevailing philosophical idealism. Iverach stands on the frontier between theology and science, and while learning from idealism, brings a dose of Scottish common sense to bear on it. Bruce and Orr pursue the apologetic path – the former more biblically, the latter more historically and dogmatically; and Forrest and Denney probe the christological and soteriological heart of the Christian faith.'

In assessing this book there are, perhaps, six comments we might make, the first three being positive and the next three being negative.

1. For anyone who wants to understand the period in question this book is indispensable. It is clear, and it is based on a wide acquaintance with the source material. The notes, and especially the bibliographical details in the notes, are worth a great deal to the student of the period.

2. Some of these writers are known for one or two aspects of their thinking. The way in which Dr Sell has given a rounded and composite picture of their scholarship is admirable. Many who, for example, know of Denney primarily through his doctrine of the cross will be interested to see how this related to other major aspects of his thinking.

3. Dr Sell's work is valuable in terms of method. This is to say, it teaches us to evaluate the work of theologians not purely in terms of their adherence to certain pre-determined schemes of thought (or Creeds and Confessions) but in terms of their intrinsic thought. In other words, to avoid analysis by 'label' and instead to examine the integrity and self-consistency of each author. This gives his work a depth which it would not otherwise have, albeit that we reserve the right to disagree with some of his conclusions.

4. It is a pity that the biographical introductions were not more fully detailed. The author rightly points out that his purpose was to give only sufficient information to 'earth' the thought of the writers, and no doubt the importance of the theological and philosophical issues left little space for this, but it would have made the volume far more useful to the reader who is less familiar with these scholars.

5. The treatment given to John Kennedy of Dingwall betrays a theological bias which is unparalleled in the treatment given to the other scholars, although the author's remarks about McLeod Campbell in his introduction, together with Prof. Torrance's preface, might have led us to expect as much.

6. The depth of detail entered into on the philosophical views of some of these men (particularly Caird) will make the book less helpful for students who themselves are not well versed in the language, literature and indeed history of philosophy.

Having made these positive and negative points it must be said in finishing that, while this book is important and worth reading, it is quite a 'heavy' book which requires considerable effort from the reader, and considerable time should be allocated if one is to get the best out of it.

A. T. B. McGowan, Aberdeen.

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Bernard McGinn (ed.), *Christian Spirituality 1: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1985; London: SCM, 1989), 502 pp., £17.50 pb.

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This volume is the sixteenth in a twenty-five volume series entitled 'World Spirituality', where each volume in the series can be read independently of the others. The series starts with primitive religious traditions, and works its way up to, and through, the higher religions, giving a detailed and authoritative picture of the types of spirituality which are characteristic of each of them. The presentation aims to be as objective as possible.

On the whole, it can be said that this aim has been achieved in this volume, which consists of nineteen different chapters, each of them written by a specialist in the field. Americans predominate, but there is a considerable input from France as well. This gives the reader the benefit of much research which is little-known in the English-speaking world, and students will find the articles on lesser-known writers and themes especially useful.

The book is divided into two distinct, and roughly equal, sections, the first dealing with people and movements, the second with themes and ideas. In the first section we are given brief but informative studies of the early Christians, of Gnosticism, of the main Fathers of the church, of monasticism, of the Pseudo-Dionysius, of the Gregorian reforms and of the religious situation in the twelfth century, which is the closing date for the volume as a whole. There is also a chapter on off-beat types of Christianity, notably the Syriac and the Celtic traditions, which are usefully summarized here.

The second section takes up various themes, particularly the main doctrines of the Trinity, Christology, Man and Grace, which shaped so much of the church's thinking in these centuries. There are also useful chapters on icons, prayer, virginity and the role of the laity, which is a subject too often ignored in works of this kind. Each chapter and sub-chapter is complete with notes and a good bibliography, pointing the reader to further studies of the theme in

question. At the end of the volume there is both a subject index and an index of names, which are indispensable for making links across the different chapters.

A book of this kind must of necessity be selective, and there is undoubtedly a bias in favour of the Eastern Orthodox tradition in this volume. No doubt that can be justified on the ground that it is a subject too little studied in the West, so that a book like this redresses the balance to some extent. However, the great casualty of this approach is Augustine, who is given fairly cursory treatment, in spite of his enormous influence. In particular, it seems incredible that there is no extended discussion of either his *Confessions* or of *The City of God*, when those two works have had more influence on Western spirituality than the whole of the Eastern tradition. Given the vast amount which has been written on Augustine in recent years, this is perhaps understandable, since information is readily available elsewhere, but it makes the omission even more regrettable in a work which tries to be comprehensive.

At the end of the day, it is hard not to think that Augustine figures less prominently than he ought because the editors of the volume (of the series?) are basically out of sympathy with his approach. Spirituality, understood as the human quest for the numinous, does not sit well with a radical doctrine of grace, in which God can only be known by self-revelation, and in which there is only one way to salvation. Nor does it agree with an approach which is rooted in experience rather than doctrine. In Christian faith, the two cannot be separated from each other, and the Augustinian tradition has always emphasized the primacy of the latter over the former. In this context, it is interesting to note that at the end of the chapter on Grace, the contributor remarks that although Augustine's philosophical theories about human nature faded from view later on, his radical understanding of St Paul's teaching imposed itself on the church as a whole.

Nevertheless, this book represents a great achievement of scholarship, which will be especially valuable for those who need to know something about areas of early Christianity which are not often in the mainstream of undergraduate courses. For this reason, this volume will establish its usefulness and hopefully lead to new avenues of exploration and research.

Gerald Bray, Oak Hill College.

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**John Calvin's Institutes; His Opus Magnum: Proceedings of the second South African Congress for Calvin Research, July 31-August 3, 1984 (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1986), iii + 528 pp., n.p.**

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This is a collection of twenty-three papers presented in 1984 in South Africa, all dealing basically with Calvin's *Institutes*. This review will concentrate on extensive analysis of only six of the papers.

Concerning the book as a whole, there is quite a bit of diversity of subjects covered and manners in which they are examined. For example, a popular paper was presented by B. J. Van der Walt on 'Women and marriage; in the Middle Ages, in Calvin and in our own time'. This topic was presented in a very readable manner, but wandered into a myriad of other sub-points such as clothing and fashion, idleness and gossip. The subject was also presented in the context of the Reformed Church of South Africa where women still do not have the right to vote in the congregation. It is an interesting paper, but quite different in content and quality in comparison with the other ones which will be examined subsequently. A significant problem with the volume is the high number of typographical errors; from consistent misspellings of Melancthon's name to assorted others. At times there are misprints on every page of the volume. The last general criticism is that although all the papers are printed in English, the quality of translation is variable.

Wilhelm Neuser and Brian Armstrong tackle the general subject of the development and analysis of the *Institutes*. Neuser rightly characterizes the *Institutio* as a summary of the biblical gospel in a handbook (p. 35). He also maintains that there is more continuity between the 1536 and 1559 *Institutes* than discontinuity (p. 41). As he traces the development of the *Institutio* from 1536 he notes

particularly that in 1543 there is more reflection of religious discussion against Rome and an increased acquaintance with Patristics. In 1559 there are some important re-arrangements and expansions: the third use of the law comes to the fore, analysis of Servetus and Osiander is included, and new evidence is given concerning the trustworthiness of Scripture.

Armstrong offers a fascinating analysis of the nature and structure of Calvin's thought. He contends that Calvin scholars who have maintained that the key to understanding Calvin is observing the dialectical motif in his structure as well as stressing his piety have set the proper course. It is Armstrong's own claim that there are always 'two poles, two aspects, two dialectical and conflicting elements in each theological topic which [Calvin] discusses' (p. 56). Furthermore, he alleges that Calvin should not be seen as a professional theologian writing formal theology and that if Calvin is freed from that mould he can be more properly analysed. Finally, he asserts that 'an indispensable element in understanding the structure of [Calvin's] theology is the conditional or hypothetical motif which one finds throughout his writings, including the *Institutes*' (p. 77).

Willem Van't Spijker presented two papers at the conference, one on the influences of Bucer on Calvin and another on the influences of Luther. Fritz Büsser presented one on the influences of the Zürich theology upon Calvin. For this review we will combine the three papers to look at influences on Calvin.

Beginning with Van't Spijker, Luther's influence on the 1536 *Institutes* is underlined (pp. 88-91) and themes taken by Calvin from Luther are presented. Nevertheless, Van't Spijker sensitively relates the differences between the two theologians, centering in Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the integration of that doctrine throughout Calvin's theology. Concerning Bucer, Van't Spijker demonstrates Bucerian influence in at least three issues: the exposition of the Lord's prayer (p. 109), election, and the power of the keys of the church. Van't Spijker pointed out earlier that a main difference between Calvin and Luther is found in pneumatology; it is precisely in comparison with pneumatology that Calvin and Bucer are so similar (p. 116).

That Bucer was a strong influence in Calvin's life is not a matter of debate. That pneumatology is one of the main pillars of Bucer's theology, as pointed out earlier by Neuser and underlined by Van't Spijker, is also not hotly debated. The similarities in their theology are striking: their pneumatology has a 'christological colour', their joint call to a holy life is clear, the similarity in their teaching on Word and Spirit is obvious, and their similar treatment of the relationship between justification and sanctification is also apparent. Van't Spijker summarizes his findings most clearly: 'Thus Calvinism owes its [sic] most characteristic traits to Bucer' (p. 132).

Fritz Büsser pursues the theme of the theology of Zürich in the *Institutes*. His very clear findings establish: that Zwingli's concept of religion was formative in Calvin's 1536 *Institutes*, that Bullinger strongly influenced Calvin's doctrine of the covenant, that Zwingli provided the framework for Calvin's conception of magistracy, law and obedience and that lastly, Zürich provided ammunition in Calvin's fight with Rome. This ably argued thesis provides clear insight into how Calvin's theology can be comprehended, both in its similarity to and differences from the Zürich theology; a very important contribution to Calvin studies.

In conclusion, the papers of this conference have made significant advances in Calvin studies and should be strongly recommended to the reformed theological community.

**Richard C. Gamble**, Director, the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and Associated Professor of Historical Theology, Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids.

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**William L. Craig, *The Only Wise God: the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 157 pp., \$7.95.**

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Today's evangelical students are justifiably perplexed over the issue of divine foreknowledge. Christian tradition and the Bible itself seem to affirm clearly that all future events are known to God, whereas

such eminent contemporary Christian philosophers as R. Swinburne and K. Ward are denying it and even an evangelical spokesman of the calibre of C. Pinnoch has openly agreed with this negative view. Undoubtedly the shift of thinking comes in the wake of process thought which stresses both divine temporality and human creativity and freedom. Given these two beliefs, divine foreknowledge is jeopardized for two major reasons. Firstly, there seems to be no possible basis whereby a temporal being can know what does not yet exist, namely a future including unpredictable free actions, and secondly if God were to know the future, human freedom would seem to be paralysed since every choice must conform to what God infallibly knows will happen; foreknowledge seems to entail fatalism.

Into the debate enters American philosopher W. L. Craig who has produced a remarkably lucid survey of the relevant issues and offered a robust defence of the traditional doctrine of divine omniscience. He begins by reviewing the scriptural evidence and concludes that not only does the Bible consistently teach that God's knowledge extends to future free acts, but also provides numerous examples of predictive prophecy. Passages implying divine ignorance (e.g. Je. 36:3) or repentance are interpreted as anthropomorphisms and unfulfilled prophecies as implicitly conditional, that is forewarnings of what will transpire unless a change of heart is exhibited by the people.

Craig then seeks to evaluate the argument for theological fatalism. One way of avoiding the painful conclusion that if God infallibly knows that I will perform a certain act tomorrow, then I must necessarily and inevitably do it, is to deny that such statements about the future have any truth value; they therefore cannot form part of God's omniscience. In other words, at the present moment it is neither true nor false that I will perform that act tomorrow and so even a God who knows all truths is necessarily ignorant of my future choice. But this attempt to avoid fatalism is unacceptable to Craig not only on theological but also on philosophical grounds. For example, he argues that the same facts that make a present or past statement true or false also make a future tense statement true or false. He asks, 'If "it is raining today" is now true, how could "it will rain tomorrow" not have been true yesterday?' (p. 58). For Craig the Achilles heel of fatalism lies rather in a logical fallacy. The fallacy is that fatalism assumes that what God foreknows *must* happen, whereas in fact it merely entails that it *will* happen. 'Jones is free to do whatever he wants, and God's foreknowledge logically follows Jones's action like a shadow, even if chronologically the shadow precedes the coming of the event itself' (p. 74).

Craig denies that this insight involves the awkward notion of reverse causation. God's knowledge is not caused by Jones's future action, rather the action provides the logical ground of God's knowledge. The relationship is one of ground/consequence not cause/effect. In fact Craig continues with a lengthy analysis of reverse causation concluding that while it is logically possible (there is no logical contradiction inherent in the idea of causing the past as there is in altering the past), it is ontologically or actually impossible because something cannot be the result of nothing and the future in no sense exists to produce anything.

For similar reasons he argues that time-travel back to the past is logically possible but actually impossible. The chapter on this subject provides some light relief after the labour of working through some fairly technical philosophical arguments, as Craig recounts the outline of a short story by Robert Heinlein in which a time-traveller journeys into the past and marries his own mother and thus becomes his own father. But not content with this he travels further back, undergoes a sex change, marries himself and so becomes not only his own father but his own mother as well!

After an examination of two other recent areas of discussion which directly relate to the foreknowledge question, namely precognition and a philosophical thought-experiment known as Newcomb's paradox, Craig looks at the basis for divine foreknowledge: how can God know what does not yet exist? Consistent with his rejection of reverse causation is his denial that God acquires his knowledge empirically by observation. Instead, Craig maintains that God has an intuitive and innate knowledge of all truths, and since, as he has already argued, statements about the future have truth-value, God's knowledge encompasses the future.

In the final chapter of the book Craig extends this contention to the claim that God also possesses Middle Knowledge, that is knowledge not only of all actual events, past, present and future, but also of all

possible or hypothetical events, including those involving free creatures. He claims that this view not only has some apparent scriptural support (e.g. 1 Sa. 23:6-13; Mt. 11:20-24) but also possesses tremendous explanatory power in elucidating such time-honoured conundrums as predestination and freewill (God chooses to actualize the possible universe in which the predestined one freely chooses salvation) and the fate of the unevangelized (God so arranges matters that those who remain unevangelized are, in fact, those who would not anyway have believed had they heard).

Craig's book is a superb introduction to a debate which has raged for centuries but which has become particularly prominent in the past couple of decades. He presents the issues with a clarity that is the product of a mastery of the material, and he argues his viewpoint with persuasive conviction. Not only is he cogently meeting the current objections to divine foreknowledge, but along with American colleagues like Alvin Plantinga, Craig is forcing theologians and philosophers to re-examine the doctrine of Middle Knowledge which has long been in eclipse.

In my estimation a few weaknesses are, however, apparent. Although Craig crosses swords with a few particular scholars like N. Pike and D. A. Carson, many significant contemporary names, like C. Pinnock and R. Rice, remain unmentioned even in the bibliography which is disappointingly sparse. It is frustrating that he often critiques ideas without specifying who holds them or without attempting to place them in the context of the history of ideas (key names in the debate like Augustine, Boethius, Ockham, Socinus and Whitehead are not even mentioned). But this should by no means be taken as a demonstration of the author's ignorance as is emphatically demonstrated by the recent appearance of his masterly survey, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1988). Nevertheless it would have been helpful to be informed, for example, that the doctrine of innate omniscience goes back through Aquinas and Augustine to Plotinus and is not a recent invention.

Turning to what Craig does say rather than what he omits, and ignoring minor lapses (e.g. on p. 40 he recalls how God appeared to Abraham 'in the guise of three men', whereas the visitors were actually God and two angels: cf. Gn. 19:1; and the biblical reference on p. 138 seems to be incorrect), I would like to question two or three more substantial points.

Firstly, one of the reasons why Craig rejects fatalism is that it involves the fantastic notion that some force (fate?) constrains my action simply because a future-tense statement about it is true (p. 69). The problem here is that Craig himself seems to be failing to acknowledge a distinction which he helpfully introduces us to elsewhere, for the fatalist is not claiming that my action is compelled (cause/effect) but simply that the fact that a future-tense statement is true is sufficient condition (ground/consequence) of my action.

Secondly, Craig's contention that reverse causation is actually impossible is questionable. His argument is that 'at the time the effect is produced, the future cause is quite literally nothing. And it is ontologically impossible that something should come into existence out of nothing' (p. 80). Yet strictly speaking of course, a past cause is similarly non-existent now, it is also 'quite literally nothing'. However, Craig would presumably maintain that the difference is that nevertheless the effect had a tangible cause in the past whereas this is not the case with reverse causation. But this self-evident assertion simply begs the question of whether a future event cannot also bring about a present one. Actually, it can be argued that there is no more reason to suppose that the non-existent future cannot be recognized as to assume the non-existent past cannot be remembered.

Finally, the coherence of the concept of innate knowledge of the outcome of a contingent world remains far from evident. Craig offers one example of purely intuitive knowledge of the empirical world when he claims that other minds are neither immediately perceived nor causally inferred (p. 120). However, although this may be strictly true, nevertheless our imputation of minds into things is influenced by empirical factors so that our early assumption that, say, dolls and flowers have feelings is modified in the light of evolving experience. Other minds might not be observed or inductively inferred but they are unconsciously assumed as the best explanatory hypothesis for much of what we discover in the world.

One could go on to cavil over other points (could not the theory

regarding the unevangelized seem offensively prejudicial towards unreached races with its assumption that none of them would have chosen piety anyway?) but these criticisms should not be allowed to overshadow the enormous value of the book, which is one of those rare works that not only inform and clarify one's inchoate thoughts but also open up whole new vistas of useful speculation.

**Robert R. Cook**, London Bible College.

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**Peter McKenzie, *The Christians: Their Practices and Beliefs*** (London: SPCK, 1988), 345 pp., £15 pb.

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As the author states on the title page, this volume is 'An Adaptation of Friedrich Heiler's *Phenomenology of Religion*'. Using Heiler's categories for analysing religious phenomena in general, McKenzie divides his analysis into three parts. The first part, which comprises two thirds of the volume, deals with 'the world of Christian phenomena'. Here he looks at such things as sacred objects, space, time and number, action, word, writings, person and community in the Christian tradition. The theme of the second part is 'the world of Christian concepts'. Here the chapter headings such as 'The Deity', 'Creation' or 'Salvation' sound more familiar to the theologian or church historian. The third part, made up of two short chapters, deals with 'the world of Christian experience'. The first of these two chapters looks at 'Basic Forms' of Christian experience such as 'awe', 'fear', 'faith', etc., while the second examines 'Supernormal Forms' such as 'inspiration', 'visions and auditions', etc.

This is unquestionably a very 'different' book on Christianity and is very interesting simply because of that. All sorts of fascinating facts about Christian practice are catalogued here. It is also interesting to see the way in which Christian practice compares with the non-Christian. Like most volumes which claim to be phenomenological, however, there is a tendency for the listing of numerous examples of the same phenomenon to become tedious. But the great weakness of the volume is seen in 'the way in which raw material for the early history of Christianity is selected and in its systematic conclusions.

As McKenzie states in his introduction, a phenomenologist must depend on the historian to gain access to the phenomena of any historical religious tradition. But unfortunately the historians do not present the phenomenologist with unequivocal evidence for the phenomena. What the phenomenologist gets from historians is different accounts of the phenomena. A brief look at various accounts of NT history would soon prove this point. That this is so is not at all apparent in this volume. Take the view of the origin of the Lord's Supper. McKenzie's theory is that the Lord's Supper started off as a common meal which Jesus shared with his friends with the possibility that there might have been some eschatological meaning to it. It was Paul, who had grown up in the atmosphere of the Graeco-Roman mystery cults, who transformed the common meal into a sacramental meal re-enacting the drama of the dying redeemer (p. 123f.).

This view of the early history of the Lord's Supper is held by some NT scholars but it is not the only view by any means, though the impression is given that it is. It is at this point that the phenomenologist's claim to objectivity is most questionable. McKenzie's account of the Lord's Supper — which is but one example from many of his type of approach — is not a case of allowing the phenomenon to manifest itself but a case of forcing the facts into a preconceived framework provided by a particular philosophy of history.

McKenzie's systematic conclusions show quite clearly what his overall framework for understanding religion is. He believes that all genuine religious experience in all the religious traditions leads to unity with God and that it reaches its fulfilment in Jesus Christ's teaching on the kingdom of God (e.g. pp. 103, 169, 238, 311). He is not a Hickian pluralist but even so his view does not do justice to the unique glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, if one can practise a phenomenological *epoche* with the theoretical weaknesses of this volume there is a wealth of interesting information to absorb.

**Dewi Hughes**, Pontypridd.



# BOOK REVIEWS

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- W. H. Brownlee* **Ezekiel 1-19** (David G. Deboys)
- P. D. Miller, Jr., P. D. Hanson, S. D. McBride* **Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honour of Frank Moore Cross** (David G. Deboys)
- Michael Jacobs* **Faith or Fear: A Reader in Pastoral Counselling** (Jack Ramsbottom)
- Donald K. McKim (ed)* **How Karl Barth Changed My Mind** (Tony Lane)
- Gerd Theissen* **Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology** (N. T. Wright)
- Alan P. F. Sell* **Defending and Declaring the Faith** (A. T. B. McGowan)
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- William L. Craig* **The Only Wise God: the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom** (Robert R. Cook)
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ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ  
προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.