

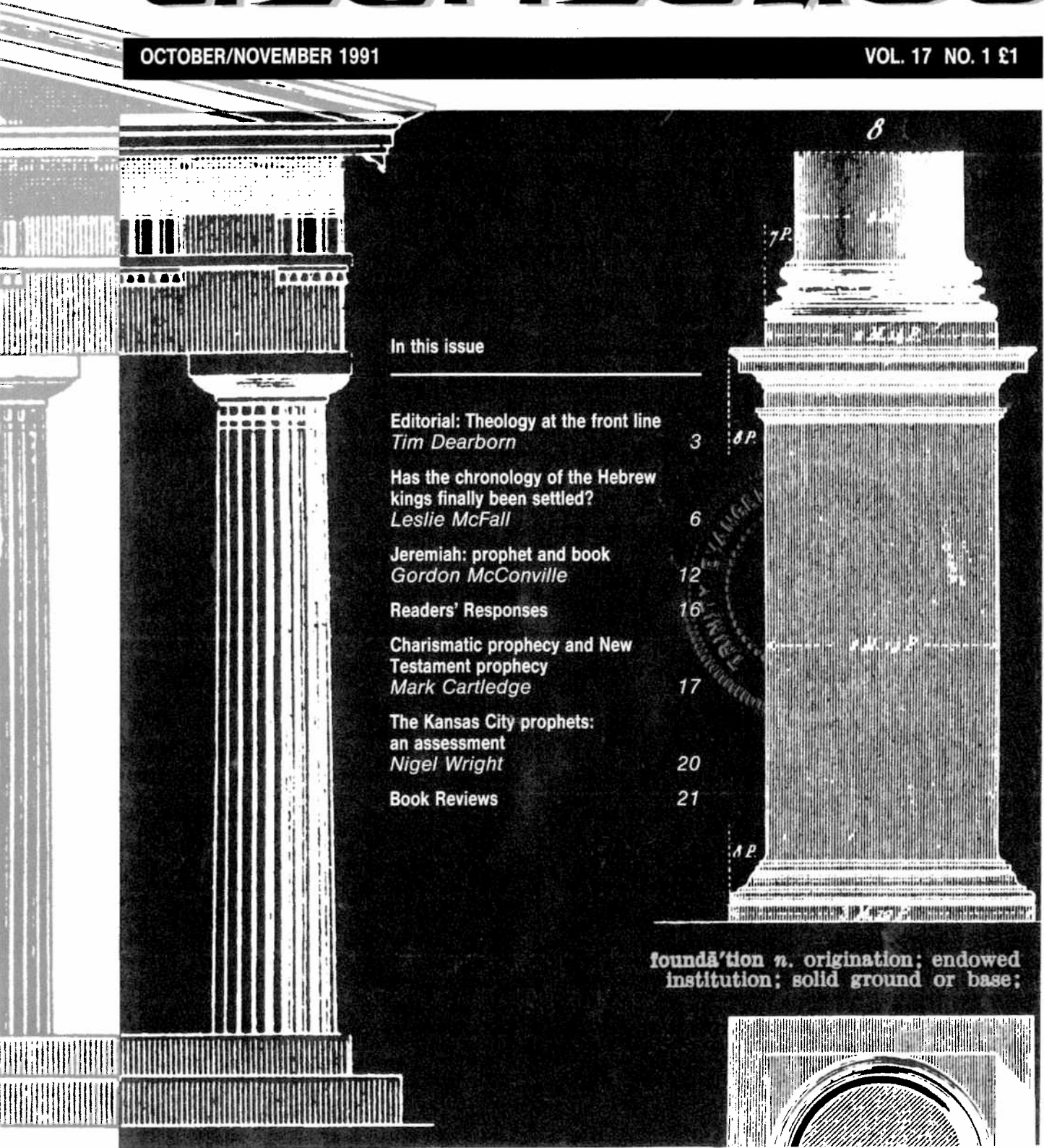
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foundā'tion n. origination; endowed  
institution; solid ground or base;

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# Editorial: Theology at the front line

Tim A. Dearborn

*At the beginning of another academic year, it is good to put the whole theological task under scrutiny. Is it not just escapism from the battlefields of real life? Tim Dearborn, who lectures in Aberdeen and in Vaux-sur-Seine, France, gave this lecture to faculty and students in Aberdeen at the beginning of the 1990-91 academic year. We are pleased to print it here as a guest editorial.*

Over fifty years ago C.S. Lewis preached a sermon in St Mary's Chapel, Oxford, entitled 'Learning in War-Time', in which he posed the following question: 'How can we continue to take an interest in these placid occupations (of studying literature or art, mathematics or biology) when the lives of our friends and the liberties of Europe are in the balance?' He continued by demanding, 'Every Christian must ask himself how it is right, or even psychologically possible, for creatures who are every moment advancing either to heaven or hell, to spend any fraction of the little time allowed them in this world on such comparative trivialities.'

It is appropriate that we too ask ourselves whether our studies of theology are an imprisonment in theological cloisters, a deviation into pious walled towers in which we are avoiding the real world, or in any sense of the word, are they relevant to the world? We might rephrase the question for our own context by saying: is it audaciously diverting to spend our days studying religion and theology when our world is falling apart, when wars are exploding around us with globe-threatening destructivity, and while the church placidly slumbers in irrelevant oblivion during the entire conflagration? Instead of acquiring more information and mastering more theories, shouldn't we race to the front lines — possibly the military battlefields, and at least the ecclesial ones? War always erects a question mark at the end of the sentence of our activities. Why are we doing this? Is our life making any significant contribution? During the Second World War, on many trains and buses (so I'm told) the sign was erected, 'Is this journey really necessary?' That is our question today. Is this journey necessary (other than as a way of getting necessary credentials so that we might do something else)? We must chart a course through these questions and into a world which defiantly doubts the value of what we do in our theological studies.

## The myth of the ivory tower

In our theological studies, we are *not* enclosed within an ivory tower, a sacred cloister which is fundamentally different from 'real life' or 'the real world'. Whether we like it or not, we're standing today at the Front, on the front line of the Battle. Everywhere God's people take a stand for the kingdom of God against the forces of the kingdom of darkness, one finds a front. A battle rages around us right now, in our classrooms, even in the soporific silence of our libraries. The question is, are we aware of it, participating in it, claiming the victory which our Lord has already won; or are we blithely stumbling along in pursuit of good grades and an academic degree?

We all live in the fracas of a battle between two invisible kingdoms: the kingdom of light which leads to wholeness, justice and peace, and the kingdom of darkness founded on destruction, exploitation and force. Everywhere, every time we are participating in the coming of one or the other of these kingdoms. The Front is never far from us. The disguise of darkness may be subtle in our hallowed halls, but like the rest of God's people, we too are on the front line. Rather than our walls being those of an ivory tower, let us envision them more as a watch tower. To us has been entrusted the holy gift of time to study, reflect and observe, in order to be more fully God's people, and in order to lead God's people more effectively into the world. This sacred trust of time together is to be devoted to the joyous task of knowing more fully the wonders of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. We've been charged with the calling to gain further equipment with which we might lead others into the liberty of the Light of Life.

## The challenges on the Front

In order to clarify this, and describe the nature of the front line upon which we stand (or more accurately, sit), it is valuable to describe several qualities of the Front. These characteristics exist on all front lines, but are especially, and extremely subtly, present here, in theological academia.

### 1. The tension between theory and practice

There is the danger during war-time of thinking only pragmatically — how will this affect our victory on the Front? We tend to let war dominate our values and control our vision. With such an orientation, people become mere tools in the accomplishment of other objectives, while ideas and words degenerate into weapons. We dare not let the pragmatic mentality dominate here, or else we will be ill-prepared to lead the church. Our dominant question must not be 'What difference will this make in the pulpit and pew?', but rather 'Who is God and how do we know more fully his truth?' Pragmatic questions must then take a subordinate place. This liberates us from the egotistic trap of placing ourselves rather than God at the centre of our life and our actions. This frees us to perceive how we can participate in the life of the triune God, and in his manifestation of his kingdom. If the pragmatic questions dominate our view, we will run the risk of placing too much stress on our own efforts and fruitfulness, and lose sight that we are but participants in a larger drama.

However, the pragmatic question must still be asked. We do not have the luxury of wallowing in theories without assessing their relevance in practice. The world does not need more 'armchair generals', who merely give advice to soldiers about how they should fight. Rather, the world needs people who have thoroughly mastered the theories, comprehensively assessed the strategies, and now can be active participants in the victory of the kingdom of God on the Front.

### 2. The temptation of false goals

The constant fear of all generals is that they will be so preoccupied with winning their current battle that they will overlook larger objectives and end up losing the entire war. Here too we run that risk. Academia is well-padded with its own system of rewards and incentives, punishments and deterrents. One can easily allow academia to determine one's priorities, objectives, and even sense of worth. One's effort can quickly be subverted into the folly of studying to please professors, produce papers and pass exams, rather than grow into the truth and be equipped for helping others live the truth.

This is not just an academic problem. It is a fundamental front line of human existence. Jesus spoke all too clearly of moths and rust, Marys and Marthas, the greatest and the least, the first and the last. It is all too easy to be side-tracked in life, running very successfully down dead-ends, diligently devoting our energies to what is good only to miss out on what's best. We have countless examples in our contemporary societies of people who have gained the whole academic or ecclesial world and lost their own soul, or at least their spouse, children, friends or health.

### 3. The turmoil of time

On the Front, we never feel like we have enough time. The requisite tasks always seem to demand more minutes than those which are available. Not only are there the demands of studies, but also of family, friendships, finances, and the future. This obviously requires the careful formulation of priorities. We must do that which is most important and leave undone that which is secondary.

In the effort to master our time, rather than be mastered by it, we must be reminded that we are not merely dealing with temporal, but with eternally urgent issues. We are in the process of becoming now, that which we will one day be in the future. Furthermore, we have the privilege of manifesting now, that which will one day be the world's future. We are simultaneously preparing for the future, and the presence of the future. This is not only

eternally significant. It also impacts our capacity to be content temporally.

The life of a student poses unique opportunities, for it is explicitly a period of preparation. It is all too plain that here, we are studying in order to be ready for something which is yet to come, just as soldiers during lulls in the combat seek to clean and polish and get prepared for whatever tomorrow may bring. However, even on a military front, one cannot postpone living until tomorrow. One never lives in the future. Thus, we must seize the present and allow God to flood it with eternally joyous significance. To turn to C.S. Lewis, he reminds us that we might as well leave the future in God's hands, 'for God will certainly retain it whether we leave it to him or not. Never, in peace or war, commit your virtue or your happiness to the future. Happy work is best done by the man [person] who takes his long-term plans somewhat lightly and works from moment to moment "as to the Lord". . . . The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received.'

#### 4. The trauma of our own finitude

There are yet other gifts which come to us when we realize we are living on the Front. One is forced to recognize the inescapable truth that there are undoubtedly things which one cannot do, places one cannot go, victories which one cannot control. Every day we see this, as we encounter people who know more than we do, express themselves more eloquently, engage in conversation more spontaneously, etc. Here we are given the gift, or rather, forced to admit, that we are finite. The Front is filled with many other warriors, and is filled with a myriad of mundane moments. Time is not always earthshaking and monumental. In fact, if monuments are ever made, they are carved by countless seemingly insignificant chisel blows.

We have here ideal schools for learning this, schools wearing the puzzling disguises of Greek verb charts, Hebrew vocabulary lists, patristic theological treatises, endless biblical commentaries, and seemingly infinite piles of texts. Learn here the ministry of the mundane, and we are all the more equipped for life on the other Fronts we will encounter outside of the classroom.

## Participating in Christ's victory

This leads us to a final fact which we must affirm in assessing our life on the Front. We are participants on this and every front line in the victory of Christ and his kingdom. The failure to describe this would nullify the value of most of what I have already said. When we recognize that we are indeed on the front line of the battle of God's kingdom, we also reaffirm that we are but participants in the already established triumph of his kingdom. If one phrase can become more fully painted upon the canvas of our lives during our studies together, may it unquestionably be: 'God is trustworthy!' Through our studies may we grow to understand more fully the reasons for our hope. On the Front, people are constantly coping with discouragement, and relentlessly searching for signs of hope. May we work hard together to develop a solid theology of hope, and to formulate a theologically consistent methodology of hope by which God's people can be equipped for life in turbulent times.

Our life on the Front resembles the reading of the history of an ancient battle. We have already read the last chapter. We know how it all will end. Thus, we can relax a little and not take ourselves quite so seriously. We are but participants in a cosmic drama, the outcome of which we already know! Neither need we take our spiritual opponents so seriously, for we and they know that they are already defeated. If our theology is indeed true, then we can live with the relief of knowing that our enemies are disarmed. They still carouse around, hurling about deceitful accusations. They still puff themselves up trying to convince us that our lives can really be threatened. They hungrily prowl, seeking to devour whatever lies in their path. Nevertheless, we know that because of Christ their power is limited and the damage they can inflict is only temporary, for Christ's triumph is sure.

## Proclaiming the goodness of God to a grieving creation

We do not study theology merely to revel in the wonders of the truth, but to learn the most effective ways to manifest the message: the war has been won. Christ is victor! We have been entrusted by God's people with this time for the construction of those armaments which the church desperately requires for its daily con-

frontations on the Front. We are the 'Research and Development Team' of the Body of Christ, charged with the responsibility of building the urgently needed tools for the further disarmament of darkness and the manifestation of light. Otherwise we leave the church unequipped for its life on these fronts. In order to illustrate the significance of our studies, I would like to address one of the harshest issues facing the church today. We long to proclaim to the world the goodness of God. Yet just as our theological studies seem to some to be an audacious disregard for the harsh realities of life, so our proclamation of God's goodness seems, in the ears of some, to be callously insensitive and blithely oblivious to the grief that currently grips the creation.

There is no need to recite the current chronicle of crises. A recent editorial in *Time* magazine succinctly voices the complaint which millions of Bengalis, Kurds, Ethiopians, Sudanese, and even parental victims of pit bull terriers hurl at the world and indeed at the heavens: 'Why doesn't someone do something? . . . The complaint is really more fundamental, one that only modern civilization could raise. It amounts to resentment against the idea that chaos can reach out without warning and wipe the slate of existence clean. How can a world that has stamped out smallpox and explored outer space be subject to such an indignity?' The disaster relief coordinator for the UN, Hamed Essafi, laments, 'How can you be satisfied when you are doing your best and still the best is not good enough?' The editorialist's conclusion is that 'The best way to deal with calamities is to accept they will be awful and proceed from there . . . only religions and insurance companies try to understand [them]'.

What do we have to say to our grief-stricken creation, in our effort to understand the seemingly endless inevitability of global tragedies? Dare we continue to proclaim the goodness of God? Our capacity to respond is probably one of the more pertinent issues we face in the exam of life.

In Ephesians 2 we find an outline of a response. The wonder of God's goodness in Jesus Christ is that the question is reversed. It is no longer the presence of death which poses a threat to life, calling into question its meaning (and the goodness of life's Lord). Rather, the Lord of life has so acted as to pose a threat to the presence of death. For the harsh truth is that we are all already dead.

The second chapter of Ephesians opens with the scandalous words, 'You were dead. . . .' Rather than dwelling on the omnipresent signs of our own and our globe's deadness, let's turn to the equally scandalous statement that life poses a threat to death. We see this expressed in the glorious, monosyllabic adversative of verse 4, 'But God. . . .' In the midst of the tragic deadness of life, God has intervened because he is 'rich in mercy' and he loves us with a great love. In our merciless world which is starving for expressions of goodness, we proclaim the death-defying mercy of God. To Bengalis, Kurds, and all disaster victims; to cancer patients, single parents, and doubt-filled students, the gospel cries out the merciful words: But God!

I wish to describe three expressions of God's aggressive attack on life's deadness which shows us ways in which we participate in the proclamation of God's goodness:

- In our world* death reigns, *but God* in Christ gives life.
- In our world* life meanders in meaninglessness, *but God* in Christ gives purpose.
- In our world* human lives and societies fracture through hostility and greed into millions of pieces, *but God* in Christ gives community.

Our studies must succeed in equipping us to manifest this life, purpose and community. If not, they are indeed piously irrelevant.

#### 1. Life irrepressible

'Even when we were dead, God made us alive together with Christ . . . in order to show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2:5-8). Life is not a tenuous possession, threatened by every ravaging storm of nature or greed, and thus something we defend through bombs, barricades and insurance policies. Life is a gift, and through Christ, life has been taken through the terrors of death and we are now 'raised up with Christ and in Christ we are seated with him in heaven' (v.6). This is the abundant life which Jesus promised to give: life pressed down and running over — irrepressible, uncontainable. The limits of our years and the boundary of our breath can't contain it. The violence of our neighbours and the vicissitudes of nature can't threaten it. We've been given in Christ,

because of the 'surpassing riches of God's grace in kindness towards us', life irrepressible.

*We are given the gift in Christ of being at peace regarding our salvation and our future.*

So how do we proclaim God's kindness? St. Augustine said that hope has two children: anger and courage. Because of the confident assurance we have in our salvation in Christ, because our hope is secure, we look at the deadness of our grieving globe and are angered. We echo God's 'no' to all that robs people of life and dignity. Because we know that our lives are irrepressible, that nothing can ultimately threaten us and thus we have nothing to lose, we are set free to act with courage to proclaim and manifest the life-giving kindness of God. Lech Welesa expressed this during a recent interview on the BBC. When asked how he continued hoping during the dark days of the Solidarity movement when his cause seemed hopeless and all seemed lost, Welesa replied: 'There is one thing you must know about me. I am a believing Christian, and therefore I know that if I am standing for what is right and good, then even if I am killed, I cannot be defeated.'

### 2. Purpose irreplaceable

'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them' (Eph. 2:10). To our ego-harassing doubts about our own purpose, and our contentment-crushing questions about life's meaningfulness, God gives us in Christ an irreplaceably valuable purpose. In fact, we find in Christ that for which all people hunger: the reason why they exist. We were created in Christ for good works which God has prepared for us beforehand. Nothing is more satisfying than knowing you're doing what you were made to do. Hassles, pressures, problems and opposition pale in power compared to the dynamism released in knowing that what we're doing has meaning. These good works aren't of our own creation. Rather, as the Scripture says, we merely 'walk in them'. This isn't the strenuous climb to surmount hurdles of thwarted ambition and combat constant threats to our success. Rather we persevere with joyous purposefulness in the manifestation of why we're here.

*We are given the gift in Christ of being at peace regarding our service and significance.*

A successful businessman in Buenos Aires has devoted his spare time over the past few years to providing new housing in the poverty-plagued barrios of that great city. Recently, the residents tried to encourage him to run for mayor. He refused, saying, 'I have greater ambitions than that.' Their suggestions of governor or even President of Argentina were greeted with the same reply, 'I have greater ambitions than that.' 'But what could be greater than being President of our country?' 'My ambition is to be a servant of my Lord Jesus Christ.'

### 3. Community indivisible

'Remember that you were . . . separate from Christ, excluded . . . strangers . . . having no hope and without God in the world. But

now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall' (Eph. 2:12-14). Yugoslavia is splintering into two and possibly six nations. The Soviet Union is no longer a union. A Tamil separatist kills Prime Minister Gandhi, and car bombs continue to blast apart Belfast. Our world hungers for, but cannot create, community. Walls are knocked down only to reveal ethnic nationalism and fascist prejudices that have replaced the cold war with dozens of heated hostilities. To this, the gospel proclaims: but now in Christ we who were alienated have been brought near through his blood, and not just near but made one. He is our peace.

*We are given the gift in Christ of being at peace regarding our relations and community.*

Therefore, we cannot content ourselves with community-less Christianity or with the chasms that divide God's creation. God has acted in Christ to make us one, and we have the privilege of manifesting and proclaiming to all peoples: we need no longer live like we're strangers and aliens. Christ is the glue which binds the fractured communities of creation together. Manifesting this peace will often cause conflict. On 15 April of this year a Serbian Protestant pastor was dragged out of his home and beaten by an angry mob because in his congregation he dared to have Serbs and Croats together eating from one loaf and drinking from one cup at the Lord's Table. We forget that prior to Tito, it was illegal for anyone other than a Serb to live in Serbia, and it was illegal for a Serb to be anything other than Eastern Orthodox. This pastor relentlessly proclaimed that in Christ, there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, Jew nor Greek. The dividing walls of our enmity have been removed.

But God . . . out of his surpassing kindness, has given to his creation in Christ life irrepressible, a purpose which is irreplaceable, and a community which is indivisible. Our studies are anything but a 'placid occupation', for insofar as God wills to use us in the manifestation of his kingdom, 'the lives of our friends and the liberties of the world' are impacted by the quality of what we gain through our life as students. To Lewis' rephrased query, 'How is it possible to spend any fraction of the little time allowed us in this world on such comparative trivialities as our theological studies, while there are creatures who are every moment advancing either to heaven or hell', we respond: our studies are not merely preparation for the battle, they are the battle. For here we stand for and with the One who is the Way, Truth and Life, and in so standing, we become better equipped to enable others to discover and live his life, purpose, and community, and to proclaim this before a creation that is indeed in grievous need of knowing the goodness of God.

<sup>1</sup>C.S. Lewis, 'Learning in War-time', in *Fern-Seed and other Essays* (London: Fontana, 1975), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>James Walsh, 'Stumbling in Chaos', *Time* magazine, 20 May 1991, p. 72.

# Has the chronology of the Hebrew kings been finally settled?

Leslie McFall

*Dr McFall was formerly Lecturer in Old Testament at Belfast Bible College.*

The answer to the question in the title must be a qualified yes. Qualified, in the sense that scholarly research has narrowed the limits to within a year either side of a tolerably fixed set of dates for the forty rulers of Israel and Judah. Many of the dates are absolute and agree with Near Eastern chronology and the remainder fit comfortably around these. The rest of this article is a vindication of these statements.

Behind any system of chronology for the Hebrew kings there is reflected the practical outworking of the chronologist's view of the integrity of the Hebrew scriptures.

## Is the Hebrew text trustworthy?

Those who question the integrity or trustworthiness of the Hebrew text in the area of its chronology do so on the basis of two factors. First, from experience with texts having nothing to do with chronology they are convinced that many errors have crept into the Hebrew text in spite of the vigilance of the Massoretes. If errors have crept into the non-chronological portions of the OT, why should a special case — an exemption in fact — be made out for the chronological portions? In any case, they would argue, why should the Massoretic Text (MT) be singled out as the standard by which integrity must be measured? The discussion then moves on into the area of the relationship between the Hebrew text(s) behind the Greek translation(s) of the OT (Septuagint or LXX), the Hebrew text(s) of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, the Samaritan version, and MT.

Second, from experience with the chronological texts themselves they discover that the numbers, totals and synchronisms simply do not make sense on many occasions.

Those who do accept the trustworthiness of the Hebrew scriptures, and its chronological data in particular, make the MT their starting point and attempt to construct an hypothesis that will (a) permit 38 synchronisms and 37 reign lengths in Kings (plus three synchronisms<sup>1</sup> and 18 reign lengths in Chronicles) to harmonize perfectly without emending a single numeral, and (b) demonstrate that the resultant chronology is in harmony with Near Eastern chronology. To date no chronological scheme has been compiled which can accommodate all the biblical data without altering at least one numeral. The nearest that any scholar has arrived at such a complete system is that produced by Edwin R. Thiele.<sup>2</sup> But even he judged that the data in 2 Kings 17-18 was in error.<sup>3</sup> Apart from this one concession his system is a model of how to approach the Hebrew text in a harmonistic manner.

## Three approaches to Hebrew chronology

Biblical chronologists can be divided into three 'schools': Harmonists, Restorationists, and Reconstructionists. These labels, of course, are not official self-designations of any actual group of scholars! They are used here as categories for the purposes of the article. What divides them is the measure of their trust or distrust in the integrity of the Hebrew figures.

Harmonists proceed on the assumption that every Hebrew figure is factually correct and accurately transmitted. This school seeks to harmonize the Hebrew chronology internally (between Kings and Chronicles) and externally (with well established absolute dates in Near Eastern chronology) without altering the text one iota.

The adherents of the Harmonistic approach divide themselves into Complete Harmonists (full integrity) and Incomplete

Harmonists (open to the possibility of an uncharacteristic slip in the original and/or a rare transmission error). Thiele is the most well-known member of this latter group.

Those who reject the Harmonistic approach may be divided into the Restoration and the Reconstruction schools. Though they differ from the Harmonists in their approach to the biblical data they are united in their premise that MT as it stands is a corrupt text and in need of scholarly correction.

The Restoration school is characterized by the belief that the main problem is one of bad transmission of the Hebrew text. This school is convinced that in the course of copying and recopying the text many numbers have been accidentally altered, or scribes have altered figures which they thought were transmission errors. By a careful study of the variants in the Hebrew versions (MT, Qumran and those behind the LXX and Josephus) these scholars are able to repair the text.

The result, of necessity, is an eclectic chronology with bits and pieces taken from all the source materials. The task then facing the resultant chronology of this school is how to persuade biblical scholarship to accept their results. The inability of this school to agree among themselves on any individual's published results constitutes the perennial weakness of this approach. In any case, few within this school are consistent in the application of the main principles of textual criticism and resort to some reconstruction of the text to effect the right result.

One major characteristic that differentiates this school from the Reconstruction school is that a scholar of the former school first picks the version that he thinks contains more of the correct chronology than the others and then proceeds to repair it using the other versions. Some have chosen the LXX,<sup>4</sup> others have preferred Josephus' system, and still others the MT as their basic text and chronological system.

Then there is the approach of the Reconstructionists. This school takes the view that the Hebrew text has been so extensively corrupted in transmission, or, if accurately transmitted, the original was factually incorrect, that the only solution is to make a fresh start and reconstruct the text and its chronology. Consequently, in this school everything is up for discussion and appropriation. A scholar may pick and choose whatever he requires and the resulting chronology is then presented to the scholarly world for their consideration.

This is by far the most popular school today and has many practitioners.<sup>5</sup> Some scholars quite openly take it upon themselves to make the mix.<sup>6</sup> Others adopt a more subtle approach. Here the mix is attributed to the biblical editor and the scholar then claims to have simply uncovered what the biblical editor(s) did with an original, pure text and system of chronology.

## The latest Reconstruction chronology

The latest example of the Reconstruction approach to the chronology of the Hebrew kings is Jeremy Hughes.<sup>7</sup> According to him neither the MT nor the LXX contains the correct chronology (p. 123, cf. p. 155), and within the Hebrew data itself he discerns at least two main systems of chronology which have been intermixed in the course of editorial activity. Reconstructing the original chronology 'is dependent on our ability to penetrate behind successive stages of schematization and re-editing' (p. 122). The successive stages were the pre-schematic (or pre-Priestly) followed by Priestly, followed by the post-Priestly (or revised Priestly). Unfortunately some of the stages were conflated which only complicated an already confused picture. As if that was not confusing enough he claims that he has discovered a schematic

chronology which a later Deuteronomistic editor had imposed on the whole chronology of Israel from Genesis through to the exile. This schematic chronology involved the alteration of numerous chronological figures which he claims he has successfully peeled away and by a careful comparison of the data available to him in the other versions he has been able to isolate the right figure that ought to have been in the original, pre-schematic Hebrew text. He makes many bold claims for his 'strong arguments' (cf. the language on pp. 173, 187, 212) in support of the pre-Deuteronomistic chronology which he has carefully stitched together from the confused state of the Hebrew text. He notes that sometimes the right figure has been preserved only in Josephus (pp. 148, 122) or in the Ethiopic version (p. 153).

The picture we get from Hughes' assessment of the various editors who were responsible for the present chronologies in the MT and the LXX is their inability to see the implications of their manipulation of the figures to produce an artificial – or as Hughes would prefer to call it a mythical – scheme. They were also very forgetful as they proceeded with their revisions (cf. pp. 130, 136, 152), some of which they did not complete (p. 136). The editors occasionally invented history (pp. 101, 164, 186) if the context required something 'extra' to make their point.

He postulates that on one occasion (in Josiah's reign) the calendar year was shortened to six months to facilitate a change-over in Judah from a Tishri New Year to a Nisan New Year. Among the repairs to the Hebrew text that he wishes his readership to consider are the reduction of Joash's 40 years' reign to 38 years; Pekah's 20 to 4; Jehu's 28 to 27; Amaziah's 29 to 28; Azariah's 52 to 26; and Jotham's 16 to 11 years. He proposed to increase Jeroboam's 22 years to 25; Ahab's 22 to 24; Abijam's 3 to 6 years; and Jehoram's 8 to 11 years (p. 275).

He dismisses coregencies with the argument that it is 'extremely doubtful that coregencies ever existed as a possible form of government in Israel or Judah' (p. 105).

He has little respect for the dates given by Egyptologists (such as K.A. Kitchen and Erik Hornung) for the reign of Shishak (Shoshenq). He considers their dates invalid due to their reliance upon Thiele's figures for Shishak's invasion of Judah in the fifth year of Rehoboam (p. 191). Although Hughes cannot claim to be an Egyptologist he does claim to have established the dates for Shishak's reign, which he places six years earlier than reputable Egyptologists. So confident is he in his results that he can write: 'if my reconstruction of Israelite and Judean chronology is correct... Egyptian chronologists will have to revise their calculations to take account of a six-year increase in the dates of Shoshenq's reign' (p. 192).

Behind Hughes' work stands his idea of what the biblical (Priestly and Deuteronomistic) writers were attempting to do when they inserted historical data into their religious compositions. He writes: 'the chronology of Kings is historically inaccurate, but it is not corrupt. The reason it is inaccurate is that the Biblical writers were more interested in chronological schematism than in historical accuracy. Biblical chronology is essentially mythical... The mythical purpose of chronological schematism is that it serves to express a belief that history is governed by a divine plan' (pp. 264f.). In other words, the Priestly writer wished to make the period from the exodus to the foundation of the first temple *exactly* 480 years and from that point to the foundation of the second temple *exactly* 480 years, and with that scheme in mind he set about manipulating the reigns of the Hebrew kings to bring about the required result. But other editors came along and undid some of his work by restoring some of the pre-schematic chronology, or what they thought was the original chronology. The essence of Hughes' thesis is to show how an original, historical chronology was converted into a schematic chronology and how he managed to retrieve and restore the original, pre-schematic chronology in virtually its pristine condition.

## The latest Restoration chronology

The latest advocates of the Restoration school are Hayes and Hooker,<sup>8</sup> whose joint work picks on the MT system of chronology and then proceeds to repair its damaged transmission. Hayes and Hooker set out fifteen statements on pp. 12-15 which distinguish their system from those that have preceded them. Among the repairs to the Hebrew text that they wish their readership to consider are the reduction of Baasha's 24 years' reign to 22 years; Asa's 41 years to 29 years; Omri's 12 to 11 years; Ahab's 22 to 15 years; Jehu's 28 to 18 years; and other similar emendations.

They postulate that on one occasion the calendar year was extended to eighteen months to facilitate a changeover from one system to another in Josiah's reign.<sup>9</sup> We are presented with the novel suggestion that Jehoram of Israel and Jehoram of Judah were the same person (p. 33). They reject the hypothesis of coregencies which Thiele and other Harmonists had employed with such good results, with the argument: 'The weakness of this assumption is the fact that the hypothesis of coregencies is without biblical warrant' (p. 11). They then go on to postulate that instead of coregencies there were abdications. In effect this is just a change of terminology because the years that the king lived after his abdication are credited both to him and to the son who took over from him. If the coregencies are 'without biblical warrant' and if that is held to be a knock-down argument for rejecting them then abdications have no warrant either.

Often one discerns in the arguments of the Reconstruction and Restoration approaches an unreasonable antagonism toward Thiele's solution in particular which tends to disparage his results in an unscholarly manner. His central premiss that the Hebrew kings appointed their successor in their own lifetime to some form of joint rule with them is not a big problem nor improbable. Solomon certainly overlapped David and that cannot be denied without emending the text.

## Why emendations should be avoided

The main objection that biblical scholarship finds with the results of the non-Harmonistic schools is the ad hoc nature of the resulting chronologies that issue from them. No matter how ingenious, scholarly, or brilliant the emendation might be that suddenly clears up an intractable problem that has been the bane of every chronologist's life, it remains an emendation just the same, and it is this stark fact that constitutes an inherent weakness in the argument and an obstacle to its acceptance. An emendation always introduces a weakness into the discussion, never a strength or a confirmation of truth.

There is an innate instinct in the majority of biblical scholars that prefers a solution which does not involve any tampering with the text. The same instinct tends to push ad hoc solutions of the Restoration type to the side-lines until extra-biblical evidence is found to enhance or promote their credibility. It is because Thiele's solution resorted to less emendations than any other system that preceded his that his hypothesis (for it must be borne in mind that it is still only a hypothesis) has been slowly becoming the dominant chronology for the period of the Divided Monarchy (certainly in the English-speaking world) since it was published in 1951. G.R. Driver had this compliment to make of Thiele's chronology: 'it is an important work, which comes very near to, if it does not actually reach, a final solution of the problem of the dates of the kings of Israel and Judah'.<sup>10</sup>

## Four controlling factors

Behind the Harmonists' approach lie four factors that enable them to solve every apparent difficulty in the Hebrew data.

*First*, Israel and Judah did not use the same calendar. The New Year began in September (Tishri) in Judah, but in Nisan (March/April) in Israel. Because their New Year's days were six months apart this will often account for the synchronisms between them being one year out.<sup>11</sup>

*Second*, they did not use the same method for counting the years their kings reigned. In Judah the new king's years were counted from the New Year's day *after* the old king died. In Israel the new king's years were counted from the New Year's day *before* the old king died. Judah's system is called the accession-year or the post-dating system. Israel's is called the nonaccession-year or ante-dating system.<sup>12</sup> Because the point from which the kings of Judah and Israel reckoned their reigns to have commenced is one year apart this will often account for the synchronisms between them being one year out or occasionally two years.<sup>13</sup>

*Third*, a written account was kept of the kings of the two kingdoms using their own distinctive calendars and method of calculating the length of their reigns. These records are repeatedly referred to as the 'Chronicles of the Kings of Israel' and the 'Chronicles of the Kings of Judah'. Since both kingdoms thought that their calendar and system of counting regnal years was correct they proceeded to write down the other's history (where it impinged on their own, e.g. synchronisms) using their own

calendar and regnal reckoning. Because the compiler of the books of Kings incorporated extracts from these two works *directly into his own composition* we have to be aware that he has left the extracts as they were. When the canonical writer is talking about a Judean king and he includes a synchronism with Israel's king in his extract, that synchronism is going to be in terms of *Judah's* calendar and *Judah's* method of numbering regnal years as they imposed it on the history of the northern kings; and *vice versa*, when the writer is talking about an Israelite king and he includes a synchronism with Judah's king in his extract that synchronism is going to be in terms of *Israel's* calendar and *Israel's* method of numbering regnal years as they imposed it on the history of the Judean kings.<sup>14</sup> One might have expected the writer/editor to do the conversion in his head each time and give us the result, thereby enabling us to follow the passage of time using one calendar and one method of reckoning regnal reigns. The fact that he did not do so will often account for the synchronisms between Judah and Israel being one and sometimes even two years out. A typical example of this is the statement in 1 Kings 15:1, 'Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam began to reign over Judah.' Note that the subject of the passage is a Judean king. He is using the accession-year system. The synchronism is with an Israelite king who numbers his own years according to the nonaccession-year system. The synchronism, because it is in terms of the Judean system of reckoning, means that the 'eighteenth year of Jeroboam' is the same as the nineteenth year according to Israel's nonaccession-year system.

Fourth, the criterion for calculating a king's reign when he also had a period as joint-ruler (or coregent) is never stated in the record. Sometimes the writer<sup>15</sup> will add the number of years a king had as coregent to the number of years he reigned as sole king (as in the A-B and B-B patterns below) but sometimes he will not (as in the A-A and B-A patterns below)! The writer may have been influenced by the perception he gained of each coregent from reading the 'Chronicles' he is so fond of referring his readers to. If the coregent played a prominent part then maybe this influenced him to backdate the beginning of his rule to the point when he was made coregent. If the coregent did not play a prominent part then he credited him only with his sole reign years, and ignored the years he ruled as coregent. This is true in the case of Hezekiah who was coregent with his father for fourteen years and was sole ruler for twenty-nine years. The official record of his rule gives only his sole reign total. Hezekiah clearly disapproved of his father's style of governing the Lord's people and he appears to have had no influence on the life of the nation until he became sole ruler.

Using these four controlling factors, it is possible to solve every single difficulty in the data of Kings. The Harmonists' hypothesis is also the simplest of all the hypotheses and approaches that have ever been put forward. Reviewers of Thiele's work attributed the success he achieved to his unshakable faith in the basic fidelity and accuracy of the Hebrew numbers and this enabled him to travel further along the road in his quest for order than any who preceded him.<sup>16</sup> Where others aborted their quest they succumbed to emendation. Derek Kidner said of Thiele's achievement:

This quest is an object lesson in the value of giving intractable scriptural data the benefit of the doubt, in the conviction that these difficulties are chiefly signs of our imperfect understanding. It also brings out the fact that a true solution of a technical problem will usually dovetail in an unforeseen way with some less noticeable features of the context.<sup>17</sup>

## Two flexible factors

We need at this point to qualify two of the four factors outlined above. All is never plain sailing in things biblical! First, with regard to points (1) and (3) above, these factors stayed constant throughout the history of the two kingdoms so far as we can judge. So no problem there.

Second, with regard to point (2), this factor did not stay constant (oh that it had!). The diagram below shows how Israel and Judah switched back and forth between the two methods of counting regnal years.

Kings of Israel																			
Jeroboam	Nadab	Baasha	Elah	Zimri	Omri	Ahab	Ahaziah	Jehoram	Jehu	Jehohaz	Jehoash (coregent)	Jehoash (king)	Jeroboam II	Zechariah	Shallum	Menahem	Pekahiah	Pekah	Hoshea
Nonaccession											Accession								
Non-accession											Accession								
Rehoboam	Abijam	Asa	Jehoshaphat			Jehoram	Ahaziah	Jehoash	Amaziah			Azariah	Jotham			Ahaz	Hezekiah		
Kings of Judah																			
Period A (931-848 BC)						Period B (848-798 BC)						Period C (798-723 BC)							

It should be noted that the only point in Judah's history when she abandoned her native accession-year system was the period when the two royal families intermarried and Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, became Queen in Judah. She was probably responsible for introducing the nonaccession-year system into Judah. It is probably significant that her son, grandson, and great grandson were struck out of the register of legitimate kings of Judah in Matthew's genealogy.

Third, with respect to point (4) above, the table sets out the four possible ways that were open to the compiler of Kings (or the original court scribe) to decide how many years he was prepared to attribute to those kings who had a period of coregency before they became sole rulers. Remember that it was in his power to add or ignore the coregency years when it came to writing up the final total that each king reigned.

Table showing all known coregencies and overlapping reigns for the kings of Judah and Israel

Jehoram	Jehoiachin	Omri	Ahaziah (I)	Jeroboam II	Pekah	Jehoash (I)	Ahaz	Hezekiah	Jehoiachin	Jehoshaphat	Jotham	Azariah	Manasseh
A A	A A A A	B B B B	B B B B										
A A	B B B B	A A A A	B B B B										

### Point from which each king's reign is calculated

- Option A: From the first year of his sole reign
- Option B: From the first year of his coregency

### Total years recorded for each king's reign

- Option A: The total excludes coregency years
- Option B: The total includes coregency years



All of the patterns on page 8 (except the A-A pattern) need to be carefully translated if we are to avoid confusion. We propose the following new translations based on the RSV (modifications are in italic script).

## Texts using the A-B pattern: coregency years included in the total

**1 Kings 16:23** In the thirty-first year (nonaccession) of Asa king of Judah, Omri *became king* over Israel, and reigned for twelve years (nonaccession) (as rival and sole king); six years (nonaccession) he reigned in Tirzah.

**2 Kings 8:25-26** In the twelfth year (nonaccession) of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, *became king*. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he *became king*, and he reigned one year (nonaccession) *as coregent and king* in Jerusalem.

**2 Kings 14:23** In the fifteenth year (accession) *from the kingship* of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, *became king* in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years (accession) *as coregent and king*.

**2 Kings 15:27** In the fifty-second year (accession) *from the coregency* of Azariah, king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah *became king* over Israel in Samaria, and he reigned twenty years (accession) *from his breakaway from Menahem*.

## Texts using the B-A pattern: coregency years not included in the total

**2 Kings 13:10** In the thirty-seventh year (nonaccession) of Joash, king of Judah, Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz *became coregent* over Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years (accession) *as king*.

**2 Kings 16:1-2** In the seventeenth year (accession) *of the breakaway kingdom* of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, *became coregent*. Ahaz was twenty years old when he *became coregent*, and he reigned sixteen years *as king* in Jerusalem.

**2 Kings 18:1-2** In the third year (accession) of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, *became coregent*. He was twenty-five years old when he *became king*, and he reigned twenty-nine years (accession) *as king* in Jerusalem.

**2 Chronicles 36:9** Jehoiachin was eight years old when he *became coregent*, and he reigned three months and ten days *as king* in Jerusalem.

## Texts using the B-B pattern: coregency years included in the total

**1 Kings 22:41-42** Jehoshaphat the son of Asa *became king* over Judah in the fourth year (accession) of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he *became coregent* and he reigned twenty-five years (accession) *as coregent and king* in Jerusalem.

**2 Kings 15:1-2** In the twenty-seventh year (accession) *from the coregency* of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, *became king*. He was sixteen years old when he *became coregent* and he reigned fifty-two years (accession) *as coregent and king* in Jerusalem.

**2 Kings 15:32-33** In the second year (accession) *of the breakaway kingdom* of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *became coregent*. He was twenty-five years old when he *became coregent* and he reigned sixteen years *as coregent and king* (until Ahaz his son was made coregent with him).

**2 Kings 21:1** Manasseh was twelve years old when he *became coregent*, and he reigned fifty-five years (accession) *as coregent and king* in Jerusalem.

## The importance of absolute dates

The absolute dates the modern chronologist works with are:

(1) 853 BC, when the Battle of Qarqar was fought (possibly in July/August of that year (Thiele, 1983:95 n.13)), which was the sixth year of Shalmaneser III — the year in which Ahab died;

(2) 841 BC, the eighteenth of Shalmaneser III when Jehu paid tribute to him at the commencement of his reign;

(3) 723 BC, the last year of Shalmaneser V and Hoshea when Samaria fell;

(4) 701 BC, the fourteenth year of Hezekiah when Sennacherib came against Judah (1983:122);

(5) 2 Adar (15/16 March), 597 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took Jehoiachin prisoner to Babylon (1983:173);

(6) 9 Tammuz (18 July), 586 BC, the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem fell (1983:189).<sup>18</sup>

Without these external synchronisms it would have been impossible to reconcile the reigns and synchronisms of the MT, as a perusal of commentaries from the seventeenth and twentieth centuries would demonstrate. It was the existence of these fixed points that enabled scholars to work out the principles that lay behind the Hebrew system of synchronisms.

A seventh absolute date is virtually certain now for the foundation of the first temple in 968 BC and the corollary date of 932 BC for the disruption of the kingdom. If these dates should prove to be correct then for the first time we would have the upper (*i.e.* 968) and lower (*i.e.* 586) limits within which all future discussion of the chronology of the Hebrew kings must take place. The evidence for 968 BC comes from three lines of research: W.H. Barnes arrived at this date through a study of the Tyrian King List;<sup>19</sup> K.A. Kitchen arrived at the same date through the Egyptian evidence independently of the Tyrian evidence; and Thiele arrived at the same date independently of the other two through a careful study of the Hebrew evidence.

Kitchen claims that he has been able to date the twenty-one-year rule of the Egyptian king Shishak/Shosheng I to *c.* 945-924 BC *independently of the biblical data*.<sup>20</sup> Rehoboam's fifth year ran from September 926 to September 925, which means that Shishak's invasion of Judah occurred toward the end of his twenty-one-year rule.<sup>21</sup> If so, this would rule out Albright's date of 922 BC for the division of the kingdom and his date of 918/7 BC for the invasion of Shishak. His dates for Shishak are 935-914 BC.

Thiele obtained his date of 931/30 BC for the division of the kingdom by calculating *backwards* from the six absolute dates given above (but especially no. 1).

Barnes has argued the dates for Shishak's reign from his reconstruction of Tyrian chronology which is based on two astronomically dated events in Egyptian history. First, the accession of Ramesses II. He noted that Parker had calculated three astronomical dates for the accession of Ramesses II: 1301, 1290 or 1279.<sup>22</sup> Second, the accession of Takelot II. Parker had noted that an eclipse occurred in the fifteenth year of his reign.<sup>23</sup> Klaus Baer dated this eclipse to 846/5 BC and his accession to 860 BC.<sup>24</sup> Wente accepted this date as 'the first "fixed" date after the accession of Ramesses II, as determined by a lunar date in his reign'.<sup>25</sup> Wente suggested dating Shishak's accession to *c.* 946 BCE, only one year higher than Kitchen and Hornung<sup>26</sup> had placed it. It appears that Wente worked *backwards* from the astronomical date of 846/5 BC (= fifteenth year of Takelot II) to arrive at 946 BC, while others worked *forwards* from the other astronomical date of 1279 to arrive at the same date.

Whatever may be the assessment of future work on Barnes' Tyrian chronology (which the present writer regards as far from being settled, though Green's work seems to give some credence to the commencement of Solomon's reign in 971 BC according to Tyrian chronology<sup>27</sup>), there can be no doubt that 926/5 BC is the most likely year in which Shishak fought against Rehoboam.

Six other biblical events coincide exactly with similar external synchronisms *without the alteration of a single numeral to achieve this result*. With such an impressive record of six out of six it would not surprise the Harmonist to discover that the MT was right in this seventh case. Thus three independent lines of research, Egyptian, Tyrian, and Hebrew, converge on 968 BC ( $\pm 1$  year) for the foundation of Solomon's temple and 932 BC ( $\pm 1$  year) for the division of the kingdom.

## Revision of Thiele's chronology

It has been necessary to make a number of modifications to Thiele's chronology which are marked with asterisks in the table below. The following is a summary of the main modifications being proposed.<sup>28</sup>

The four major modifications are four coregencies which Thiele overlooked, namely, a coregency for Hezekiah from 729/8–715 BC;<sup>29</sup> a two-year coregency for Jehoash king of Israel from 799–798; Ahaziah king of Judah probably became coregent in the eleventh year (nonaccession) of Joram and in the twelfth year became king; and Jehoiachin had a coregency from September 608–December 597 BC.

The nine minor alterations include:

- (1) Jehoshaphat became coregent in September<sup>30</sup> 873 not 872/1;
- (2) Jehoram (J) became coregent in September 854 not 853;
- (3) Jehoahaz died between September 798 and April 797 and Jehoash became king during this period: Thiele gives 798;

(4) Jeroboam II became coregent in April 793 not 793/2 or 792 (p. 96);

(5) Azariah became coregent in September 791 not 792/1;<sup>31</sup>

(6) Hoshea died between April and September 723: Thiele gives 723/22;

(7) Uzziah/Azariah died between April and September 739 and Jotham became king during this period, not 740/39;

(8) Ahaz died before Nisan 715 (probably in March) and Hezekiah succeeded him at this time, not in 716/5; and

(9) Manasseh became coregent in September 697 not 697/6.

These modifications do not interfere with Thiele's basic chronology: they are merely a fine-tuning of his system.

### Revised chronology for Israel and Judah

Biblical sequence	Judah and Israel (in italics)	Coregent (commencement)	King (sole reign)	Died
1 Ki. 12:1–14:20	Solomon		Sept 931–Apr 930	Sept 931–Apr 930
1 Ki. 14:21–31	Jeroboam		Sept 931–Apr 930	Sept 910–Apr 909
1 Ki. 15:1–8	Rehoboam		Apr–Sept 913	Apr–Sept 913
1 Ki. 15:9–24	Abijam		Sept 911–Apr 910	Sept 911–Apr 910
1 Ki. 15:25–32	Asa		Sept 910–Apr 909	Sept 870–Apr 869
1 Ki. 15:33–16:7	Nadab		Sept 909–Apr 908	Sept 909–Apr 908
1 Ki. 16:8–14	Baasha		Sept 909–Apr 908	Sept 886–Apr 885
1 Ki. 16:15–20	Elah		Sept 886–Apr 885	Sept 885–Apr 884
1 Ki. 16:21–22	Zimri		Sept 885–Apr 884	Sept 885–Apr 884
1 Ki. 16:23–28	Tibni	Sept 885–Apr 884		Apr 880–Sept 880
	Omri	Sept 885–Apr 884		Sept 874–Apr 873
	Omri		Apr 880–Sept 880	Apr–Sept 853
1 Ki. 16:29–22:40	Ahab		Sept 874–Apr 873	Apr–Sept 848
*1 Ki. 22:41–51	Jehoshaphat	Sept 873–	Sept 870–Apr 869	Apr–Sept 848
1 Ki. 22:52–2 Ki. 2:25	Ahaziah		Apr–Sept 853	Apr–Sept 852
2 Ki. 3:1–8:15	Joram		Apr–Sept 852	Apr–Sept 841
*2 Ki. 8:16–24	Jehoram	Sept 854–	Apr–Sept 848	Apr–Sept 841
**2 Ki. 8:25–9:29	Ahaziah	Sept 842–	Apr–Sept 841	Apr–Sept 841
2 Ki. 9:30–10:36	Jehu		Apr–Sept 841	Sept 814–Apr 813
2 Ki. 11:1–21	Athaliah		Apr–Sept 841	Apr–Sept 835
2 Ki. 12:1–21	Joash		Apr–Sept 835	Apr–Sept 796
*2 Ki. 13:1–10	Jehoahaz		Sept 814–Apr 813	Sept 798–Apr 797
**2 Ki. 13:11–25	Jehoash	Apr 799–	Sept 798–Apr 797	Sept 782–Apr 781
2 Ki. 14:1–22	Amaziah		Apr–Sept 796	Apr–Sept 767
*2 Ki. 14:23–29	Jeroboam II	Apr 793–	Sept 782–Apr 781	Aug/Sept–753
*2 Ki. 15:1–7	Azariah	Sept 791–	Apr–Sept 767	Apr–Sept 739
2 Ki. 15:8–12	Zechariah		Aug/Sept 753	March 752
2 Ki. 15:13–15	Shallum		March 752	late Apr 752
2 Ki. 15:16–22	Menahem	late Apr 752–		Sept 742–Apr 741
2 Ki. 15:23–26	Pekahiah		Sept 742–Apr 741	Sept 740–Apr 739
2 Ki. 15:27–31	Pekah	late Apr 752–	Sept 740–Apr 739	Sept 732–Apr 731
*2 Ki. 15:32–38	Jotham	Apr–Sept 750–	Apr–Sept 739–	Sept 732–Sept 731
	Jotham	Sept 753–Sept 731	Sept 735	
*2 Ki. 16:1–20	Ahaz	Sept 735–	Sept 732–Sept 731	c. March 715
*2 Ki. 17:1–41	Hoshea		Sept 732–Apr 731	Apr–Sept 723
**2 Ki. 18:1–20:21	Hezekiah	Sept 729–	c. March 715	Sept 687–Sept 686
*2 Ki. 21:1–18	Manasseh	Sept 697–	Sept–Sept 686	Sept 643–Sept 642
2 Ki. 21:19–26	Amon		Sept 643–Sept 642	Sept 641–Sept 640
2 Ki. 22:1–23:30	Josiah		Sept 641–Sept 640	c. July 609
2 Ki. 23:31–35	Jehoahaz		July 609	c. Oct 609
2 Ki. 23:36–24:7	Jehoiakim		Oct 609	9 Dec 598
**2 Ki. 24:8–17	Jehoiachin	Sept 608–	Dec 598–Apr 597	after Apr 561
2 Ki. 24:18–25:7	Zedekiah		Apr 597–Aug 586	c. Aug 586

\* Minor alterations to Thiele's chronology  
 \*\* Coregencies omitted in Thiele's chronology

### Conclusion

All biblical chronologists are inherently harmonists (with a small 'h'). The different non-Harmonistic approaches adopt a 'cut-and-paste' approach to the Hebrew chronology, testing various ways to amend the data in order to achieve harmony on the basic

assumption that the biblical writers (or copyists) got it wrong. Harmonists, on the other hand, adopt an interpretive approach to the biblical material, testing various ways of reinterpreting the data in order to achieve harmony on the basic assumption that the biblical writers got it right.

Has the chronology of the Hebrew kings been finally settled? It would appear so as far as the approach of the Harmonist is concerned. In only a few places is it susceptible of being adjusted (i.e. reinterpreted) a single year this way or that. Nevertheless it should always be borne in mind that Thiele's chronology is still only an hypothesis; the best, maybe, in the field, but still only an hypothesis. Where, however, his dates agree with established Near Eastern chronology and by absolute dating (the Julian calendar), there we can be sure that he is correct for that segment of Israel's history. Because he is correct in that area does not necessarily mean that every other date in his scheme is incontrovertibly correct. Archaeology has a way of confounding 'the assured results of science', and it would be prudent not to close the door to further minor revisions of Thiele's chronology. Admittedly, the room for adjustment has been narrowed down to a year either way of Thiele's figures because of factor (2) above which Thiele has assumed operated only once in Israel and twice in Judah. There is still the possibility that it may have operated more times than Thiele has allowed for. Adjustments of the year either way are also remotely possible due to factor (1). This factor may not have remained constant throughout the period of the Divided Monarchy. Thiele's assumption is that it did. Archaeology may yet have the last word to say about that!

<sup>1</sup>The Chronicler makes one concession to his strict practice of never mentioning any northern king in a synchronism with a Davidic king, see 2 Ch. 13:1-2. His other two synchronisms are the 36th year from the division of the kingdom (2 Ch. 16:1) and the notice that 'Ahaziah became king [of Judah] forty-two years from the time Omri became king over Israel' (2 Ch. 22:2). The rsv reads, 'Ahaziah was forty-two years old', but this contradicts 2 Ki. 8:26 where Ahaziah is said to be twenty-two years old.

<sup>2</sup>Thiele published his first results (the product of a doctoral thesis) in *JNES* 3 (1944), pp. 137-186. This work was later expanded and published in book form in 1951, 1965, and 1985 as *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

<sup>3</sup>This error was ably rectified by S.H. Horn, 'The Chronology of King Hezekiah's Reign', *AUSS* 2 (1964), pp. 40-52. Such a coregency for Hezekiah was suggested as long ago as 1905 by O.C. Whitehouse, *Isaiah I-XXXIX* (New Century Bible, New York), p. 23. J.R.A. Hughes incorrectly stated that Thiele postulated a coregency for Hezekiah (*The Secret of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, *JOT* Supplement Series 66, Sheffield: JOT Press, 1990, p. 112).

<sup>4</sup>E.g. J.D. Shenkel, *Chronology and Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), and W.H. Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel* (Unpub. D.Th. thesis, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986). He utilizes coregencies in his scheme.

<sup>5</sup>To the 14 chronological solutions proposed from 1884 to 1961 (see H. Tadmor, *Encyclopedia Miqra'it*, 4:245-310) we can add those of Claus Schedl, 'Textkritische Bemerkungen zu den Synchronismen der Könige von Israel und Juda', *VT* 12 (1962), pp. 88-119; J.M. Miller, 'Another Look at the Chronology of the Early Divided Monarchy', *JBL* 86 (1967), pp. 276-288; W.R. Wifall, 'The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel', *ZAW* 80 (1968), pp. 319-337; K.T. Andersen, 'Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda', *Studia Theologica* 23 (1969), pp. 69-114; W.H. Barnes, *op. cit.* (1986), and Jeremy R.A. Hughes, *op. cit.* (1990).

<sup>6</sup>J.M. Miller, 'Another Look at the Chronology of the Early Divided Monarchy', *JBL* 86 (1967), pp. 276-288, suggested reducing Baasha's reign from 24 years to 18, Asa's reign from 41 to 31, and Jehoram's from 10 to 8 on the basis of the Lucianic text of the LXX. W.F. Albright, 'The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel', *BASOR* 100 (1945), pp. 16-22, emended 8 out of 20 regnal totals for Judah and 6 for Israel. E.g. he proposed reducing Rehoboam's reign from 17 years to 8 or 9; Omri's from 12 to 8; Joram's from 12 to 8; Amaziah's from 29 to 18. For a critique of Albright's scheme see Wm. H. Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-16. Albright virtually repudiated coregencies. He accepted only the one between Jotham and Azariah. Albright's dates have dominated John Bright's *A History of Israel* (cf. his 3rd edn, London: SCM Press, 1981) and American exegesis generally. Wm. H. Barnes, *op. cit.*, proposed altering 6 reign lengths.

<sup>7</sup>*Op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>J.H. Hayes and P.K. Hooker, *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988).

<sup>9</sup>The idea goes back to Max Vogelstein, *Biblical Chronology* (Cincinnati, 1944), p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>*JTS* 4 (1953), p. 305.

<sup>11</sup>There is unanimity among scholars for the existence of two New Year dates, but no unanimity on which of these dates Judah and Israel began their respective New Years (see J. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 166 for discussion and bibliography). See also D.J.A. Clines, 'The Evidence for an Autumnal New Year in Pre-exilic Israel Reconsidered', *JBL* 93 (1974), pp. 22-30.

<sup>12</sup>The terms accession- and nonaccession-years are not immediately related to the problem of counting regnal years. To refer directly to this difference in the method of counting (which in any case has to do with the starting point for numbering the first year of a king's reign) we would need to use terms such as 'single-counting' and 'double-counting' years, or a 'non-overlapping' and 'overlapping' first year.

<sup>13</sup>F. Rühl appears to have been the first to make the discovery that there were these two methods for counting regnal years in his work, 'Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 12 (1894/5), pp. 44-76, 171.

<sup>14</sup>The idea goes back to Max Vogelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup>It is not certain who determined how a king's years were to be reckoned, hence the term 'writer' here and in what follows may refer to the original court scribes of Israel and Judah who wrote the 'Book of the Chronicles of Israel' and the 'Book of the Chronicles of Judah' respectively, or it may refer to the canonical writers of Kings and Chronicles.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. the reviews of L.L. Honor, *JQR* 43 (1952/3), pp. 285-286; S.H. Horn, *AUSS* 2 (1964), pp. 40-52, and *AUSS* 5 (1967), p. 213; R. North, *CBQ* 29 (1967), p. 181; H.H. Rowley, *VT* 4 (1953), p. 446; K.A. Strand, *AUSS* 17 (1979), p. 227; W.R. Wifall, *JBL* 98 (1979), pp. 118-119, who lists major works which have adopted Thiele's dates; M.F. Unger, *BibSac* 108 (1951), pp. 377-378; J.L. McKenzie, *CBQ* 14 (1952), pp. 298-303, which is the most incisive review to date along with that of D.N. Freedman, *JRel* 33 (1953), pp. 311-312.

<sup>17</sup>F.D. Kidner, *Churchman* 8 (1967), p. 68.

<sup>18</sup>A number of scholars date the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Zedekiah's 11th and last year ran from Sept. 587 to Sept. 586 BC. Cf. H. Cazelles, '587 ou 586?', in C.L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (eds.), *The Word of the Lord shall go forth* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 427-435.

<sup>19</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 40-89.

<sup>20</sup>K.A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 BC)* (Second Edition with Supplement, Warminster, England, 1986), pp. 544, 575.

<sup>21</sup>This is the view of Kitchen (*op. cit.*) and A.G. Green, *JBL* 97 (1978), p. 358, on the basis that the relief was never completed. The Silsilis Stela is dated to the 21st year of Shishak and it was set up to commemorate the opening of the quarry which was to produce the triumphal relief depicting his invasion of Judah (among other countries). Cf. R.A. Caminos, 'Gebel Es-Silsilah No 100', *JEA* 38 (1952), pp. 46-61.

<sup>22</sup>The Lunar Dates of Thutmose III and Ramesses II', *JNES* 16 (1957), pp. 42-43.

<sup>23</sup>*JNES* 12 (1953), p. 50.

<sup>24</sup>*JNES* 32 (1973), pp. 2-25, esp. p. 107.

<sup>25</sup>See Edward F. Wente (review of Kitchen's book), *JNES* 35 (1978), p. 278. Cf. also E.F. Wente and Charles C. Van Siclen III, 'A Chronology of the New Kingdom', in *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1976), who based their dates on Egyptian data itself.

<sup>26</sup>K.A. Kitchen, *op. cit.*; Erik Hornung, *Untersuchungen zur Chronologie und Geschichte des Neuen Reiches* (Wiesbaden, 1964).

<sup>27</sup>Alberto R. Green, 'David's Relations with Hiram: Biblical and Josephan Evidence for Tyrian Chronology', in C.L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (eds.), *The Word of the Lord shall go forth* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 373-391 (esp. p. 382).

<sup>28</sup>For a fuller treatment and revision of Thiele's chronology see the author's article, 'A Translation Guide to the Chronological Data in Kings and Chronicles', *BibSac* 148 (1991), pp. 3-45.

<sup>29</sup>This and the following coregency were proposed by John Gray in his commentary on *I & II Kings*; *A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 73 and 64 respectively.

<sup>30</sup>Tishri was the beginning of the regnal year in Judah; here 'Sept' stands for Tishri. Nisan was the beginning of the regnal year in Israel; here 'April' stands for Nisan.

<sup>31</sup>Thiele (1983:109) gives an accession-year to Azariah's coregency (see p. 97), which was a lapse on his part for he noted earlier that 'The year that begins a coregency is the first official year of that coregency' (p. 85). Hence coregencies do not have an accession-year. Fortunately accession-years do not count for strict chronological purposes and so there is no difference between the chronology being offered here and that of Thiele.

# Jeremiah: prophet and book

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Though it is one of the less celebrated cruxes in the critical interpretation of the OT, the book of Jeremiah (*Jer*) is an excellent case study in the problems in understanding the meaning of a prophetic book, as well as the relationship between the prophetic figure who lies behind it and the formation of the book itself. *Jer* is particularly interesting because of its resistance to the establishment of a consensus view of it. The history of its criticism is characterized, on the contrary, by a great divide.

On one side of the divide stand those who, taking their cue ultimately from B. Duhm,<sup>1</sup> attribute only a relatively small proportion of the book directly to the prophet. The classic formulation of this position was achieved by S. Mowinckel. Building on Duhm's premiss that only the poetic oracles could be authentic to the prophet Jeremiah, Mowinckel distinguished two further types of material, namely biographical accounts of the prophet's activities ('B') and prosaic sermons ('C'): the poetic oracles themselves he called 'A'. The sermons were attributed, again in line with Duhm, to a 'Deuteronomic' source.<sup>2</sup>

The grounds for such a distinction between parts of the material were in part stylistic, as is clear already from Duhm's overriding criterion of the authenticity of the poetic oracles. The stylistic grounds were not confined to Duhm's axiom, however, but consisted also in the similarity of some of the prose, especially the sermons, to parts of the Deuteronomistic History. Detailed parallels between the two *corpora* were pointed out by both E. Janssen and E.W. Nicholson.<sup>3</sup> The belief that the non-poetic material was in some sense 'Deuteronomic', however, was already present in Duhm.

Nor were the grounds for the distinction exclusively stylistic. It was held, in addition, that the prose sections exhibited certain theological differences from the poetic. They were marked in particular by a strongly conditional covenantal theology, lacking the freshness and immediacy of the authentic prophetic warnings of imminent danger, and betraying rather their home in the chastened reflection of the exile and after.<sup>4</sup> Specific theological contrasts were also pointed out within the book. How, for example, could the prophet of the temple sermon (*Jer* 7:1-15), with its strong plea not to put trust in the permanent-seeming externals of religion, finally promise an everlasting covenant, with its own enduring symbols (*Jer* 31:38-40; 33:14-26)?<sup>5</sup>

Further developments have tended to consider the book as a rather more thoroughgoing Deuteronomic production, so that even what once seemed to be sure ground in the quest for a historical Jeremiah, namely the authenticity of the poetic oracles, has been rendered insecure.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis in this tradition of interpreting *Jer* has thus fallen more and more upon the book, and attached ever less importance to the life and message of the prophet.

On the other side of the divide are those who believe that Jeremiah himself is to be credited with most or all of the material in the book. This approach goes back to the early part of the present century, and counts among its modern advocates J. Bright, H. Weippert and W.L. Holladay.<sup>7</sup> These have in common the belief that the book, in its admitted diversity, can yet be explained within the context of the long and varied ministry of the prophet, who is thus seen as the interpreter of God to Israel in a time when the issues before the people changed swiftly and dramatically. The different styles may correspond to different settings.<sup>8</sup> They may,

indeed, not be so very disparate as they are sometimes believed to be.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the similarity between the *Jer* prose and that of the Deuteronomistic History has been exaggerated at the expense of the similarities of thought and expression of the various parts of Jeremiah.<sup>10</sup> Considerations of style and expression apart, indeed, important differences of content stand against the too ready classification of the book, either in part or as a whole, as Deuteronomic. For example, while the Reform of Josiah occupies a prominent and climactic position in Kings (2 Ki. 22f.), that Reform hardly figures in Jeremiah's preaching. Josiah himself is applauded, admittedly, for his faithfulness (*Jer* 22:15f.), yet only in passing, as an exception to the otherwise highly pessimistic picture of the kings of Judah in the same chapter. Correspondingly, Jeremiah is not even mentioned in Kings, a curious omission in an account of the last days of Judah.

A further striking difference concerns the topic of hope for the future, presumably all-important to the Babylonian exiles. Kings contains no more explicit statement of this than Solomon's great prayer at the dedication of the temple. In 1 Kings 8:46-53, Solomon anticipates the exile, and prays that, should the exiles repent, they might find compassion in the sight of their enemies; he stops short of praying for restoration to the land. This puts his prayer in interesting contrast to the expression of hope for just such a restoration in Deuteronomy 30:1-3. When the books of Kings end, therefore, with the Jews in exile, there is little within their thought which can hold out hope of a return. In this respect, *Jer*, especially in the so-called Book of Consolation, goes beyond Kings, and stands closer to Deuteronomy.<sup>11</sup> However these differences are to be explained, it is at least true to say that the two great works have chosen to represent both the demise of Judah and the prospect in exile somewhat differently. It is justifiable, therefore, to speak of a specifically Jeremianic understanding of God's purpose in the period which is not simply 'Deuteronomic'.

I have thus sketched two different approaches to Jeremiah. It will probably be clear from the discussion that I think that a 'Deuteronomic' understanding of the book does too little justice to its individuality. The emphasis on *Jer* as 'book', particularly in recent discussion, minimizes the role of Jeremiah in its production without adequate justification for doing so. The point may be illustrated by reference to the work of McKane and Carroll.

## 'Book' interpretations

Carroll's treatment of the topic of repentance in Jeremiah 3 illustrates his general approach to the book. The topic is introduced in 3:1-5. This oracle is based upon the law of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. As a man who divorces his wife may under no circumstances remarry her, so, it is implied, Yahweh cannot 'return' to his people once he has rejected them (3:1). In the same breath, scorn is poured on the idea of Israel 'returning' to him with any sincerity. The 'returning' theme is continued in verses 6-11. Carroll's interpretation (like McKane's) depends on the premiss that verses 6-11 misinterpret verses 1-5. In Carroll's view, that passage, in common with the discourse that begins in chapter 2, bears upon Judah alone. Even where the term 'Israel' appears in chapter 2, it refers in reality to Judah. Therefore, verses 6-11 labour under the false impression that verses 1-5 referred originally to the northern kingdom, and thus develop the comparison between the two kingdoms on a false premiss.<sup>12</sup>

This interpretation of 'Israel' in chapter 2 and in 3:1-5 is fragile. Chapter 2 clearly reviews Israel's whole history, both of covenant and apostasy, as its evocation of the wilderness period shows (2:2f.). Its allusions to 'Assyria', furthermore, make most sense if they are recalling the actual experience of the northern kingdom in relation to that Empire. The force of verses 18 and 36 may indeed be that one Empire is much like another as an object of trust. Nevertheless, verse 36 opposes a past experience to a still future one, and has its background in the historical end of Israel (the

northern kingdom) at Assyria's hands. (Incidentally, the future tense adopted by some EVV at 2:26 is gratuitous; it should be translated either with a past or a present.)

In reality, therefore, Jeremiah 2:1-3:5 really does mean 'Israel' when it says it. It is true that that section does not overtly oppose or compare the two kingdoms. Nevertheless, its meaning is that contemporary Judah is in grave danger because of a present apostasy which is in organic continuity with the apostatizing tendency exhibited in Israel's history broadly understood. It follows that 3:6-11 is a legitimate development of the ideas in that section.<sup>13</sup>

As important as the particular argument of Carroll's on this issue, however, is the method which lies behind it. His interpretation of the repentance topic is in line with his belief that the book has reached its present form as a result of a complex process over a long period, reflecting the experience of different groups in a variety of specific circumstances. In the view of Carroll (and again McKane) the theologizing about repentance here, and the habit of contrasting Judah unfavourably with the former northern kingdom, is an exilic or post-exilic pre-occupation, cf. Ezekiel 16:51f. Its real context is the rivalry between the group that has been through exile in Babylon and that which has not. This rivalry is reflected in the vision of Jeremiah in chapter 24, and in the book of Ezra. It is a key *topos* in Carroll's understanding of the whole book. By a curious twist of Carroll's theory, 'Judah' in 3:6-11 must mean the Palestinian group that had not seen Babylon, while 'Israel', the less guilty party, stands for the returning group.<sup>14</sup>

There is some effort of the imagination in all of this. The suggested semiology of the passage is without analogy, and offends against the simplest reading of the text, namely that at some point in his preaching to Judah, Jeremiah compared that people unfavourably with their long-lost cousins in the north — whose fate should serve as a warning to them. In fact, Carroll's broader view of the book has produced his angular exegesis. Here, as *passim* in both his commentary and McKane's, passages are explained against a variety of proposed backgrounds of which we have little in the way of real knowledge.

It is thus assumed that Jeremiah did at some stage in his ministry preach repentance to his contemporaries. The point must be conceded immediately if it is allowed (though not all do) that the temple-sermon of 7:1-15 is authentic to the prophet. However, the issue is more complicated when we ask the question in relation to the passage just discussed. It is important to pursue the point for the following reason. If on the one hand arguments which aim to put distance between the book and the prophet do not always rest on firm evidence (as I think we have seen), there may be an opposite danger, in trying to secure the book for the prophet, of under-estimating the extent to which it is indeed a 'book', and as such a piece of reflective theology.

My point about the difficulty of unearthing the repentance preaching of Jeremiah that underlies 3:1-4:4 is that the text which we have seems to bear the marks of a digested reflection on that preaching. This consists in the pervasive sense in the chapter that the people who are called to repent *cannot* do so. Calls to repent come at 3:12, 14, 22; 4:1. Their most interesting characteristic is the play on the verb *šûb* 'return', 'repent'. The command *šûbâh* (v. 12) is followed immediately by the epithet *m'šûbâh*, 'faithless' (RSV), implying that the people have a strong tendency to 'turn', indeed, but to turn away from God rather than to him. The thought is most fully developed in 3:22, where the final word on the subject is God's statement: 'I will heal your faithlessness.'

The intervention of God in this way anticipates the theology of the new covenant, in the sense that there also the failure of Judah to respond to the call to repent is met by a new approach on God's part to the problem of continuing in covenant with her (cf. 24:7; 31:33; 32:39f.; and further below). This means that Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 participates in an important way in the final theological shaping of the whole book. Though it testifies to an actual preaching of repentance on Jeremiah's part (a testimony supported by Jer. 7:1-15), it is not an undigested reportage of *ipsissima verba*; rather, it incorporates the whole trajectory of thinking about repentance in the book. It is a *theology* of repentance, a reflection on what happens when the covenant people is found unwilling, or perhaps unable, to turn to God definitively.

With these observations, I hope to have illustrated the first of my main contentions. I have said above that many lose sight, gratuitously in my view, of the prophet who lies behind the

message. There is an obverse of this, however, namely that those who seek the man behind the book may be diverted by an overly 'biographical' method from doing justice to the book as a 'book', that is, as a sustained theological reflection. The two quests, for the man and for the book, are not, in my view, inimical to each other. We are obliged, however, if we would undertake both, to think carefully about the nature of the relationship between the two.

## 'Prophet' interpretations

Recent studies of Jeremiah have indeed produced significant attempts to understand the relationship between the prophet and his book on the basic premiss that he was responsible for all or most of it. These studies go beyond the major recent attempts (of Bright and Weippert) simply to establish the likely authenticity of the prose as well as the poetry, to confront the question how the different kinds of theological articulation of Judah's position before Yahweh may be understood together.

It may be worth elaborating the point (made earlier) that such differences do exist side by side in *Jer.* Jeremiah's 'temple-sermon', for example (7:1-15, and more briefly in 26:2-6), seems to be a straightforward record of a preaching on the basis of covenantal conditions, which aims to produce repentance on the hearers' part. On the other hand, there are unqualified pictures of coming doom, such as 4:5-8, reinforced by Jeremiah's own anguished and vivid realization of the horrors ahead (Jer. 4:19-21). These, as we shall see, have been variously read either as servant of the call to repent or as a separate stage in Jeremiah's preaching. A further set of passages does make explicit, however, that God's way forward for Judah is through exile: a time for repentance is past. One indicator of this is the repeated prohibition of intercession laid upon the prophet (7:16; 11:14; cf. 15:1). And the clearest representation of the point is in the vision of the two baskets of figs (ch. 24), in which the good figs are those who go into exile, and the bad are those who refuse. The former are those who have acquiesced in God's purposes, and who therefore have a future with him; the latter he has rejected. Much of Jeremiah's later ministry seems to have been devoted to the proposition that the duty of king and people was to submit to the Babylonian yoke (21:9; 27:8-11), understandably provoking passionate hostility, and the suspicion of treachery (37:11-15). The exile was the only means by which a future might be secured for the covenant people (29:10-14). Repentance preaching thus gives way to another kind of appeal. The movement from repentance preaching to an acknowledgment of its failure, and of the consequent need for God to act in some other way, was evident in the treatment of the repentance theme itself in 3:1-4:4. The same movement may also be found in the book as a whole. There is evidently a chronological dimension to this change. The preaching of repentance obviously only makes sense before the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's ravages of Judah (597); correspondingly, the preaching of exile as a part of God's determined plan is firmly associated in the book with the reign of Zedekiah, *i.e.* between the two main attacks on Judah, and prior to the fall of Jerusalem (see ch. 24). The recognition of this chronological dimension, however, does not immediately solve the problem of the composition of the book.

One attempt to account for the change is that of T.M. Raitt. He traces a development from the early repentance preaching through a time when Jeremiah preached inevitable annihilation, to a final stage when he once again preached salvation, now on the basis of new covenant theology (31:31-34). The development, therefore, follows a clear chronological line. Indeed, Raitt says that his 'suggestion of developmental sequence in Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's message is one of the most basic hypotheses offered in this book'.<sup>15</sup> That hypothesis is supported by a form-critical argument, according to which the various stages of the prophecy are conveyed by forms which are suitable to the particular message. Thus, in the second stage, when Jeremiah is pronouncing complete annihilation and the end of the covenant, the chosen form is the Oracle of Judgment. The ideological framework of the Oracle of Judgment is the Mosaic covenant. In the hands of Jeremiah, however, the covenantal principle of justice comes to be more fundamental than that of election: '... strictly covenantal concerns are largely superseded, and prophetic theology is stretched to a breaking-point'.<sup>16</sup> The Oracle of Judgment, therefore, adopts a distinct interpretation of the fate of Judah both from the idea of exile as a chastisement (as in Lev. 26:44, which Raitt sees as deliberately opposing Jeremiah), or, to vary the thought slightly, from 'remnant-theology'.<sup>17</sup> It is important to be clear about Raitt's position here. He is not simply saying that Jeremiah has not yet

developed a remnant-theology when he preaches judgment. Such theology, after all, already exists within the prophetic tradition (as in Hosea). Rather, he believes that Jeremiah's Oracle of Judgment actively repudiates such theology. His subsequent adoption of it, therefore, is by way of a *volte-face*.

Raitt has made important observations on the nature of form criticism, in which he rightly criticizes much use of it as too rigid.<sup>18</sup> He has also correctly observed the element of theodicy in Jeremiah's preaching of judgment.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, his differentiation of the three 'stages' of Jeremiah's prophecy is itself too rigid. The idea that the Oracle of Judgment proclaims annihilation in an unqualified way, and that it is a consciously distinct route from other messages in the book, is open to question. On the one hand, it is hard to think that Jeremiah was not actually aiming for repentance when he uttered an exhortation such as 4:8 – the girding with sackcloth, lamenting and wailing being signs of penitence. On the other, the Oracle of Judgment can contain a hint like 9:7 that the judgment will have a purgative intention. Raitt's analysis, therefore, has its own rigidity, and has not, I believe, finally accounted for the relationship of the various parts of Jeremiah's message to each other.

J. Unterman has in common with Raitt a belief that a development in Jeremiah's thought can be traced in distinct stages. His approach, however, is rather more theologically orientated, beginning from the question whether Jeremiah regarded repentance as a prerequisite of redemption. (Repentance is defined as a decisive turning towards God; redemption is the act of God's mercy, restoring the blessings of the covenant.<sup>20</sup>) Unterman's study of the theme turns on the belief that Jeremiah's thought underwent a transition in relation to it. Unlike Raitt, he does not imagine a time when Jeremiah abandoned a belief in salvation at all; rather, the preaching of judgment had repentance and restoration as its goal.<sup>21</sup> Salvation, therefore, is always in view. The question is only how it is attained. Unterman is right, I believe, in his basic understanding of 2:4–4:4 as Jeremiah's own composition, reflecting his theological reasoning about the topic.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, his treatment also encounters problems when it attempts to trace a process in the prophet's thought along a time-line. Unterman's thesis is that Jeremiah's earliest preaching shows a belief that redemption is dependent on repentance (as in 3:12f.), that in a transitional phase he saw the need for repentance receding in favour of a redemptive act of God (e.g. 24:4–7), and that finally he abandoned the former altogether (as in 31:27–34).

Unterman's attempt to account for the data in Jeremiah is commendable because of its recognition that they are the deposit of the book's handling of a difficult theological topic. In pursuit of it, he makes numerous perceptive criticisms of literary-critical manoeuvres which unnecessarily force texts apart. However, he himself introduces polarities into the theological discussion which, in their own way, are just as insecure.

The problem lies in his handling both of the texts and the concepts. Crucial to his argument is the belief that theologies of repentance and redemption can and sometimes do lie at opposite ends of a spectrum. Thus the Deuteronomist is strongly influenced by the former. For this reason Deuteronomy 30:1–10 is decisively different from Jeremiah 24:4–7, for while both anticipate redemption, the passage in Deuteronomy lays down repentance as a condition, but in Jeremiah 24 it is muted, and in Unterman's view clearly receding in favour of an emphasis on God's mercy.<sup>23</sup> I have already said that on the subject of hope for the future, *Jer* lies close to Deuteronomy 30:1–10.<sup>24</sup> And in fact, Unterman's contrast cannot be maintained, for two reasons. First, it fails to realize to what extent Deuteronomy itself contains reflection on the relationship between repentance and redemption. The point may be illustrated by a comparison of Deuteronomy 10:16 with Deuteronomy 30:6. While the metaphor of circumcision of the heart appears in both, there is an unmistakable shift from the former to the latter, in which God himself effects the circumcision. This shift evidently belongs within the reflection that characterizes the discourse of Deuteronomy broadly conceived. Deuteronomy, therefore, is by no means propounding a theology of repentance that is opposed to one of redemption. Rather it is precisely recognizing the complexity of that theological topic.

The second objection to finding a significant contrast between the two passages lies in the superficial grounds found for it in the texts. Unterman regards repentance as secondary in importance in Jeremiah 24:4–7 because it appears only in verse 7b, at the end of

the passage. This positioning, however, hardly demonstrates negligibility; indeed the reverse could be argued equally plausibly. The idea that the repentance demand is 'receding' here is actually quite subjective.

In fact, Unterman's specific argument about the relation between repentance and redemption finally founders because of the essential improbability of the view that they are, or are potentially, rival theologies. That view leads him into a number of fragile interpretations of texts. This is best illustrated by his treatment of some which he finds difficult to place. On 30:5–17, for example, he finds Jeremiah vacillating between the call to repent and the promise of redemption, and even wonders whether he might for a time have held two different views simultaneously.<sup>25</sup> Such a conclusion should have suggested that the trail was false.

There is in fact a flaw in the procedure, adopted by Unterman, by which texts are isolated from each other and from larger contexts and taken, by virtue of their particular form of expression, to represent points on a spectrum of views about a topic. (Thus texts which make promises about the future but which omit the terminology of repentance are taken to have rejected the idea.<sup>26</sup>) There is no account either, on this view, of the book as a whole, in which the various texts discussed are held to be from Jeremiah, yet according to which it contains ideas which, *ex hypothesi*, he rejected.<sup>27</sup>

### A third way

In response to both Raitt and Unterman it may be urged that *Jer* contains rather sophisticated reflection on the relationship between repentance and redemption, and that the various texts on the topic have their place in it. Indeed, I believe that what was said above about the nature of the composition in Jeremiah 3:1–4:4 applies to the whole book. That is, there is a sustained treatment in the book of the problem of Israel/Judah's failure to respond to God in the way in which the covenant required. The book in its final form knows the outcome of the preaching of Jeremiah, and therefore the record of his ministry is not merely such, but also a casting of the issues in the context of a discussion *a posteriori*.

The thesis can be elaborated only sketchily here (its character having been adumbrated by the treatment of 3:1–4:4 above).<sup>28</sup> In trying to understand the development, it is clear that one must recognize a chronological aspect to it. However, it is, in a sense, merely part of the staging of the discussion. The issue throughout is how there may be a future for the people of God in view of their refusal to meet the covenant demands. The story opens (though its stages do not correspond neatly with parts of the book, or not uniformly so) with echoes of repentance preaching (as in 7:1–15) side by side with pictures of a people that cannot repent (e.g. 3:1–4:4. The topic is developed more broadly throughout chs. 2–20.) The line of development continues with the recognition that judgment must therefore ensue, *as a means* of the relationship continuing (21–24). The survival of the covenant depends wholly on the gracious initiative of God, which is conceived as something quite new (31:31–34), but which does not relinquish the basic understanding of covenant as one of mutual commitment in which the obedience of the human partner is indispensable. This is the context of 24:7, 31:33 and, most explicitly, of 32:39f. The idea of God *enabling* the obedience is precisely Jeremiah's answer to the basic problem. It also stands as the book's answer to the question how such uncompromising criticism of the temple worship as is found in 7:1–15 can be followed by a passage like 33:14–26, which affirms so categorically the permanence of the very institutions which Jeremiah once excoriated. The transformation of Jeremiah from prophet of judgment to prophet of salvation, incidentally, is not undertaken lightly. It is very carefully portrayed and explained in chapters 28f., where he confronts those salvation-prophets who do not recognize the need of a purging of the people in exile. The whole dramatization of the prophet's life, indeed, may be said to aim to show that his transformation was, as it were, through fire. It is the theology of new covenant, together with the portrayal of Jeremiah's experience in himself of the judgment of God, which enables the transition to hope.

The issue of the irreversible requirement of obedience in the covenant people does not go away, however, after the Book of Consolation (*i.e.* *Jer.* 30–33). Rather, it continues to be aired in the persistent refusal of the remnant in Judah following 586 BC to hear God's word through the prophet (chs. 40–44). In this account, the judgment on those who would refuse the purging experience of

Babylon (in terms of 24:1-7), though it seems determined in that vision, is shown also to be chosen and merited. Finally, the Oracles against the Nations (Jer. 46-51) reverse early warnings addressed to Judah. Babylon, the destroying 'foe from the north', falls in turn to another of the same (50:3). In the logic of *Jer*, its fate follows appropriately on God's use of it as a scourge of his people. It had its time, just as there was a time of purging for Judah, but falls in the end, a victim of its own concupiscence, and helpless witness of God's vindication of its former prey. The position of the Oracles against the Nations in MT (as opposed to their position after 25:13 in LXX) is well fitted to their function there, providing a suitable climax to the book.

The topic of hope for the future, therefore, understood as the question about the survival of covenant and covenant people, is the object of sustained reflection in *Jer*. The chronological development is subsidiary to a theological and literary one. This is why it is difficult to recover a chronology of the prophet's life; it is not the subject of the book.

## Conclusions

With these observations, we return to the question posed at the outset, namely that of the relationship between prophet and book. By means of a consideration of the topic of repentance and redemption we considered the cases, first for the treatment of Jeremiah primarily as 'book', to the extent that its connection with the prophet became slight or negligible, and secondly for accounts which maximized the involvement of the man in the literary work which we now have. In the first case, we found the most extreme 'book' approaches were not supported by firm evidence in their minimizing of Jeremiah's influence. In the second, however, we found that interpretations which took the prophet's life as the true context of the words attributed to him were insufficiently sensitive to the 'book' aspect of his literary deposit. In charting the developments of Jeremiah's thought — which they did more or less plausibly — they did not account satisfactorily for the coexistence of its various stages in the final product.

The foregoing does not intend to adopt the former course outlined. The programme of the book cannot, I believe, be simply assimilated to the anonymous 'Deuteronomistic' endeavours of the exilic period, as I have maintained above. I intend rather to show two things. The first is that the book may be derived quite genuinely from Jeremiah. This proposition depends not only on what I see as the failure of others to provide convincing alternative hypotheses for the setting of the book, but also on a view of the nature of the Israelite prophetic tradition, within which, I think, the contents of *Jer* can reasonably be understood. For example, the repentance trajectory which we discovered in *Jer* can also be found in Hosea. This, it may be replied, raises a difficult question about the nature of the dependence of Jeremiah on the earlier source, when one is proposing an actual progression in the thought of the later prophet. Nevertheless, the authenticity of the substance of Hosea currently enjoys a rather secure footing in OT scholarship. Furthermore, points of contact between *Jer* and earlier prophetic books are numerous and broad in their range.<sup>29</sup>

My second intention, however, is to show that the book does not derive from the prophet in a simple way, as if it were a mere collection of *logia* which, for all their authenticity, made little sense as a whole. The words are, I suggest, those of Jeremiah-ben-Hilkiah, a prophet of Judah in the broad Israelite prophetic tradition. They are transmitted to us, however, by means of his own mature reflection on them, in the light of his experience both of God and of God's dealings with his people in history. *Jer* as a book, therefore, forms a part of the OT's evaluation of the experience of exile. This, then, is to maintain a distinction in principle between the life of the man and the meaning of his book, though the two are interwoven. Only an approach of this sort can, I think, both acknowledge the variety of thought in the book, and find an explanation for it that satisfactorily maintains its coherence.

<sup>1</sup>B. Duhm, *Jeremia* (Tübingen and Leipzig, Mohr 1901).

<sup>2</sup>S. Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiania, Jacob Dybwad 1914). He modified his position somewhat, so as to associate the sermons more closely with Jeremiah in a later work, *Prophecy and Tradition: the Prophetic Books in the Light of Study of the Growth and History of the Tradition* (Oslo, Jacob Dybwad 1946).

<sup>3</sup>E. Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht 1956); E.W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles* (Oxford, Blackwell 1967), pp. 116ff. Nicholson abandoned the distinction between 'C' and 'D' material,

regarding the prose in general as deriving from the Babylonian exiles' adjustment to their new circumstances.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. the comments on Duhm and Mowinckel on this topic in L. Stulman, *The Prose Sermons of the Book of Jeremiah* (Atlanta, Georgia, Scholars Press 1986), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>On the theology of new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) as a post-Deuteronomistic leap of hope, see R.P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (London, SCM 1986), p. 614; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 636-639, for the view that 33:14-26 are a further supplement to the cycle in chs. 31-32.

<sup>6</sup>The source of this trend is J.P. Hyatt, 'The Deuteronomistic Edition of Jeremiah', *Vanderbilt Studies in the Humanities* 1 (1951), pp. 71-95. See also W. Thiel, *Die Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25* (Wageningen, Neukirchener Verlag 1973).

<sup>7</sup>An early advocate of the authenticity of the whole book was Th. Robinson, 'Baruch's Roll', *ZAW* 42 (1924), pp. 209-221. More recently: J. Bright, 'The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah', *JBL* 70 (1951), pp. 15-35; *Jeremiah* (New York, Doubleday 1965); H. Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Buches Jeremia* (Berlin, de Gruyter 1973); W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1, 2* (Philadelphia, Fortress 1986, 1989) — the fruit of a published oeuvre spanning many years.

<sup>8</sup>Note in this connection Holladay's theory of septennial readings of Deuteronomy, based on the command in Dt. 31:9-13. Jeremiah's prose he then takes to be a counter-proclamation, in the same style; *op. cit.*, 2.27. The thesis of J.W. Miller, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels Sprachlich und Theologisch untersucht* (Assen, van Gorcum 1955) has elements in common with Holladay; see pp. 32f.

<sup>9</sup>J.L. Kugel has shown that the familiar distinction between prose and poetry is not hard and fast, but rather imports categories which are to some extent misleading. He also alerts the reader to the false impressions which can be given by the versification of parts of the biblical text, in both Hebrew and English Bibles: *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven, Yale University Press 1981), especially pp. 76ff., where he illustrates the point in relation to Jer. 30:6-11.

<sup>10</sup>This is the thesis of Bright and Weippert; see n. 7.

<sup>11</sup>I have elaborated this point in two other articles. In 'Narrative and Meaning in the Books of Kings', *Bib* 70 (1989), pp. 31-49, I have tried to show the logic of the books of Kings, which finish, despite the glories of Josiah, on a note of uncertainty about the future, waiting for God to act in whatever way he will. In '1 Kings viii 46-53 and the Deuteronomistic Hope', *VT* forthcoming, I have argued that the prayer of Solomon deliberately stops short of expressing the hope found in Dt. 30:1-3, though it knows the passage.

<sup>12</sup>Carroll, *op. cit.*, pp. 145f.; cf. W. McKane, *Jeremiah I* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark 1986), p. 67; *idem*, 'Poetry and Prose in the Book of Jeremiah with special reference to Jer. iii 6-11 and xii 14-17', *SVT* 25 (1980), pp. 229ff.

<sup>13</sup>For a fuller treatment of this point see my forthcoming book, *Judgment and Promise: the Message of Jeremiah*, ch. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Carroll, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup>T.M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment and Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia, Fortress 1977), p. 36.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 26, 32.

<sup>18</sup>T.M. Raitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 150ff. He makes the telling point that form criticism, as usually conceived, can hardly deal with any 'new' situation. Notice also his perceptive critique of Begrich, *ad loc.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 89ff.

<sup>20</sup>J. Unterman, *From Repentance to Redemption* (Sheffield, JSOT 1987), p. 11.

<sup>21</sup>J. Unterman, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 64-67.

<sup>24</sup>See n. 11.

<sup>25</sup>J. Unterman, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 89ff.

<sup>27</sup>Holladay's position has much in common with those of Raitt and Unterman, especially the former. His account of transitions in Jeremiah's thought is similar to Raitt's, though he perhaps draws less firm distinctions between the different stages; see *op. cit.*, 2 pp. 78-80. Holladay's theory about the development of Jeremiah as a succession of scrolls may give a fixity to the various parts of the book which would enable him to account for the coexistence of different answers to the question about Judah's future in its final form. However, this in turn seems to prohibit interpretation of them in conscious relation to each other as Jeremiah's specific contribution to the topic.

<sup>28</sup>Its full articulation is the subject of my *Judgment and Promise* (see n. 13).

<sup>29</sup>See Holladay, *op. cit.*, 2 pp. 44ff.; McConville, *op. cit.*, ch. 8.

## Some additional reading

(excluding items referred to in the article, and mainly recent):

### Commentaries

E.A. Martens, *Jeremiah*, Herald Press, Scottsdale Pa, 1986; emphasis on interpretation and application.

D.F. Kidner, *The Message of Jeremiah* (BST), IVP, Leicester, 1987; commentary in expository style.

J.A. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, Paternoster/Eerdmans, 1980; still the best general commentary.

R.E. Clements, *Jeremiah* (Interpretation), John Knox, Atlanta; more 'critical' than the above, but good emphasis on theological interpretation.

Notice R.P. Carroll, 'Radical Clashes of Will and Style', *JSOT* 45 (1989), pp. 99-114, on recent commentaries (including his own).

#### Introductory and other studies

W.J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, Apollos, Leicester, 1989, pp. 112-126.

Peter J.M. Southwell, *Prophecy*, Hodder; contains a treatment of Jeremiah as an example of the interpretation of prophecy.

John Goldingay, *God's Prophet, God's Servant*, Paternoster, Exeter, 1984; the 'prophet' is Jeremiah. A readable approach to the main issues of interpretation.

T.W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood*, SCM, London, 1970; a

useful treatment of the theology of the book through an exploration of the idea of falsehood.

#### On the new covenant

W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, Paternoster, Exeter, 1984, pp. 170-185.

H.W. Wolff, *Confrontations with Prophets*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1983, pp. 49-62.

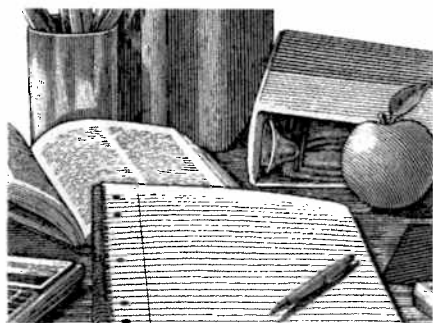
#### Other, more specialized, works

W. Baumgartner, *Jeremiah's Poems of Lament*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1987; a translation of the classic work on this topic (these poems are often called the Confessions of Jeremiah).

Kathleen O'Connor, *The Confessions of Jeremiah; their Interpretation and Role in Chs. 1-25*, Scholars, Atlanta, 1988; interprets the Confessions in their literary and theological contexts; an interesting contribution to the individuality of this part of the book and its integration into its theology.

L.G. Perdue and B.W. Kovacs, *A Prophet to the Nations*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, 1984; a collection of essays on the criticism of Jeremiah.

## READERS'



## RESPONSES

### What on earth was the result of the fall?

Steve Bishop ('Green theology and deep ecology', 16.3, April-May 1991) has given us a theology for the environment which is as topical as it is important, as New-Agers and pantheists, who are strong on creation, weak on the fall, and weaker still on atonement, are providing a high-profile alternative. His 'salvation history' approach of creation-fall-redemption-new earth needs to be stressed, as this gives the only framework for a Christian understanding of the environment. However, I have one question about his paper: What on earth was the result of the fall?

Steve writes on the fall: 'The whole of creation was disrupted. The shalom that existed in the Garden between God, humanity and nature was disrupted. It is in the fall that the roots of our ecological crisis lie.'

I agree with the last statement, and this is spelt out in Ron Elsdon's *Bent World* (IVP, 1981). The first part I cannot accept, as Steve holds that the fall introduced suffering and death into a world where they were previously absent.

Until the geologists came along with their hammers in about 1800, most would have

agreed with Steve that Adam's sin brought death and suffering into the world. This is expounded poetically by Milton in *Paradise Lost*:

*Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden.*

(Book i, l. 1)

*Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,  
And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,  
Devour'd each other.* (x, ll. 710-712)

and prosaically by commentators, for example Calvin. (Predacity prior to the fall was accepted by some, e.g. Matthew Poole, but that was a minority view.)

This outlook was challenged by geologists, who 'stretched' Genesis with their long ages, and from fossil evidence were claiming that animals were dying and eating each other long before man appeared. Even before Darwin was out of nappies this was accepted by all geologists and many Christians, Thomas Chalmers being one of the first. When *The Origin* was published all opponents of Darwin, including Wilberforce, took this for granted. In the latter part of the nineteenth century almost all evangelicals accepted that animal suffering came in long before man. Contemporary palaeontology continues to claim this, with evidence of death from 3,500 million years ago and even a pair of dinosaurs fossilized while locked in mortal combat some 100 million years ago (see D. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*, 1987; my paper on 'A History of the Effects of the Fall', CIs Annual Conference, 1990; E.C. Lucas, *Themelios* 12.2 (1987) on the fall).

In his discussion of the fall Steve Bishop makes his conclusion clear: the fall affected the whole of the natural world. Would he agree with St Bernard, who claimed 'a wild spot is in a state of Original Sin', and regard the Welshman who in 1686 reckoned Snowdon was a Paradise to be in theological error?

The so-called evolutionary picture with its myriads of ages is well known. If it is correct, then Calvin was wrong to say that sin 'perverted the whole order of nature', resulting in 'fleas, caterpillars [butterflies?] and other noxious insects' (Commentary on Gn. 2:2). That view can be acceptable only if the earth is very young, i.e. some 10,000 years old. If that is the case then all geology is fatally flawed.

It is too glib to say that 'The approach we take seems to depend on whether or not we take

scientific issues into account when we interpret the Scriptures'. It is impossible not to. There are the old issues raised by Copernicus and Galileo over astronomy, which were so beautifully resolved in anticipation by the geocentric Calvin in his Commentary, and aided by his principle of accommodation. If we use archaeology to help in the interpretation of a text, then we are taking scientific issues into account. If it is permissible to use archaeology as an aid to biblical interpretation, then so can geology be used to aid our interpretation of the fall. After all, the historical methods used by both sciences are identical, so that if geology is wrong, then so is archaeology.

Most commentaries on Genesis take scientific issues into account, be they Calvin, Patrick, Gill, or Morris and Kidner. Theology is not carried out in a vacuum. As Lucas very rightly pointed out, scientific issues must be taken into account. That is not the same as letting science dictate our theology (it is here I disagree almost violently with contemporary pantheism), but it will affect our interpretation of the fall. If the geological/evolutionary picture is correct (I'll come clean, I hold it to be so), then we must argue, and argue forcibly, that 'there is little [I would say no] evidence that nature has been altered in a fundamental way'. To hold any other view is factually wrong and, as it is not dealing with 'the way the world is', then conclusions drawn from it are liable to be wrong.

Perhaps to some I am nit-picking, but it is a fundamental point. Steve rejects various pantheistic and Whiteheadian approaches. Whatever their faults theologically, which are legion, they have one virtue: they address the world as it is and has been for 4,600 million years. As a result they have a certain plausibility. Steve's otherwise excellent article has one major fault: it addresses the world as it is not and never has been. The fall did not result in a disruption of creation - death, predacity, volcanoes, earthquakes. They were there from the beginning.

The article requires only to accept that the fall was limited in its effects to humanity to become a very valuable argument for a Christian approach to the environment, and a healthy antidote to New Age ecoism and other non-biblical approaches.

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# Charismatic prophecy and New Testament prophecy

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## Introduction

In recent times, through the impact of the charismatic movement, the 'spiritual gifts' of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 have been brought to the attention of the Christian church.<sup>1</sup> Certain particular gifts have, from time to time, been stressed by charismatic participants and currently there is a fashionable interest in prophecy.<sup>2</sup> In the charismatic movement the term 'prophecy' is used in a technical sense to refer to a message from God to someone (an individual, group, local community, nation or society) by means of a spokesperson. This usually occurs through the medium of a revelatory experience – that is, an experience such as a vision, dream, mental picture, words coming to mind, or other such experiences, through which the person believes that God is communicating directly. This interest in prophecy has been most recently evident with the discussion and debate concerning the Kansas City prophets.<sup>3</sup> The prophetic experiences and theological interpretations expounded by this 'school' (if it may be called that), and indeed the rest of the charismatic movement, raise some interesting and important questions concerning the nature of prophetic inspiration and revelation.

Evangelicals have rightly voiced concern about these issues as they relate to contemporary prophecy. However the basic question which I wish to raise is this: *Does contemporary prophetic experience correspond to, or cohere with, NT prophecy?* In other words, is NT prophecy similar to, or the same as, or different in kind to, contemporary prophecy? This, of course, also depends upon how the NT is interpreted, since definitions of the NT phenomenon vary. And so, while it should be admitted that this question is not an easy one to answer, it must remain basic to any serious theological enquiry. Charismatic literature does not really deal with it, and charismatics often *assume* that there is a direct relationship between both sets of experience. Is this really the case?

A number of scholars have expressed themselves in this area and they are able to assist, to some extent, our consideration of this particular question. Therefore five contributions will be described, their relationship to each other noted, and some specific comments made.

## 1. J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step With The Spirit*

Packer has posed the question directly by asking: 'Can charismatic prophecy be convincingly viewed as the restoring of a New Testament sign gift? Surely not' (p. 214). He notes that according to Joel's prediction, recorded in Acts 2:17-21, universal prophecy is a mark of the age of the Spirit. He contends that prophecy should not therefore be absent from any age; and he is suspicious of any theory which assumes that prophecy has been absent for most of church history, as some charismatics insist.

He maintains that the essence of prophecy is not 'foretelling' (prediction) but forthtelling (proclamation), 'and this regularly meant application of revealed truth rather than augmentation of it' (p. 215). He explains his position more fully when he says:

So it is natural to suppose that ordinarily, and certainly sometimes if not every time, a prophetic 'revelation' (1 Cor. 14:26, 30) was a God-prompted application of truth that in general terms had been revealed already, rather than a disclosure of divine thoughts and intentions not previously known and not otherwise knowable. By parity of reasoning, therefore, any verbal enforcement of biblical teaching as it applies to one's present hearers may properly be called prophecy today, for that in truth is what it is. (p. 215)

The use of direct speech within charismatic circles (e.g. when a person uses a preface to a prophecy such as 'Thus says the Lord . . .') Packer considers to be misleading because it confuses canonical prophecy with a non-canonical derivative kind of prophecy (previously described). The fact that he can explain prophecy in terms of applied, heart-searching preaching, which has always existed in the church's history (according to Packer – and which he appears to assume), in contrast to the charismatic claims of sudden restoration, is for him convincing. Likewise he believes that any prophecy which is accepted as authentic because of its verbal form or mere existence is wrong (p. 216). Again, he argues that the verbal form used by many charismatics is not to be found in the NT, and this also negates their claim to have experienced a restoration of the NT sign gift. The tests, for Packer, of any alleged prophecy remain the doctrinal content (Dt. 13:1-3) and the fulfilment of any prediction (Dt. 18:22).

In summary, it could be said that Packer regards prophecy both in the NT and today as the preaching of Bible truth with application, whether it is given in a formal or informal setting (p. 217). He is not 'convinced' by contemporary claims of direct revelation; he contends that no argument is cogent enough and that in his opinion none will ever be.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. D. Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*

As can be seen from the title of this book, Hill is dealing with the NT, but he does then consider its application to the present day. Hill describes a Christian prophet in the NT as someone, divinely called and inspired, who occasionally or regularly receives intelligible and authoritative revelations which he/she is 'impelled to deliver publicly'. The form of these prophecies may be oral or written and may be given to Christian individuals or to a Christian community (p. 8). In his section dealing with the Pauline evidence, Hill states that:

As *pastoral* preachers the New Testament prophets teach and give instruction on what the Christian way requires of individual believers and of the community as a whole. As an objection to this view it may be argued that a teacher or instructor works with materials already known and makes them relevant to his hearers' needs, whereas a prophet's utterances cannot and should not be dissociated from the impartation of knowledge not already available and which does not come to him by the application of rational thought, but only by 'revelation'. (p. 129)

It is with respect to the content of revelation that Hill and Packer would appear to part company; although the pastoral preaching of prophets, to which Hill refers, may come close to Packer's applied preaching.

Hill believes that there is indeed common ground between the NT period and today, but equally he feels that there are real differences. For example, he does not believe that 'the interpretation of tongues' corresponds to prophecy in the NT. Neither does he think that in the NT there is a distinction between natural and inspired prophecy, as some have suggested; nor does he believe that prophecy in the NT includes the allegorical interpretation of Scripture (pp. 203-206).<sup>5</sup>

Hill neatly summarizes his position by saying:

Those Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostal writers who describe the 'gift of prophecy' in terms of edificatory exhortation (*paraklēsis*) seem closer to what in our view Paul, Acts and the book of Revelation consider to be the chief function of prophets. (p. 206, cf. p. 210)

Thus Hill is more open to the possibility of a correlation between NT and current charismatic experience in terms of the chief function of prophecy.

### 3. W.A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*

A breakthrough came in the subject of NT studies with the publication in 1982 of Grudem's doctoral thesis entitled *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*.<sup>6</sup> This has been followed at the popular level with publication in 1988 of Grudem's work, supplemented with application to the contemporary situation (page numbers below refer to the 1988 book).

Grudem's method is characteristic of most NT scholars approaching this subject: he first seeks to define the NT phenomenon and then makes application from that definition to today. He defines NT prophecy primarily in relation to the words relayed and their authority: thus the OT prophets spoke with divine authority of actual words, while NT prophets spoke with divine authority of general content. OT prophets correspond to NT apostles, who also had authority of actual words. For Grudem the distinction is a sharp one. So NT prophets would merely speak 'human words to report something God brings to mind' (p. 67, chs. 3-5). However, for Grudem that message is called by Paul a 'revelation' which is spontaneously given to an individual. The basis for Grudem's definition is thus 1 Corinthians 14:29-31: 'Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged' (NIV).

This distinction of Grudem's is helpful in seeking to understand the relative nature of such prophetic authority and at the same time the possibility of a divine source. He believes that confusion arises when charismatics fail to make this distinction and so refer to prophecies as 'the word of the Lord', thus taking on the form of OT canonical prophecy. This, according to Grudem, is unjustified and betrays a misunderstanding of the differences between OT and NT (non-apostolic) prophecy.

Grudem understands the content of NT prophecy to be related to the specific needs of the moment (p. 152). The content is derived from the 'revelation' which is received in a direct fashion from God rather than being mediated through Scripture. In a summary statement he says: 'The essential elements would be that it is based on a "revelation", that it be spoken publicly, and that it bring about an edifying result' (p. 162). This statement, in itself, appears similar to other definitions (especially Hill's), but behind it stands Grudem's concept of authority, outlined above, which gives it a unique perspective.

In criticism of Grudem from a NT perspective, Max Turner has made two notable points. Firstly, Grudem appears to have overdrawn the distinction between apostolic and prophetic prophecy. Were the apostles really regarded as prophetic messengers giving actual words from God? Turner sees no evidence for this outside the Apocalypse, and that there the claim to authority is in the name of *prophecy* not *apostolicity* (Turner, p. 16).

Secondly, this is also where Turner feels that Grudem's distinction is unfounded semantically. He notes that the primary significance of a statement lies with the 'structure of the propositions of a communication', rather than the 'surface structure of the wording'.<sup>7</sup> So that a definition which is closely allied with the surface structure of language in general rests upon a misunderstanding linguistically. Turner suggests that in fact there was probably a spectrum of authority extending from apostolic speech and prophecy at one extreme to 'vague and barely profitable attempts at oracular speech' at the other (hence 1 Thes. 5:19f.).

In summary, Grudem does appear to regard contemporary prophecy as corresponding to some degree with what he understands to be the NT experience, although he regards certain aspects of contemporary practice as unbiblical. For example, he resists calling contemporary prophecy 'the word of the Lord', because he feels that gives the impression of prophecy having an authority of actual words, which in his view does not occur today.

### 4. M.M.B. Turner, 'Spiritual Gifts Then and Now'

Turner builds on the work of D. Aune<sup>8</sup> and Grudem to define NT prophecy in terms of oracular speech which was based upon a revelatory impulse (p. 46). This 'revelation' contained 'particularis-

tic knowledge — not merely general principles that could be deduced, for example, by illuminated reading of the Torah, or from Gospel Tradition, or from apostolic *didache*' (p. 12). Also, Turner believes that NT prophecy had a privileged position because the prophetic *apokalypsis* went further than 'particular knowledge' and involved, on occasions, the impartation of doctrinal 'mysteries' (cf. 1 Cor. 13:2).

Turner also describes the purpose of prophecy in terms of 1 Corinthians 14:3: edification, exhortation and consolation. But he does not accept that 1 Corinthians 14:3 is itself a sufficient condition or basis for speech to be classified as prophecy. Indeed, Turner sees other forms of speech as being highly charismatic but not constituting prophecy as such. So he can say that preaching, exegesis or teaching, however inspired, is not what the NT writers refer to as prophecy. Thus for Turner there is a clear distinction between teaching and prophecy. The distinguishing characteristic is the 'revelation' which is directly mediated to the person rather than being mediated through Scripture (p. 14). According to Turner the paraenetic function of OT prophecy leads some to conclude that NT paraenetic is therefore prophetic. (The term 'paraenetic' refers to exhortation; thus passages in the Bible which have a strong exhortatory content are often classified as 'paraenetic'.) But, to quote Turner again, 'this overlooks the fact that paraenetic is not a distinctive feature of OT prophecy as such, but common to a variety of genres (p. 14).

With the NT considered, Turner does address himself to Packer's question directly (pp. 43, 46f.). He is cautious in his comparison, acknowledging that his knowledge is based upon his 'impression' of the contemporary phenomenon from tapes, direct experience and popular literature. He argues that the NT and the modern phenomenon 'roughly cohere' at the following points: (1) Both are oracular speech based upon a perceptible revelatory impulse or event and usually marked by a standard formula of introduction, or a description of a visionary phenomenon; (2) The state of the prophet varies from mild dissociation to (controlled) trance state; (3) The 'content' of prophetic pronouncements is rarely if ever primarily doctrinal, but operates in the area of specific knowledge and guidance; (4) Prophetic oracles have 'the same mixed enigmatic quality of authority evinced in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Thessalonians'; (5) Modern prophecy is especially seen to fulfil the role expressed in 1 Corinthians 14:3.

On points of difference, Turner observes that: (1) Except for stereotyped openings, modern prophecy is 'relatively lacking in distinctive forms'; (2) *Some* modern prophecy 'does not rest on "previous reception" of the word of the Lord by the individual; but is regarded as a simultaneous reception and transmission of the oracle or vision'. This, Turner feels, eliminates the possibility of a prior evaluation. But, on the whole, he believes that these differences are not material, and that there is a resemblance. However he does not expect to see prophecy playing the same 'foundational' role as it did in the NT (cf. Eph. 2:20).

It must be admitted that Turner does appear to do justice to the evidence from *both* NT and contemporary experience (as he perceives it).

### 5. D.A. Carson, *Showing The Spirit*

Carson's position is in agreement with Grudem modified by the comments of Turner (noted above), but he adds two of his own. Both points, it is contended, have the impact of refining Grudem's thesis slightly.

Firstly, Carson believes that Grudem has over-simplified the contrast between OT and NT prophets. This reflects Turner's criticism that Grudem has overdrawn the difference between apostolic and prophetic prophecy in the NT (since, for Grudem, OT prophets correspond to the apostles in type). Carson observes that the OT records the existence of prophetic 'schools', and that not all those involved had the status of Isaiah or Amos. He notes that there is 'no single, stereotypical OT prophecy and a different stereotypical NT prophecy' (p. 98). Rather, he suggests that Numbers 12:6-8 and 11:29 give evidence of two kinds of prophecy. One type could be classified as charismatic and enigmatic, the other type could be classified as Mosaic. This, in Carson's view, indirectly supports Grudem's distinction, although it must be said that *both* types are contained within the OT.

Secondly, Carson adds the important comment that psychologically the OT prophets did not necessarily believe their words to be the very words of God. The difference in self-

awareness between OT and NT prophets from a 'psychological' perspective is thus questioned by Carson. Grudem's distinction is only possible if the distinction refers to prophecy *qua* result, and not prophecy *qua* revelatory experience (p. 99). That is, Grudem's distinction applies to the result of prophecy rather than the mode. These points obviously build upon those previously outlined above.

With respect to the contemporary scene, Carson voices similar criticisms to Grudem himself. These include the fact that prophecies are given as 'direct quotations from the Lord' (p. 121); and this he believes is compounded by too little attention to Paul's injunction to weigh and test what is said. Therefore, in his opinion modern prophecies can be manipulative, arrogant and sometimes dishonest. Carson nevertheless indicates that there appears to be a degree of correspondence between the NT evidence and the contemporary phenomenon, although much of the charismatic packaging is unacceptable to him.

## Comments

There are a number of comments which can be made in relation to the present discussion.

1. There is, as already noted, a debate concerning the NT itself on the matter, although Grudem's thesis clarifies the area to a great extent, especially when modified by the work of Turner and Carson. There are, however, evangelicals who disagree with his proposal, mainly from a 'reformed' position.<sup>9</sup> So while there is growing consensus, there is not complete agreement as to what constituted prophecy in the NT era. This needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about this important question.

2. Usually the interpreter's understanding of what the NT has to say influences how the contemporary phenomenon is perceived. With the NT as a starting point, it is possible to beg the question with respect to *contemporary* experience. This is the danger that all interpreters face, and could succumb to. The lack of academic material inevitably contributes to this problem. The material which scholars present as relating to modern experience is often the better quality of popular literature, but nevertheless the selection is often small and possibly unrepresentative. If there is a central weakness in the scholarship considering this question, it lies on the contemporary side, in contrast to their NT discussion.

3. Packer allows for the continuance of prophecy today, but defines it in terms of preaching, or the application of Bible truth to one's present hearers. It would, however, appear that Packer is hardly open to persuasion from the charismatic camp. Is it possible that Packer may not be convinced by anyone, on *a priori* grounds? He adds to his conviction evidence of the abeyance of prophecy of canonical type in church history. But here other writers cite evidence that (non-canonical) prophecy, perhaps differently defined, has continued to exist, albeit on the margins of church life.<sup>10</sup> Is it therefore possible that this type of prophecy is now once again resurging, and is appearing under the guise of OT phraseology? To deny the possibility of contemporary prophecy, as experienced within the charismatic movement, because of its *misuse* of OT canonical prophetic form seems to me to be a case of throwing the baby out with the prophetic bathwater!

4. Hill, as we have noted, essentially proposes a *functional* definition of NT prophecy based upon the proclamation of a received 'revelation', namely edificatory exhortation (*paraklēsis*). While this element is clearly a part of the NT scriptures (1 Cor. 14:3), and is one which contemporary proponents stress, the question remains whether *paraklēsis* was the defining characteristic of prophecy in the NT definition. This must be doubted; alternatively, it is more probable that it was an important and expected corollary. Significant for our discussion is the fact that the same could be said today for modern prophecy.

5. Turner observes that *some* prophecy is regarded as a simultaneous reception and transmission of an oracle or vision. This is true as far as it goes. From charismatic literature it could be suggested that a fuller picture would include three possible ways of viewing this aspect of the prophetic experience. (1) Some prophetic experiences are such that the message is received sometime before the actual proclamation. This may be a matter of seconds, minutes, hours or days. The recipient knows the message in total in advance. (2) In another instance only part of the message is received and the person realizes that he or she must begin to speak before the rest of the message will come to them. (3) With most proclamation of prophecy in public there is an accompanying impulse to speak. In some cases the person does not have a message of which he or she is aware, but senses that speaking should commence. As the prophet begins to speak the message

comes to them. This means that any attempt to define contemporary prophecy must not rest solely upon the action of speaking or proclamation, since the prophetic experience has often an earlier starting point.<sup>11</sup>

In response to the comment of Turner, it could be argued that the spontaneity of the reception and deliverance of a message within *some* charismatic practice does inevitably limit prior evaluation, but that this is only one feature of the whole charismatic practice in general. In any case, it could be added that there does appear to be more of a foundation for the spontaneity of the reception and relay of prophecy than Turner would be willing to admit (*cf.* Grudem, p. 116). If this is true, then it strengthens the case for a closer relationship between the NT and present-day practice than even Turner proposes.

## Conclusion

From evidence considered here (and from research which I have completed)<sup>12</sup> it could be suggested, at least, that there are a number of 'contact points' between the NT and today. (1) As noted by Turner, revelatory impulses of some description (words, pictures, dreams, visions) form the basis of prophecy. These impulses are, of course, broad in the sense that they contain a variety of experiences. (2) The congregational setting is the appropriate and expected context for the exercise of this gift in proclamation. (3) Theoretically anyone can prophesy. (4) As a result of prophecy being exercised the expectations expressed in 1 Corinthians 14:3 should be fulfilled. (5) True Christian prophecy is nevertheless a mixed phenomenon and has only an authority of general content, thus requiring discernment and judgment to be exercised by the congregation and its leadership before being accepted.

Following on from these comments, it perhaps should be stated clearly that contemporary charismatic prophecy is not, by its nature, infallible and in any sense absolute, but rather has only a relative authority. Therefore all modern prophecy should be evaluated in light of existing orthodox doctrinal norms, the test of which is Scripture itself.<sup>13</sup>

### Books discussed in the article

- J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, IVP, 1984.  
D. Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979.  
W.A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, Kingsway, 1988.  
M.M.B. Turner, 'Spiritual Gifts Then and Now', *Vox Evangelica* XV (1985).  
D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, Baker, 1987.

<sup>9</sup>For example see: M. Harper, *As at the beginning* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1965); F. Sullivan, *Pentecostalism and The Charismatic Renewal* (Veritas, Dublin, 1986); P. Hocken, *Streams of Renewal* (Paternoster, 1986); also A.R. Mather, *The Theology of the Charismatic Movement in Britain from 1964 to the Present Day* (Ph.D. thesis, University College of N. Wales, 1982); and J. Bax, *The Good Wine* (Church House Publishing, 1986).

<sup>10</sup>For example see: C. Hill, *Prophecy Past and Present* (Highland, 1989); and G. Houston, *Prophecy Now* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup>Interest in the UK came initially through D. Pytches, *Some Said It Thundered* (Hodder, 1990); reviewed by C. Hill, 'Kansas City Prophets', *Prophecy Today* 6.4 (1990), pp. 5-7; *cf.* J. Martin, 'Prophets and prophecies', *Church of England Newspaper*, 27 July 1990, pp. 1-2; P. Morris, 'Kansas City Prophets', *Anglicans for Renewal* 43 (Winter 1990/1991), pp. 6-8.

<sup>12</sup>The possibility that he may have changed his mind on the point is indicated by a quotation on the cover of Grudem's most recent book, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Kingsway, 1988): 'Careful, thorough, wise and to my mind convincing' (J.I. Packer).

<sup>13</sup>Contra Every, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup>American University Press, Washington, 1982.)

<sup>7</sup>*Cf.* Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (SPCK, 1989).

<sup>8</sup>*Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, 1983).

<sup>10</sup>For critical assessment of the Grudem position see: V. Budgen, 'Prophecy in the New Testament - The Need for a Clear Test Case', *Reformation Today* Part I, 101 (1988), pp. 13-20; Part II, 102 (1988), pp. 19-28; and K.L. Gentry, *The Charismatic Gift of Prophecy - A Reformed Response to Wayne Grudem* (Footstool Publications, Memphis, 1986 and 1989).

<sup>11</sup>*Cf.* R. Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), ch. 6; G. Every, 'Prophecy in the Christian Era' in *New Heaven? New Earth?*, ed. S. Tugwell *et al.* (DLT, 1976), pp. 161-206; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, pp. 241-243.

<sup>12</sup>M.J. Cartledge, *Prophecy in the Contemporary Church: A Theological Examination* (M.Phil. dissertation, CNAA, 1989), pp. 31, 38, 62, 133.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*: for contemporary examples within charismatic literature see ch. 2, and for examples from empirical research see ch. 3.

<sup>14</sup>*Cf. ibid.*, ch. 5, esp. pp. 156-161.

# The Kansas City prophets: an assessment

Nigel G. Wright

*In a previous article,<sup>1</sup> Nigel Wright, of Spurgeon's College, London, indicated that the contemporary movement known as 'Restorationism' is in a state of continual flux. The current article is by way of a provisional update on this condition and is concerned with the new impetus given to some parts of the movement by the rise of the 'prophetic' in association with John Wimber and the Kansas City prophets.*

As always on this subject, careful qualification is necessary. The influence of John Wimber is by no means confined to Restorationism, nor does it apply equally, or sometimes at all, to that diverse movement. Wimber has equally close relations with the New Frontiers network of churches led by Terry Virgo and with charismatic Anglicans associated with Bishop David Pyches. The rise of the prophetic has made its impact across the charismatic movement. Neither would it be true to say that emphasis on the prophetic is itself new. Since the inception of the charismatic movement the dimension of heightened awareness of the voice of God has been present. From 1979 onwards, David Pawson advanced a claim to fulfilling a prophetic ministry, and more recently Dr Clifford Hill has argued, written, prophesied and predicted along the same line in connection with the magazine *Prophecy Today*. What is new is the emergence of Paul Cain and the Kansas City prophets with an apparently advanced experience of this ministry.

John Wimber has described how in late 1988 he came into contact with Paul Cain and was stirred through him to a new level of concern for holiness and for the prophetic ministry which until then he had not taken seriously.<sup>2</sup> Since that time he has been concerned to promote this new emphasis among the contacts which he has built up over the years. Accordingly, Paul Cain and others of the Kansas City prophets have ministered in England to a representative gathering of leaders at Holy Trinity, Brompton, in July 1990 and more generally the following October at conferences in Harrogate and London. A mark of Paul Cain's acceptance can be seen in the positive responses of Clive Calver, General Secretary of the British Evangelical Alliance,<sup>3</sup> and of R.T. Kendall, for whom Cain has spoken at the Westminster Chapel, London.

At the same time Cain has by no means been universally endorsed by charismatics. There are hints that within Wimber's Vineyard movement some have struggled to come to terms with the new emphasis of the Kansas City prophets. Most notably, there have been strident opposition and detailed allegations from a prominent charismatic leader in Kansas City itself, Ernie Gruen, which have been taken up by Clifford Hill in an internecine dispute within the prophetic camp. Gruen's allegations include the charge of manipulation and the suggestion in the case of one of the prophets, Bob Jones, of mental instability and occultism. Hill has circulated such allegations privately and has reported them in *Prophecy Today*. Wimber, in turn, has had the reports investigated, has applied discipline where necessary, and made a full response in print to the allegations.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent to the July 1990 meetings attempts at clarification and reconciliation between Cain and Hill have been made and have proven partially successful. The concerns remain concerning some of Cain's teaching and some of his associates.<sup>5</sup>

The Kansas City phenomenon has two aspects to it. The wider prophetic impulse articulated in particular by Mike Bickle is a panoramic view of the purposes of God in the next generation which include the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in an unprecedented manner as a prelude to the coming of Christ. As such, the prophetic teaching resembles closely the early claims of Restorationism as articulated on the platform of the Dales Bible Week in the early 1980s. It is a form of post-millennialism such as

has often been expressed in enthusiastic movements in the church's past. Within this wider context, Paul Cain's contribution is more in the nature of extended 'words of knowledge'. In meetings he will identify and then address persons whom he normally does not know by means of extensive information concerning their circumstances. It is in this regard that Cain is considered to have an ability far beyond that of others. If plain fraud is ruled out, the man has, by anybody's standards, a quite remarkable talent.

Yet questions are to be raised about Cain. The first concerns his prediction that the United Kingdom would experience revival in October 1990. This claim was published in connection with the conferences to be held in the UK in that month. The suggestion was clear. John Wimber was reported to have brought all his family across to be part of the events.<sup>6</sup> I was present at the Docklands Arena on the final night of the conference which, if anything, was less eventful than most such meetings I have been to. The discussion since that time, true to the psychology of cognitive dissonance, has been around what is meant by 'revival' (apparently something different is suggested to Americans by this term than to the British) and whether throughout the country as a whole there are signs of increased spiritual effectiveness hingeing around October 1990. Creative redefinition is under way. An alternative interpretation might be that at this point Cain stepped beyond the area of his gifts and made a misleading statement.

A second area of concern relates to Cain's former associations with the evangelist William Branham, one of the post-war healing evangelists.<sup>7</sup> Similarities include the part played by angelic visitations in their careers and their extraordinary accuracy in the 'word of knowledge', allied, in the case of Branham, to 'therapeutic failure'<sup>8</sup> (limited success in healing), and in the case of Cain, in my estimate, to failure of prediction on the wider scale. In other words, within certain limits both men were extraordinarily gifted. The Branham connection however is of concern because of the excessive devotion shown to him by his followers, extending to the expectation of resurrection after his death in a road accident, and the suggestion of heterodoxy in some areas of doctrine. Prophetic ability is apparently no guarantee of doctrinal orthodoxy.

A third area concerns the nature of religious experience and specifically the interface and interaction between the spiritual and the psychic. This is as yet an inadequately explored area<sup>9</sup> but is profoundly suggested by the entire Wimber phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Without entering into value judgments on Cain's ministry, it is possible to ask to what extent what is being displayed is spiritual gifting or psychic capacity and what is the relation between these two realities.

The jury is still out upon the category of the 'prophetic' in general and the Kansas City prophets in particular. That the living God is still the speaking God ought to be a point on which all might agree even if the exact nature of that speaking is differently conceived. Plainly, some claims to divine speaking are more volatile than others, and this might suggest that we have a responsibility to choose and support some models of the prophetic over against others, not by denying the total validity of other forms but by asserting the primary value of the less volatile.

A final, tentative thought: if Martin Luther King, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Paul Cain might each in their own way be seen as prophetic, we might nevertheless ask which form of prophecy is most needed by the church and the world today. The answer to this question cannot be merely intuitive but theological, pastoral and political in nature.

<sup>1</sup>'Restorationism and the "house church" movement', *Themelios* 16.2 (Jan/Feb 1991).

<sup>2</sup>*Equipping the Saints* Vol. 3 No. 4 (Fall 1989), pp. 4ff.

<sup>3</sup>See the article by Mike Wiltshire, 'The Impact of the Prophetic', in *Renewal* No. 176 (Jan. 1991), pp. 28ff.

<sup>4</sup>See 'A Response to Pastor Ernie Gruen's Controversy with Kansas City Fellowship' in *Equipping the Saints* (Special UK edition, Fall 1990), pp. 4ff.

<sup>5</sup>A fuller account of the controversy is given in the article 'Seers in the Heartland: Hot on the trail of the Kansas City prophets' by Michael G. Maudlin in *Christianity Today* (14 January 1991), pp. 18-22.

<sup>6</sup>On the back cover of *Equipping the Saints* (Special UK edition, Fall 1990) are Wimber's words: 'It has been prophesied by Paul Cain that revival will break out in Great Britain in October 1990. I am, by faith, believing that we will "bring some back" to share in Anaheim at this event.'

<sup>7</sup>Branham's career is described by W.J. Hollenweger in *The Pentecostals*

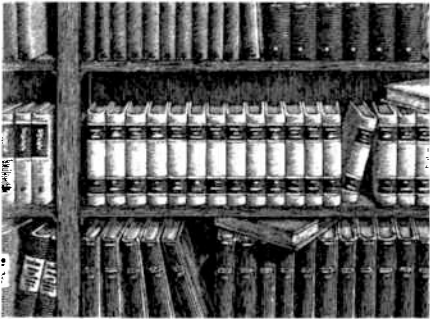
(SCM, London, 1972), pp. 354-357. See also the interview with Cain: 'Paul Cain answers some tough questions', in *Equipping the Saints* Vol. 4 No. 4 (Fall 1990), pp. 9ff.

<sup>8</sup>This was Hollenweger's judgment from observation of particular gatherings in Zürich after having acted consistently as Branham's interpreter: see *ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>9</sup>See, however, Morton T. Kelsey, *The Christian and the Supernatural* (Search Press, London, 1977).

<sup>10</sup>I have attempted some exploration in a different but related context in *The Fair Face of Evil: Putting the Power of Darkness in its Place* (Marshall Pickering, London, 1989), pp. 115-123, and in an as yet unpublished paper delivered under the auspices of the C.S. Lewis Centre: 'The Theology and Methodology of Signs and Wonders'.

# BOOK



# REVIEWS

**The Book of Ruth, NICOT**  
R. Hubbard  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988,  
331 pp., \$26.95.

It is safe to say that this will remain, for some considerable time to come, one of the most useful and enlightening commentaries available on the lovely little book of Ruth. The format is standard but eminently useful. It begins with a generous 80 pages of introduction, covering text, canonicity, literary criticism, authorship and date, purpose, setting, genre, legal background, themes, theology, an analysis of content, and a select bibliography. Even though one might not agree with all the author's conclusions, these are all succinctly and fully addressed. The bulk of the text, some 200 pages, is devoted to the ensuing translation and verse-by-verse commentary, the divisions of which follow the outline set forth in the preceding analysis of content. The comments themselves are lucid and the argument is almost always easy to follow, a result achieved by a most judicious relegation to the introduction and to the footnotes of the more complex and esoteric matters of grammar, interpretation and socio-legal background, as well as the author's interaction with the other points of view pertinent thereto. The book concludes with detailed, and hence most useful, indices of subjects, authors, Scripture references, and Hebrew words (in transliteration!). The reason that this text may well remain one of the most useful and enlightening is doubtless its constant and close attention to the theology that informs the narrative. This attention marks not

just the 'theology' section of the introduction, but the text throughout. In particular the author gives careful and insightful attention to that feature that above all characterizes the role of the God of Israel throughout the book, *viz.* the way in which Yahweh's providential guidance is constantly present yet hidden behind the everyday actions and activities of ordinary people. In so doing he sets forth for us numerous examples of the fact that 'the book's teaching is simple and straightforward: whenever people of faith practice God-like *hesed* toward each other, God himself acts in them' (p. 72).

Now, no one can undertake to comment on and elucidate the text of Ruth without discovering two contrasting facets that attend that task. On the one hand the book is a masterpiece of literary art. Through a skilful combination of brief narrative and extended dialogue the narrator artfully applies the Hebrew techniques of narrative art to the smooth development of plot and lifelike fullness of characterization. So well is this done that we arrive at the resolution with little sense of problems unresolved or questions unanswered. On the other hand, as soon as one delves below the surface and seeks to correlate plot development and the details of societal and family customs and obligation that provide the nexus of cause and effect that link these developments into a coherent and credible whole, one faces a whole series of complex, difficult, and in a number of cases intractable problems. It is to the credit of this commentary that, in the main, it handles both of these contrasting facets of interpretation with good judgment and insight.

Thus, the author with skill and discernment regularly notes and draws the implications of the narrator's adept use of the literary devices of inclusion, keywords, disjunctive sentence structure and summary sentences to signal the beginning and end of individual narrative units and to tie together larger narrative divisions. Particularly in introductions to and summaries of these larger narrative divisions, he helpfully draws out for the reader the implications of the narrator's use of literary device and artifice for the meaning and development of the story.

When one turns to the way in which the author has handled the complex problems of the correlation of plot development and the details of societal and family customs, obligations, and legal formulations that inform the story, one can only extol the good sense he exhibits. Thus his interpretation assumes that, lacking good evidence to the contrary, one will grant to the narrator that his story conforms to the principles of good story-telling, *i.e.* that it complies with the principles of intelligibility, self-sufficiency, and credibility (pp. 49-50). Secondly, he recognizes that attempts to align precisely the customs in Ruth relative to

marriage and the redemption of land to the passages dealing with levirate and redemption in Leviticus and Deuteronomy are unnecessary and ill-advised (pp. 50-51, 57). Thirdly, and most important, the author's approach to the role of levirate marriage in Ruth is exemplary. In this reviewer's judgment he quite correctly recognizes the following facts, all too seldom observed in the interpretation of the book. (1) Since there are no brothers of Elimelech extant and the language from the two examples of levirate marriage (Gn. 38; Dt. 25:5-10) plays little if any role in the book, the marriage of Ruth and Boaz is not a levirate marriage *per se* (pp. 50-51, 57). (2) There is no allusion to the levirate law in 1:11-13 (p. 109). (3) In Naomi's designation of Boaz in 2:20 as 'one of our kinsman-redeemers' she does not have in mind the provision of an heir for the line of Elimelech in accordance with some levirate-type obligation. Rather in the light of her focus on marriage, not an heir, in 3:1-2 'marriage alone was her concern here' (p. 187). (4) On the other hand, contrary to some recent opinions, he very correctly posits that the book of Ruth *does* assume a family responsibility, moral not legal in nature, *i.e.* voluntary, in which it was incumbent upon the kinsman-redeemer to take on two obligations: on the one hand the obligation to marry the wife of a deceased relative and so relieve the destitution and shame of her widowhood, and on the other hand the obligation when a deceased relative died without a male heir, to marry the widow and produce a descendant who would inherit his property (pp. 51-52, 57-59, 189, and n. 41), obligations which are very similar to those of levirate marriage.

One wonders, however, whether the author has been fully consistent in following out the implications of this line of interpretation in three connections: first, in regard to the meaning of Ruth's request in 3:9; secondly, in regard to the main theme he posits for the book; and thirdly, in consequence of the first two, in regard to the specific period to which he dates the book. In regard to the first he has concluded that Naomi's identification of Boaz as 'kinsman-redeemer' and a relative in 2:20 and 3:1-2 relates only to an obligation to marry the widow of a deceased relative. Does it seem likely, then, as he posits, that Ruth's request in 3:9 went beyond Naomi's intentions: 'Naomi's instructions intended simply to obtain a husband for Ruth. . . . By invoking the *gō'el* custom on her own initiative, however, Ruth subordinated her own happiness to the family duty of providing Naomi an heir' (p. 213)? But Hubbard avers that the responsibility of the *gō'el* alluded to by Naomi in 2:20, and the only one alluded to thus far in the story, is that of the duty to marry the widow of a deceased relative. Hence, since the symbolic act Ruth speaks of in her request ('spread the corner of your garment over me') relates specifically and narrowly to marriage, how could Ruth in the grounds for

her request ('since you are a kinsman-redeemer') suddenly be using the term *gō'el* to imply a responsibility to benefit *Naomi* by providing her with an heir? Note that she has not identified herself to Boaz immediately prior by saying 'I am Ruth, wife of the deceased' (or 'wife of Mahlon', cf. her identity in 4:5, 10). Rather, she has called herself simply 'Ruth, your handmaid', an identity that stressed her status as one eligible for marriage to a man of Boaz's position (as Hubbard notes, p. 211), not as the widow who must raise an heir to her husband's estate. In this light it is difficult to see how Ruth could be using *gō'el* in any different sense than Naomi did in 2:20 or that is implied in her reference to Boaz as a relative in 3:1-2. It does seem very likely that Boaz, in his response to her request in 3:12-13, speaks almost enigmatically in such a way that *he* seems to have more in mind than simply marriage, but Ruth in 3:9 surely does not.

Secondly, in regard to the main theme of the book, one wonders if it is correct to say that 'The dominant theme is God's gracious rescue of Elimelech's family from extinction by provision of an heir' (pp. 39, 63). In the light of the above understanding of 3:9, not a word about the problem of the lack of an heir for the line of Elimelech has surfaced in the story prior to the hint that Boaz has more in mind than marriage in his reply in 3:12-13. Surely Naomi's bitter cry in 1:20-21 does not sound this theme as Hubbard postulates (p. 39), but rather expresses the affective dimensions of the death and emptiness of the life of Naomi, whose bare outlines our author sketched in 1:3-5 and began to fill in in the painful dialogue of 1:8-13. And the women in 4:17a do not joyously voice the resolution of this theme (p. 39), but rather Naomi's restoration to life and fullness. This final scene, 4:13-17, focuses exclusively on Naomi's restoration. Yahweh is not celebrated by the neighbour-women in 4:14 because he has not left the line of Elimelech without a descendant, but because he has not left Naomi without a redeemer to care for her in her need. And the women do not see the meaning of this child in the fact that he is the heir of Elimelech and will inherit his property, but in the fact that he will restore Naomi to life and support her in her old age (4:15). Nor do they celebrate his identity by crying, 'A son has been born to Elimelech', but rather, 'A son has been born to Naomi' (4:17a). Indeed, it is only Boaz in the scene in 4:1-12 who views his marriage to Ruth as 'in order to raise up a descendant for the deceased on his inheritance' (4:10) and who raises the issue of the redemption of the family land. His purpose in doing so is to induce the nearer redeemer to cede him his prior right to marry the widow and redeem the field. It is only in this scene, in the male world of the legal assembly in the city gate, that the issue of an heir for the line of Elimelech is a matter of concern. Hence the central and all-absorbing theme of the book is the second one Hubbard mentions in his introductory section on themes (pp. 63-64), viz. the restoration of Naomi from death and emptiness to life and fullness. This renders it quite unlikely, then, that the major purpose of the book is 'political . . . to win popular acceptance of David's rule by appeal to the continuity of Yahweh's guidance in the lives of Israel's ancestors and David' (p. 42).

Thirdly, in regard to the 'setting' of the book, i.e. the era in which it is to be dated, the author's arguments that the book is pre-exilic and probably dates earlier in that period than later (pp. 30-35) are, in this reviewer's opinion, well taken. However, if the above considerations regarding major theme and purpose are at all cogent, the major basis the

author posits for dating it to the reigns of David or Solomon (pp. 44-46) are lacking.

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**The World of the Old Testament (Bible Handbook, Vol. II)**  
A.S. van der Woude (ed.)  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989,  
300 pp., \$34.95 hc/\$27.95.

The title of the Dutch original — *Het Oude Testament* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1982) — better indicates the scope of this book, written by a team of Dutch scholars, than does the title of the translation. The three major sections of the volume cover the history of Israel, the literature of the OT, and the books of the OT. Also included are chronological tables, an index, six pages of maps, extensive bibliographies (with coverage extended in the translation through the mid-1980s), and 24 pages of very clear black and white photographs.

The section dealing with the history of Israel starts off with a segment covering Israel to the time of the captivity (M. J. Mulder). He opens with a crisp discussion of the problems encountered in attempting to write a history of Israel. It is good that this important issue is dealt with so forthrightly. The discussion, however, is so brief that those for whom this is a new issue may have difficulty in discerning the implications or purpose of it. Nor is the author's own position entirely clear. He is 'confident (but not with the arrogance of fundamentalism) that the Bible is yet true', and wishes 'to take the biblical data strictly at their face value'. He also notes, however, that 'Whether the picture so acquired agrees with what happened in the distant past remains, meanwhile, an open question' (p. 4). In practice he is rather sceptical regarding the possibility of reconstructing with any degree of certainty the events prior to the rise of the monarchy. A discussion of the date of the exodus, for example, concludes by noting that the data 'do point to the thirteenth century, in which something like an exodus may have taken place' (p. 15). In contrast, the segment by van der Woude, who ironically has less data to work with, displays a more optimistic estimation of what historians may accomplish, and his segment offers a useful survey of the period between the captivity and the rise of Alexander the Great.

The second major section (by H.A. Brongers) surveys the literary genres to be found in the OT. His survey includes a discussion of secular and religious poetry, poetic stories (including myths, fables, sagas, legends, and novelettes), historical, prophetic, and wisdom literature, and legal materials. In a number of instances comparison with similar materials or genres from other ancient cultures enhances the discussion; occasionally, however, the treatment is so brief as to be disappointing and of little help (wisdom literature, e.g., receives scarcely two pages).

The third and longest section surveys the books of the OT in the order in which they are found in Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (except for Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which — in that order — are grouped with the other historical books). Four scholars divide the labour, and both the points covered and the perspective of the treatment vary noticeably.

On the one hand, for example, C.

Houtman's essay on the Pentateuch focuses virtually exclusively on hypotheses about its origin and authorship. He concludes, at the end of a comprehensive and balanced survey, that while in the Pentateuch three large blocks of material (Genesis, Exodus-Numbers, Deuteronomy), each with its own distinctive character, may be distinguished, they 'are integrally connected. Each becomes meaningful only in association with the other.' Further, he asserts that the Pentateuch itself cannot be detached from Joshua-2 Kings, and that the entire group of books 'in their present form are from the same author or group of writers' who utilized 'material of diverse provenance, character, and age' (p. 199).

B.J. Oosterhoff, on the other hand, in his discussion of Isaiah, simply states that chapters 1-39 contain 'mainly prophecies from the time of Isaiah himself', while 40-66 derive from the time of the Babylonian captivity or later. He then focuses essentially his entire survey on the content and themes of the two parts of the work. Each writer, in short, covers significantly different issues, and the result is somewhat unbalanced coverage. The treatment of the historical books (by H. H. Grosheide) and the Writings (by J. P. M. van der Ploeg), though sometimes brief, generally fares better in terms of balance of coverage and focus.

Overall this is a difficult volume to characterize. Strong points include the bibliographies, chronological charts, and generous selection of excellent pictures, all of which students will find useful. Moreover, the issues chosen for discussion are treated in a fair and even-handed manner, and the authors are not hesitant to express an independent point of view. At the same time, the relative diversity of perspective and approach results in a certain unevenness of treatment and choice of topics. Nevertheless it will serve well as a reference volume, and may find a place as a secondary text for introductory OT survey courses.

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**Psalms: Part 1 with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry (FOTL XIV)**  
E.S. Gerstenberger  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988,  
xv + 260 pp., \$24.95.

Gerstenberger's treatment of the book of Psalms is part of the rapidly appearing *Forms of Old Testament Literature*. The purpose of this series is to provide full discussions of the form-critical nature of the biblical texts. It is not an exegetical commentary, though the series claims that form criticism leads to exegesis. However, the focus of the series, and thus Gerstenberger's contribution, is highly specialized. Only a small audience will find this volume interesting and/or helpful.

The first 40 pages of the book are an introduction which presents Gerstenberger's general approach to the Psalms. He rightly identifies the bulk of the Psalms as liturgical material and then associates their origin with religious ritual. He uses insights into the sociological status of the people of God throughout their history to comment on their ritual history (p. 7). He especially notes a conflict which develops as Israel moves from a family and personal religion toward a monarchy, when the big state institutions

'began to impose themselves upon small-group, or personal, religion' (p. 21). Thus, he believes the monarchy changed (negatively) the kind of personal religion which the Psalms originally represented.

Also in the introductory material, he describes the chief genre types of the Psalms. He wants to base his division on ritual, whether it is special or seasonal (p. 9). He thus groups laments, complaints, and thanksgivings under the former, while hymns, royal psalms, and wisdom psalms are listed under the latter. Unfortunately, his rationale for placing genres in a certain group are not clearly stated. Further, his division of the psalms into these five types is not that unique, but his view that the wisdom psalms are connected with the cult is a minority viewpoint. These five genre categories are further broken down in the genre sections on the individual psalms. For instance, Psalm 6 is an individual complaint which is more specifically a 'psalm of sickness' (p. 62).

Indeed, the heart of the book is found in the treatment of individual psalms. The present volume, the first of two, examines the initial 60 poems of the book. Each psalm is described in the same way and in the same order. There are sections on text, structure, genre, setting, intention, and a bibliography. The section on structure is the major section of this commentary. Here, Gerstenberger provides an outline of the psalm's inner form, followed by a lengthy description. This section is as close as the commentary comes to exegesis. The genre section follows and is usually based on the analysis of structure. Here, Gerstenberger asserts the genre. I use the verb advisedly; Gerstenberger does an incredible amount of asserting without suitable argumentation or explanation. This characteristic is one of the frustrating aspects of the book.

This book is a rich mine of contemporary critical psalm interpretation. Not only do we get the views of Gerstenberger, a highly respected biblical interpreter, but we also benefit from his extensive interaction with the most recent research in many different languages. Gerstenberger's bibliographies are extremely valuable in and of themselves for the advanced student of the Psalms.

I do have, however, one major and several minor problems with the book. The major problem is that Gerstenberger gives little guidance as to the importance of his study for exegesis and theological significance. The series as a whole has a kind of schizophrenic attitude toward exegesis. This attitude is illustrated by the general editor's preface which states both that 'the aims of the book are fundamentally exegetical' (p. xi), while also restricting the commentary to 'the form-critical interpretation of the text' (p. xii). Gerstenberger's work, while admirably fulfilling the latter, does not lead us to the former. Thus, unlike the preface which recommends this book to a broad audience consisting of 'students, pastors, priests and rabbis', I could only recommend it to its primary audience of biblical scholars.

The several minor problems include his view that the enemy terminology of the psalms is 'metaphoric throughout' (p. 126). Is it not more reasonable and natural to assume a literal reference in this case unless there is compelling evidence (not provided by Gerstenberger at least in this volume) for the contrary? Second, many of his more specific genre classifications seem to appear out of thin air. Note, for instance, his label Messianic Hymn for Psalm 2. This designation is not even described or explained except in the glossary. Perhaps if he had provided a theoretical discussion explaining his particular understanding of

genre in the introduction, the matter would be clearer. As it is, he makes only a few theoretical points in the body of his discussion, and these without much explanation (p. 194). Third, one misses any discussion or mention of the recent developments in the area of the poetics of parallelism initiated by James Kugel (*The Idea of Biblical Parallelism*, Yale, 1981). Indeed, the overall genre of Psalms is poetry, deserving of discussion in its own right.

For fear that I will be misunderstood, let me restate that Gerstenberger's volume is a rich mine of information. It is like a reference book on a certain critical approach to the Psalter. In addition, even though he shows no awareness of it, Gerstenberger's approach to the Psalms is quite *avant garde* from a literary perspective. His view, stated so clearly, that the Psalms are generated out of a particular 'social matrix' voices similar concerns to those of New Historicism, a school of thought which has unseated deconstruction as the current rage in literary circles.

In conclusion, Gerstenberger's work is a 'must buy' for scholars working in the area of Psalms research.

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**Ezekiel (The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 19)**  
**Ronald M. Hals**  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989,  
xiii + 363 pp., \$29.95.

Form criticism has been through an updating process. Time was when James Muilenburg could justly take form critics to task for their preoccupation with the typical, to the neglect of the individual character of texts ('Form Criticism and Beyond', *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 1-18). In reaction Rolf Knierim proposed a newer kind of form criticism that was fully open to the text and sought to expose the particular use of a genre by means of a flexible structural analysis that highlighted matters important to the text itself, such as rhetorical style or use of traditional motifs ('Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered', *Interpretation* 27 (1973), pp. 435-468, esp. pp. 459-467).

The result of this rethinking is a series of volumes devoted to this new sort of form-critical study, edited by Knierim and Gene M. Tucker. Each volume engages in structural analysis of pericopes and follows it up with examination of setting and intention, as an aid to understanding. There is also a substantial glossary of genres and formulas at the back, where those less skilled in the discipline might well begin in order to learn the language. In general terms, this approach is a wedding of the older diachronic method to the synchronic approach that has become more fashionable in recent times. In the case of Ezekiel this blending is of special significance in that Zimmerli's and Greenberg's commentaries are marked by an emphasis on the diachronic and synchronic respectively.

Form criticism is important for the study of the prophetic literature, and especially so in the case of Ezekiel, who as a priest-prophet inherited ways of communication characteristic of both backgrounds and moulded them into a unique and complex blend. Zimmerli made a major contribution to the form criticism of Ezekiel. Hals acknowledges his debt to him. But his analyses often refine Zimmerli's work, and

he has been able to make good use of recent research. He has missed (or implicitly dismissed) B. Willmes' insight into 34:2-16, 17-22 as double oracles of judgment/salvation, a category that nicely covers 44:6-16 too. He has overlooked B.O. Long's study of a question and answer schema used by Ezekiel to link a symbolic act with its meaning (*JBL* 90 (1971), pp. 129-139). Presumably D. F. Murray's valuable refinement of Gruffy's work on the disputation (*JOT* 38 (1987), pp. 95-127) came out too late for his consideration. But there is so much that Hals has covered: the bibliographies, both general and particular, are good.

The verse-by-verse structural analysis nicely links form and content. It rigorously forces readers of Ezekiel to get their noses down to the text before them instead of skimming. It must be admitted that the author is not much of a rhetorical critic. This is ironic because Knierim in his key article realized the importance of rhetorical-critical factors, under the influence of Muilenburg's outcry. Hals does occasionally find room for the device of inclusion and he is sometimes alert to repetition, which is so important in Hebrew writing, and even to wordplay once in a while. He seems to consider Ezekiel's style too 'pedestrian' for many rhetorical features (p. 217). This is unfortunate. Hals is seemingly unaware of H. Van Dyke Parunak's 1978 dissertation and articles on stylistic structure in Ezekiel, and of P.D. Miller's *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets* (1982). The result is that Muilenburg's clarion call, heeded by Knierim, has here gone largely unheard. Rhetorical criticism can often uncover the particular way that form-critical elements are used. Thus on 47:1-7 'and behold' is a structural marker that occurs in verses 1, 2 (missed by Hals) and 7, introducing a series of disclosures. In verse 6a it is replaced by an attention-seeking question. Accordingly the narrative moves in four stages, verses 1, 2, 3-6a, 6b-7, each stage beginning with a guidance formula, which is slightly delayed in the third case, which Hals again misses. He lacks the rhetorical critic's eye for such signals of a text's development. His structural analyses are consequently less helpful than they might have been.

Most sections necessarily begin with a short treatment of text-critical issues. Evidence for Hals' emendations is left uncited and the treatment is rather superficial and secondhand. He declares his unwillingness to follow Zimmerli in his degree of emendation (p. xii). If he had had to write a full-length commentary and so been forced to grapple with the relationship between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint, as Zimmerli was, one suspects that his conclusions would have been different.

Zimmerli's third contribution to the study of Ezekiel was in the area of redaction criticism. Hals too is a moderate redaction critic, but in keeping with more recent trends he stresses literary wholeness; wisely he confines the period of the literary process to the exile. In line with Knierim's program, Hals lays a valuable emphasis on tradition history, tracing the development of earlier theological concepts. He tends to dismiss literary dependence, however, even when correspondence to other texts is especially close, and thus differs from such scholars as Baltzer and Fishbane. In the study of the prophets, oracles of judgment have received more study than oracles of salvation. In the latter Hals usefully uncovers the regular use of two techniques: continuity of divine action, so that God's promises are shown to be consistent with his earlier work, and the undoing of a previous evil situation, in which either the evil actions of the oppressor or the desperate plight of the oppressed may be emphasized (see especially p. 250).

The reviewer cannot follow Hals in his judgment that in chapters 44-48 the 'prince' or head of state is not to be closely related to the Davidic tradition. This issue is a complex one, but application of the term to the historical dynasty in earlier chapters (and indeed in 45:9) and to the future Davidic king in 34:24, 37:25 suggests a sensitive intent to perpetuate a 'messianic' tradition in terms of a more constitutional monarchy during a period when political animosity against monarchy was rife. However, the author, who has an interesting style of writing that enlivens what otherwise might seem tedious material, has given us many literary and theological insights.

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**Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith**

Marvin R. Wilson

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, 374 pp., \$15.95.

A challenging book by Marvin Wilson pointedly reminds the church that her roots and background are in its Jewish origins. The roots of our faith are what really enable us to understand the OT as well as a good portion of the NT. Wilson asks repeatedly that the Christian should once more be reminded from the 'theology of the olive tree' that Christians have an olive tree connection with Israel. The root of the olive tree is what supports the engrafted branches of Gentile believers, and the author deplors the fact that after the AD 300s, 'the church arrogated to itself the very position of the olive tree' (p. 16).

In the chapter on the 'Contour of Hebrew Thought', Hebrew is discussed as an extremely descriptive language. Word usages provide verbal pictures to communicate spiritual truth. Greek thought is obviously different from Hebrew thought: the people in the OT did not 'think truth - they experienced truth'. 'Everything is theological', meaning that there was no separation of religion on the Sabbath day and the other days of the week. The NT reflects much of this viewpoint. In three other chapters Wilson demonstrates that both the Hebrew Scriptures and NT reflect Jewish ideas in marriage and family, worship and education.

Lest some Christians feel that seeking out the Jewish roots of NT faith will become an exercise in Judaizing, Wilson challenges the non-Jew that when he 'adopts moral and ethical values, social and spiritual ideas and an overall orientation toward life in the world that is Hebraic, this is not Judaizing' (p. 25). Rather, the danger lies in de-Judaizing, which takes us away from our roots and, consequently, which warps the faith.

One area of interest today is how the church contextualizes its faith and lifestyle when moving from one culture to another. Christians must learn how to take the biblical message into the culture in which they live. The best example of cross-cultural communication is Paul's ministry, in which he carried a biblical message from its Jewish source into the Greek culture. Paul was uniquely prepared to do so: (1) he knew how to select passages from the Greek poets which are also biblically substantiated; (2) there is no doubt Paul had an understanding of Greek philosophy, knowing how to relate to certain points on the Greek cultural grid but also preserving the biblical position.

Obviously, features of Platonic thought are contrary to biblical world-views: the unseen world is better and more important than the visible world; the heavenly is better than the earthly; and far better is it for the soul to escape from the body as its prison so as to be utterly free in the unseen world. Contextualization means that we have to know where to draw the line between what can be accepted and what has to be set aside, and in special cases we have to take features of belief from the biblical worldview in its Jewish setting to a new culture, as Paul had to do when he introduced the concept of resurrection into the arena of interchange with the Platonic philosophers.

A second portion of Wilson's position asks us to relate to *Judaism* as the root of our faith: the Gentiles who become believers 'are now infused with full life and vigour through the Jewish people' (p. 14). He also cites Heschel approvingly: the church needs to 'consider itself an extension of Judaism' (p. 16). Elsewhere the Hasidic lifestyle of today is regarded with approval because people have such an intense devotion to God.

But to ask the church to consider itself as an extension of Judaism raises serious questions. Which Judaism? Traditional? Conservative? Reform? Reconstructionist? Any other? Wilson himself admits that such a variety of thinking and lifestyle exists among Jewish people and that many even in the modern sense have turned their backs on any such expression from their own backgrounds. What then is the church to emulate?

When considering the 'theology of the olive tree' (Rom. 11:17-18), should we not realize that the roots actually represent the revelation provided by God to Israel and that it is this revelation to which the church needs to relate? While there was always a remnant in Israel which was responsive to and lived in accordance with God's revelation, nevertheless, many in the Jewish ranks do not believe in or live what God has revealed. Even the religious Jewish people do not exactly believe what biblical revelation declares to be a substitute atonement and an authentic Messiah. No, it is best to realize that the OT and NT revelation and that which can be found in the Jewish writings which reflect the Scriptures can certainly become the root to which the church needs to relate rather than any specific form of Judaism.

There is no doubt that Wilson has produced a book to involve the Christian in dialogue with Jewish people. In his last chapter he seeks to enlist today's church to establish sensitive and lasting links with the Jewish community. There is no doubt that this is a noble objective.

While he points out that one area of concern between the Jewish community and the church in dialogue is Jesus of Nazareth, nowhere is the full distinct message of the church spelled out: (1) Where is the proclamation that Jesus is the only way to God? (2) Where is the distinctive that the church has a message of love for all peoples, including Jewish people, that atonement can only be accomplished on the basis of substitute atonement and not through self-effort? Wilson says that conversion can be accomplished only by God, but he does not mention that the church is the instrument by which Jesus is shared, even with Jewish people. While the Jesus issue is certainly a hard truth, the church cannot escape from its God-given mandate to disciple the nations, including the household of Israel.

Wilson has provided us with a necessary emphasis that the root of our faith is in God's

revelation to a chosen people. At the same time, however, we need to be aware and not afraid of our distinct message which unfortunately remains undeclared in *Our Father Abraham*.

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**Mark 1-8:26 (Word Biblical Commentary 34A)**

Robert A. Guelich

Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989, xliii + 453 pp., n.p.

Although there are some good 'general reader' commentaries on Mark, for some time we have needed an English-language Mark commentary for advanced students and scholars that is up-to-date in the issues and scholarly literature. This work aims to address that need. V. Taylor's 1952 commentary (2nd edn 1966) is still worth consulting but now quite dated. The only subsequent Mark commentary in English with which to compare Guelich's work is W. Lane's 1974 contribution to the NICNT series. Lane's commentary reflected the developing scholarship of the gospels in American 'evangelical' Protestant circles, and its detailed discussion and rich citation of scholarly literature made it the most in-depth English-language Mark commentary after Taylor. Now, Guelich has produced the first volume of the most thorough Mark commentary in English, a major contribution to NT scholarship that also happens to illustrate the continuing maturation of American 'evangelical' biblical scholarship.

Guelich deals with the major introductory questions: genre, Mark's narrative quality, author, place, date, sources, structure, outline, theology, and the purpose of Mark. Guelich divides Mark 1-8:26 into four main sections (1:1-15; 1:16-3:12; 3:13-6:6; 6:7-8:26), composed of 44 smaller units, each of which receives analysis and discussion. He offers his own translation of each unit, but the discussion interacts fully with the Greek of Mark. Each unit has its own bibliography, which will assist the reader who seeks to do further investigation of a particular passage or question. And the bibliographies are both impressively current (with items as late as 1988 included) and full (including a rich citation of German-language scholarship). There are also two excursions, one on the term *euangelion*, and one on 'Baptism with the Spirit and/or Fire'.

At no point does Guelich duck issues or offer any special pleading. He treats seriously the questions of modern scholarly investigation of Mark, with respect for the evidence and any difficulties involved. He provides reasoned judgments on the many thorny and complex issues, but does so in full and fair dialogue with the academic fraternity. Overall Guelich has given us a work that students and specialists alike must welcome gratefully.

A summary of Guelich's conclusions on several introductory questions may be helpful. On the genre question, Guelich concludes (in basic agreement with Aune) that the NT gospels are formally examples of Hellenistic biography, though their content makes them a distinctive 'subtype' of that genre. After a brief review of different authorship proposals, Guelich pronounces the question moot and 'more a historical curiosity than an exegetical necessity'. Likewise moot is the question of the place of origin, though Guelich finds a Roman provenance to have slightly more probability than



other proposals. He offers a date sometime during the Jewish revolt, suggesting AD 70.

Though Guelich finds lacking unambiguous evidence that the Evangelist 'ever creatively composed *de novo* one single pericope', and emphasizes how Mark incorporates traditional materials and motifs, nevertheless he grants that Mark's selection and combination of material 'has indeed produced a distinctive literary work'. A large part of Guelich's discussion of each unit of text is given to identifying the traditional elements taken over by the Evangelist and his own redactional contributions. For readers of 'evangelical' persuasion, Guelich has a brief defence of this traditio-critical approach to 'the Scriptures', arguing that those who seek a 'normative witness' must use every scholarly means to obtain an understanding of the author's intention (p. xxxv). In general, he leans towards a more generous estimate of Mark's dependence upon traditional material and motifs, and restricts Mark's own authorial contribution more than some other recent studies. Though by no means identical, Guelich's basic approach might be compared with that taken in Pesch's commentary. In some sections of Mark, however, Guelich sees Mark as quite active in developing narrative emphases (e.g. in 6:7-8:36).

Guelich regards the themes of eschatology, Christology, and discipleship as so inseparably involved in Mark that no one theme can be singled out as primary. He seems to accept Kingsbury's critique of the 'correctionist' Christology interpretation of Mark, and sees Mark as written pastorally to 'a community under duress', to remind them of who Jesus was and of his significance for the future, and to summon them to authentic discipleship patterned after 'the way of the cross'.

It is difficult in one commentary to address both the scholarly academic, interested in historical-critical questions, and the minister and theologian, interested in the applicative and hermeneutical questions, though the series editors proclaim their intention to serve both types of readers. I impute no peculiar failing to Guelich, therefore, when I judge that he has succeeded in the former task but has barely dealt with the latter. Working ministers who take preaching the Bible seriously, and others who approach the biblical text with theological concern, will find much to inform their study of Mark. But basically they will have to make their own way to an appropriation of Mark for the pulpit or for theological reflection. Guelich's 'Explanation' sections do not often live up to the editors' promise (p. viii) of discussions of passages' 'relevance to the ongoing biblical revelation'. Most often, these sections simply offer a digest of the discussion of critical issues dealt with under the other headings.

Guelich is sensitive to the historical distance between Jesus' ministry and the gospels, and avoids simplistic reconstructions of the historical Jesus. But he sometimes attempts to indicate where the Jesus tradition may reflect authentic contours of Jesus' ministry, siding with Vermes (and against Tödt *et al.*), for example, on the view that Jesus used 'Son of Man' as a self-referential term.

On questions about Mark's use of pre-Markan collections of Jesus tradition, Guelich accepts Achtemeier's theory of a pre-Markan miracle collection lying behind much of chapters 4-8, holds (contra J. Dewey) to a collection of controversy stories behind Mark 2:1-3:6, and sees collections behind other passages such as Mark 4's string of parables. Indeed, one of the more intriguing portions of the commentary is Guelich's discussion of

Mark 4, which argues that 4:10-12 is not redactional but represents the 'sectarian' mentality of the pre-Markan tradition which Mark tones down. These verses are thus, in Guelich's view, no basis for positing a distinctive Markan 'parables theory'. (Curiously, Guelich shows no acquaintance with the several articles by C.A. Evans on the use of Is. 6:9-10 in the NT.)

In a work on a text as controversial as Mark, there are bound to be places where Guelich disappoints. For example, he cogently rejects Fowler's argument that the account of the feeding of the 5,000 is a Markan creation, but strikes me as unimaginative to a fault in his treatment of the significance of the numbers of the loaves. And his discussion of Mark 8:14-21 (a passage of apparent importance in Mark) is vague and insufficiently specific about what it was the disciples were to have understood.

Nevertheless, any disappointment with a few particular passages cannot slacken our gratitude to Guelich for this work of massive learning and meticulous analysis. All who are involved in scholarly investigation of the gospels are advised to become familiar with this commentary, and we look forward eagerly to the concluding volume.

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### Christian character in the Gospel of Luke

Brian E. Beck

London: Epworth, 1989, 232 pp., £6.95.

Brian Beck has produced a most interesting and informative book on a subject which is for the most part ignored by commentators. It is not simply a word study, but a wide-ranging consideration of Luke's attitude towards ideas which have an important bearing on the matter of Christian behaviour both positively and negatively. After an introductory chapter setting out the aims of the study, the author looks in some detail at the subjects of love, wealth (two chapters), a sense of God, faith, discipleship, imitation, the Pharisaic mind, a chapter on the structure of Luke in the light of earlier chapters, and a concluding summary.

There are so many good things in this book that one must confine oneself to some examples. In the chapter on love Beck underlines that for Luke, love is not a static concept but is marked by action. In the Lucan version of the great commandment, the quotation of Deuteronomy 6:4f. and Leviticus 19:18 are brought together in a single sentence as one command (10:27) and not separated as in Mark 12:30f. Love is thus indivisible, with no first commandment which can be fulfilled independently of the second (or *vice versa*). In the chapter on discipleship, Beck observes that Jesus does not propound a sectarian ethic to be adopted by some special class of person, but one which is intended for all. The inside/outside distinction is not nearly so clearly drawn as it is in Mark. The penultimate chapter on Luke's structure applies the author's conclusion in earlier chapters to the much-debated question of how Luke has organized his material. Students of Luke will find here some original points in this difficult area.

This book is a study in redaction criticism at its best. By paying close attention to the text,

Mr Beck is able to draw out many telling observations and it is recommended that a synopsis is to hand when reading this book. The style is wonderfully lucid and it is a book to be warmly recommended to scholars and ministers. There is some solid material here for sermon preparation.

Howard C. Bigg, Cambridge.

### Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus

Bernard B. Scott

Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989, xii + 465 pp., \$29.95.

In the mid- to late seventies, the Society of Biblical Literature's Parables Seminar became well known for its innovative appropriation of cross-disciplinary methods of studying the parables of Jesus. In the mid- to late eighties, the widely publicized Jesus Seminar, which is colour-coding all the sayings of the canonical gospels and certain apocryphal parallels according to the probability that Jesus actually spoke them, has demonstrated how broad a consensus of North American scholars (and to a certain extent continental ones) has accepted these methods. B.B. Scott, who teaches at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, has participated in both of these seminars and has produced the most extensive commentary on the parables in half a century, ably reflecting this new consensus.

Scott begins with a section of prolegomena, in which he offers the following definition of a parable: 'a *mashal* that employs a short narrative fiction to reference a transcendent symbol' (p. 8). He then organizes his introductory remarks to explain each portion of this definition. Among Scott's concerns are: (1) much more can be learned from the rabbinic parables than has usually been recognized; (2) parables and allegories differ in the direction of transference of meaning; (3) the *Gospel of Thomas* is an important, independent witness to the parables, often reflecting forms at least as early as those in the Synoptics; (4) storytelling practices in oral cultures make it impossible to speak of an original form (or *ipsissima vox*) of a parable since each 'performance' differs from the next (but one can speak of *ipsissima structura*); (5) parables and myths are opposites; and (6) the authentic cores of the parables facilitate insight into the kingdom of God in unconventional, non-propositional, and existentially upsetting ways.

The bulk of Scott's book then proceeds with a passage-by-passage commentary on the parables. Scott includes a few parables from *Thomas* which he deems authentic (e.g. Thos. 98) and he omits a few from the Synoptics which he rejects as entirely inauthentic (e.g. Mt. 25:1-13). He classifies the parables according to imagery, entitling his major sections 'Family, Village, City, and Beyond', 'Masters and Servants', and 'Home and Farm'. Scott is abreast of the latest sociological and cultural-anthropological research and regularly discusses topics like the honour or shame which would have accrued to certain characters' actions or the economics of a limited goods society presupposed by other characters' financial transactions. He uniformly rejects the interpretive framework into which the Evangelists have placed a parable, usually also jettisoning the opening or closing verses of the actual words attributed to Jesus as misrepresenting his original meaning. He then

analyses the 'surface structure' of the remaining cores to show the literary artistry and figures of speech employed. He eschews any attempt to summarize the main point of a parable as a misguided exercise but instead, in verse-by-verse fashion, seeks to describe how the parable 'creates meaning' (p. 420). Finally he considers the move 'from story to kingdom' to highlight the paradoxical and picaresque undercurrents of Jesus' speech.

Scott's insights range from indispensable to implausible. For almost every parable, Scott manages to consider the text from a fresh and provocative angle. In many instances, his interpretations prove convincing: the rich fool (Lk. 12:16-20) illustrates 'how to mismanage a miracle' (p. 127), the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk. 18:10-14a) shows that what had been considered holy is now outside the kingdom while the unholy may now be inside, the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) 'parodies legal form for the same reason [Jesus] parodies the rabbinic trusting in the yoke of the law - for freedom' (p. 235), and the unjust steward (Lk. 16:1-8a) 'breaks the bond between power and justice', showing that 'the kingdom is for the vulnerable, for masters and stewards who do not get even' (p. 266).

In other cases, however, Scott's readings seem less than fully persuasive. Scott insists on seeing the leaven (Lk. 13:20-21) as a metaphor of evil and so concludes that the parable teaches about the kingdom's freedom to appear under the guise of corruption. He plays down the abundant harvest in the sower (Mk. 4:1-9) and so rejects any apocalyptic interpretation of the narrative. He speculates too much about the minor details of the wicked tenants (Mk. 12:1-12) and so decides that 'in the plot the kingdom fails and the inheritance is in doubt' (p. 253). And he finds in the potentially unethical behaviour of the man who buys the field with hidden treasure (Mt. 13:44) a lawless narcissism which the kingdom creates because it is based on grace alone.

More seriously disconcerting are five of Scott's overarching presuppositions and hermeneutical principles. (1) One can learn much from rabbinic parables, not least that approximately three-quarters of the earliest ones were allegorical. But Scott refuses to consider this information relevant for interpreting Jesus' parables because of the time gap between the first century and the earliest attested forms of the rabbinic material. Yet curiously he is willing to use these later parables to shed light on first-century belief even though Jewish thought was much less stable than Jewish forms of teaching. (2) His disjunction between parable and allegory is defective from the outset because he adopts an all-or-nothing approach which is unparalleled in literary theory outside biblical scholarship. (3) He dismisses without refutation a strong case for viewing most of Thomas' paralleled parables as later than and dependent on the Synoptics. (4) He recognizes that the principle of *ipsissima structura* means that Jesus must have told similar stories in several different settings but never once applies this to the gospels. Scott therefore assumes that pairs of parables like the talents and pounds or great supper and wedding banquet must have resulted from the distortions of tradition or redaction, without considering the possibility that Jesus himself was responsible for variations on a theme. (5) The meanings of the parables change dramatically when all interpretive material in the gospels is bracketed. No doubt some of this is redactional, though even then Scott falls prey to the common 'redaction equals inauthenticity' fallacy. But in several instances he rejects material that is more likely authentic and which calls into question some of his more radical,

existentialist and seemingly anachronistic interpretations.

Notwithstanding these objections, the volume is a must for anyone who wishes to view the world in which a large percentage of parable interpreters live these days. It is a pity, however, that the emerging North American and continental consensus pays so little attention to dissenting voices in British and/or evangelical scholarship.

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**Studying the Synoptic Gospels**  
E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies  
London: SCM Press, 1989, 374 pp., n.p.

The departing Dean Ireland's Professor at Oxford and his wife have jointly produced this volume which is in effect an introduction to the synoptic gospels. Sanders is responsible (apparently) for all but Part Four of the book, and its contents will be fairly predictable for those familiar with his earlier works. The great merit of the work is its fairly detailed discussion of the problems and the texts with copious examples that the reader can follow through. The book is thoroughly up-to-date and incorporates discussion of recent developments in synoptic study. It has five parts.

In Part One Sanders discusses authorship and genre in broad terms. He thinks that the gospels were written anonymously c. 65-100. This conclusion is reached by doubting the reliability of Papias and the traditions which he quotes. In Part Two there is an extensive discussion of the synoptic problem which recognizes the complexity of the issues and the uncertainty of the commonly used criteria. Sanders is persuaded by M. Goulder that Luke knew Matthew but not necessarily that Matthew had no source other than Mark. He is inclined, therefore, towards a complex solution, which in the nature of things is hard to prove. It is not too surprising, therefore, that the book is dubious about the methods of a redaction criticism which assumes any particular hypothesis of synoptic origins. Part Three discusses form criticism in the light of recent studies by A.J. Hultgren, K. Berger and others which have led to some modifications of more traditional positions. Thus, for example, Sanders speaks in terms of *chreiai* rather than *apophthegmata* or pronouncement stories, and he is sceptical of Jeremias' attempt to locate the parables in historical contexts in the ministry of Jesus. On the whole, he keeps fairly close to Bultmann, but he argues that his critical reservations about Bultmann's views lead to 'more uncertainty than he had, not less'.

In Part Four Margaret Davies makes her entry with 'Holistic Readings' of the gospels. Redaction criticism is illustrated by expounding the work of J.D. Kingsbury on Matthew; the account is somewhat sceptical in that the author is critical of the assumption 'that the meaning of a text is given by the author's intention' and finds that this assumption flaws Kingsbury's approach. However, it is by no means so certain that the 'intentional fallacy' is a fallacy, as P. Cotterell and M. Turner have shown in their *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, chapter 2. She passes on to structuralism and deconstruction, of which she is rightly sceptical, and then to rhetorical criticism, which is important for its analysis of the literary devices used by all

writers, biblical ones included. Finally, she looks in turn at the genre of the three gospels. Matthew is 'a theodicy about creation and recreation'... which is centred in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus'. So too is Mark. But Luke is closer to the genre of Hellenistic history writing.

Finally, in Part Five the question of the historical Jesus is considered. Sanders rightly defends the legitimacy of the question. He insists that it is not a matter of 'innocent until proved guilty' with the sources or *vice versa*, but of weighing the evidence and assigning degrees of probability. He finds support for authenticity where the material shows characteristics which are against the interests of the Evangelists, where there is uniqueness (*i.e.* the dissimilarity principle), where there is multiple attestation in independent sources, and where there is agreement between friends and foes of Jesus. The first three of these are familiar, while the last is perhaps more novel. On this basis some seven general statements about Jesus' mission and his view of the kingdom of God can be listed as virtually certain - and a good deal more which is not listed.

Readers of all schools of thought will be grateful for this clearly presented account of gospel study and its methods. The authors are sufficiently sceptical of some of the 'assured results' of earlier criticism to make their work provocative for all readers. Conservative students will be worried no doubt by the rather sceptical conclusions to which they come regarding the historical reliability of the gospels: a very great deal of material is regarded as unhistorical (with virtual certainty) or as being of doubtful historicity. Has something gone wrong?

It is customary to distinguish between presuppositions, methods and conclusions. Some conservatives argue that methods which begin by assuming that the gospels may contain historically unreliable statements start from the wrong presuppositions. But, on the other hand, it is difficult to see why methods which investigate the historicity of the gospels should fail to work because the critic approaches the material with an open mind as to historicity. Surely if the gospels contain historically reliable statements, then they will pass tests for historicity, or at least cannot be disproved by historical study. And, on the other hand, it is necessary to investigate in what sense the statements in the gospels are historical, as for example, when material has been presented in abbreviated form or difficult sayings of Jesus have been clarified by the Evangelists. (I am aware that James Barr says that conservatives practise biblical criticism only because they are sure that it will come up with the 'right' answers from their point of view! The fact that he is wrong in this judgment does not altogether destroy my point. It would be more fitting to say that conservatives are, or should be, open to the truth, whatever it is. They believe that criticism cannot destroy the gospel even if it may correct their own false ideas of the gospel.) It is true, of course, that anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions will lead to false conclusions, and it is necessary to watch out for these, even when authors protest that they have not been influenced by them. But in the present case faulty presuppositions of a different sort may be the real culprits. They emerge perhaps in the discussion of the synoptic problem where the possibility of continuing sources of reliable information about Jesus right up to the time of composition of the gospels is simply not taken sufficiently seriously. Or again, assumptions about primitive narratives being 'simple' and later ones 'more developed' are not questioned sufficiently.

So far as the methods are concerned, it is probably little comfort to some conservative readers to discover that very similar things about the nature of historical study were being said in 1977 in the reviewer's own *I believe in the historical Jesus*, where the point was made that historical study can only assign degrees of probability to statements. It is true that the reviewer would assign greater probability of historical reliability to much more in the gospels than would Sanders, but in principle the methods employed are the same, and it is good that Sanders thinks in terms of degrees of probability. Readers may of course want to say that their belief in the reliability of the gospels is independent of historical study with its merely probable results, but such independence is not really possible. To take a hackneyed example, if the accounts of Peter's threefold denial of Jesus vary in the different gospels, then some kind of solution must be sought, and even those who postulate an original sixfold denial in order to harmonize the accounts and those who propose some other solution for the differences must use historical (as well as other) arguments in trying to settle which solution to adopt. And the conclusions to which they come will remain in the realm of probability.

So the problem is whether the methods have been properly applied, and whether conclusions have been reached which are truly dependent on correct application of methods and not perhaps on an unjustified scepticism. A certain amount of scepticism is in fact present, and when it is analysed it often seems to be unfounded. There is a danger of assuming too readily that where positive criteria for authenticity cannot be produced there are grounds for scepticism. The truth is that the whole business of demonstrating both authenticity and inauthenticity is extremely difficult.

Readers, therefore, who appreciate Sanders' scepticism regarding some of the familiar conclusions of other gospel critics will do well to exercise the same caution over against much of what he says, and they will be right to say 'Evidence, please' or to look critically at what is offered as evidence and to take note of considerations which have not been mentioned. They will appreciate the comprehensiveness of this guide to gospel criticism and they will learn much from it, but (in the spirit of the authors) they will read the work critically.

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### The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessors. From Narrative Source to Present Gospel

Robert T. Fortna

Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988, 368 pp., \$39.95.

Robert Fortna has been one of the acknowledged masters of Johannine redaction criticism since his publication of *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970). Since then Dr Fortna's research has continued to probe beneath the surface of John, seeking evidence for an earlier document, a narrative source, which might be one of the earliest Christian writings in existence.

The quest may not be as far-fetched as it may at first seem. The Johannine literary puzzle is a well-known mystery. Lengthy discourses stand side-by-side with miracle ('signs') nar-

atives and each seems to convey a different emphasis. Further, these disparate episodes in John seem stitched together into an ill-fitted patchwork. And this has left numerous tensions or irregularities (called *aporias*) in the gospel. Consider, for instance, the aborted ending at 14:31, or the peculiar geographical sequence in chapters 4-7. Even chapter 21 seems to be an addition, as does the prologue in 1:1-18. Jesus' first sign is in Cana (2:11) and his second in Capernaum (4:54) - but many other signs intervene! In 16:5 Jesus remarks that no one was asking about his departure, but the truth is that in 13:36 Peter had done just that.

All of this evidence (and much more) suggests that the Fourth Gospel had been vigorously edited and, if we follow Fortna's lead, edited somewhat clumsily. The *aporias* betray seams in the story and these in turn enable us to uncover the redactor or editor's handiwork.

In the present volume Fortna seeks to reconstruct the original, ancient narrative source behind the gospel. In the first half of the book he divides the narrative (excluding the discourses which come later) into 20 sections (e.g. the testimony of John the Baptist, 1:6-7, 19-34 is sec. 1; the official's son, 2:12a, 4:46-54, is sec. 4; and the great catch of fish, 21:1-14, is sec. 5). Each section is carefully scrutinized so that we can see the original story underneath the redactor's veneer. There is a good deal of rearranging here (the cleansing of the temple is moved to the end; ch. 5 joins ch. 9) and no doubt much of Fortna's redactional spadework seems like guesswork. Nevertheless the thesis is provocative and compelling and makes good sense in many places - for instance, no doubt the Jerusalem and Galilee signs should be gathered together. On the other hand one wonders how, say, in John 11:1-45 (pp. 94-109) Fortna can so confidently cut away the secondary accretions.

In the second half of the volume Fortna makes what may be the most troubling and certainly the most speculative step. He attempts to analyse the original theology of the source and then reconstruct the outlook of the editor based on the hypothetical reconstruction of the text just given. Following the traditional categories of biblical theology, Fortna studies Christology, signs and faith, salvation, the death of Jesus, and eschatology to see how the Johannine community was undergoing theological change. One example will suffice. The original narrative source presented Jesus as a worker of miracles and signs. The editor shifts the focus away from this to say that the chief sign was Jesus' death by which he gave us life.

The casual reader will be astonished at the degree to which Johannine literary criticism has dissected, rebuilt, and interpreted this gospel. And he would not be wrong to demur just a bit. Even Fortna knows that his work is very speculative and he sheepishly calls it 'creative sleuthing', hoping that only 50% of it will convince. Indeed some of his proposals are fascinating, such as when he supplies an excursus on the genre of the pre-Johannine source, compares it with the Synoptics, and dates the document in the 40s or 50s (pp. 205-220).

There is the nagging problem of method and control in this sort of effort, however. What test can verify such reconstructions? Could someone else sift the same material with utterly different results? Truth is, one gets the haunting feeling that Professor Fortna has found themes in the text which are as much *his* as anyone's. But this will always be the danger in thoroughgoing redaction criticism like this. Separating the source from the redactor is often more art than science. And if the beauty of art is really in

the eye of the beholder, then the success of Fortna's results will depend entirely on who is doing the viewing.

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### Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John

David Rensberger

London: SPCK, 1989, 168 pp., £9.95. Published in the US under the title *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988).

Rensberger, Associate Professor of NT at the Interdenominational Center in Atlanta, has produced a well-written and provocative study that attempts to link the Fourth Gospel - traditionally the 'spiritual gospel' - to broader themes of liberation, to hard social and political decisions. In his reading, traditionally 'religious' acts such as baptism and eucharist become marks of a self-consciously counter-cultural community.

In the first chapter, Rensberger sets the stage by rapidly reviewing recent Johannine scholarship. As he sees it, the creative movement is toward the delineation of the Johannine community in conflict with synagogal Judaism. Whether or not Johannine Christianity is a sect in the sense that it has broken relations with other Christians, it is certainly a 'conversionist community' (using the categories of Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest Among Tribal and Third World Peoples*).

The second chapter focuses on Nicodemus and the blind man (Jn. 3 and 9 respectively). With respect to John 3, Rensberger is not interested in sorting out whether Nicodemus is an historical figure, but in thinking through 'the symbolic role he plays in the Fourth Gospel' (p. 37), for 'as usual [John] seems less concerned with the meaning of this character for Jesus' history than with his meaning for the history of the Johannine community' (pp. 37-38). But what does Nicodemus symbolize? Rensberger's contribution is the suggestion that he plays a role 'as a communal symbolic figure' (p. 38, emphasis his). In particular, Nicodemus symbolizes the group of 'crypto-Christians' (the terminology is that of J. Louis Martyn) who are Christians in some sense but who so hide their profession of faith that they do not suffer the expulsion from the synagogue that the rest of the Christian community endures. They are 'successful enough at avoiding detection to have caused considerable distress to John and his community' (p. 41). By contrast, the blind beggar symbolizes the courageous Christian who, faced with a similar choice, comes out clearly in favour of public identification with the Christian community.

The third chapter is devoted to a compositional analysis of John 3. The two principal parts of the chapter are held together, Rensberger argues, by a single theme: the need to go beyond half-belief to full-hearted confession of Jesus. In both cases this is accomplished in baptism (since Rensberger interprets Jn. 3:3,5 to have primary reference to Christian baptism), and the baptism of John the Baptist has the similar aim of forcing profound

decision and therefore communal division. In his fourth chapter, Rensberger discusses both baptism and the eucharist in their function as boundary-markers. Baptism 'represents the threshold between the world and the community for John, and also the risk of crossing that threshold' (p. 81). The eucharist reinforces this boundary, and maintains solidarity between the individual believer and other believers, since neither sacrament is performed by the individual in isolation from others.

Chapter five treats the trial of Jesus and the politics of John. By casting Jesus as a king over against both Pilate and Barabbas, the Fourth Gospel 'confronts the issue of Israel's freedom in the late first century Roman Empire with an alternative to both zealotry and collaboration, by calling for adherence to the king who is not of this world, whose servants do not fight but remain in the world bearing witness to the truth before the rulers of both synagogue and Empire' (p. 100).

Chapter six attempts in an exploratory way to relate these findings to what is 'somewhat uneasily' called liberation theology. The call for Nicodemus to decide, to make a public transfer of allegiance, is what the saying 'You must be born from above' is all about; and, more generically, this becomes in our time a call to decide, to identify today with people who are on the margins of society. 'Nicodemus — that is, the group of people in the late first century whom he symbolizes — is being called upon to leave a secure, if ambivalent, situation by making known his solidarity with an oppressed minority. He is bidden to *decide*, and is told that on one side, and on one side only, lies the eternal life of God. He is told to come out of hiding' (p. 114). 'Where is Nicodemus to be found today? . . . Nicodemus is to be found, to begin with the most exact analogy, where Christians in power relate to powerless Christians. This is true whether power is derived from money, class, gender, race, education, political connection, or otherwise. . . . Nicodemus is to be found wherever one whose life is secure must face those whose life is insecure, or who struggle in the cause of God, and decide to say, 'I am one of them'' (pp. 115-116). Similarly, when the Johannine Jesus refuses to grant allegiance to Caesar or to acknowledge his authority, he 'provides the fundamental prerequisite for undermining his rule' (p. 118). From this base, Rensberger explores possible lines of thought connecting Johannine theology with a variety of authors on black theology or liberation theology.

In his seventh and final chapter, Rensberger reflects on the process of thought that connects the particularities of the historical existence of the Johannine community at the end of the first century with appropriate application today. As long as, say, Bultmann's atemporal existentialist approach prevailed, the challenge of this connection was not acute. But once the sociological and historical dimensions of the Johannine community are laid bare, then the challenge of moving from historical particulars no longer relevant (for instance, today the synagogue does not persecute the church) to contemporary application becomes formidable. Rensberger offers no formula, but rather a number of his preferences. In particular, the community's mission, both then and now, is, like that of Jesus, to 'take away the sin of the world'; and that is best accomplished in self-identity with the oppressed, with those on the boundaries of life.

Rensberger's work is not easy to evaluate in short compass, primarily because it is built on so many assumptions that are largely in vogue in the world of biblical scholarship, but which cry out to be questioned — at least

modified, in some cases jettisoned. The book is a delight to read. There is an easy familiarity with the literature and a graciousness of style that are altogether engaging. Even so, despite countless suggestive insights along the way, the thrust of the book is surely wrong-headed.

For a start, even if we grant that Rensberger's reading of the Fourth Gospel is largely correct, and that the Johannine community is best thought of as being on the boundaries of life, it is an extraordinary step that thinks of this gospel as a call to side with every minority group on the boundaries of life. To use John's gospel this way is to domesticate it, to hold it hostage to certain 'in vogue' sympathies on one wing of Christendom. The point is made clear from John's gospel itself. John is not calling anyone to identify with Judaism, which was a minority group within the Empire; with the Essenes, a minority group within Judaism; with the Samaritans, a minority group within the province of Syria; with the Stoics, a minority group within the Hellenistic culture. His point is to call people to allegiance to one particular minority group, the messianic community, the new covenant people of God. More precisely, his purpose is to call people to allegiance to Jesus the Son of God — not to any Jesus but the Jesus of history and of faith to whom he bears witness. To extrapolate the exclusiveness of, say, 5:23; 10:7-10; 14:6 into a generic call to side with minority groups, regardless of all other considerations, is not only to miss the point of John, but to contradict it.

Quite apart from the application of Rensberger's reading of John, is his reading itself justifiable? There was a time when form criticism taught us that although this or that pericope dealt with Jesus, and might or might not include historically accurate reminiscences, the pericope also reflected some sort of concrete situation in the church. Tradition and redaction criticism taught us to speculate about this ecclesiastical situation a little more closely, by analysing how these pericopes were shaped and put together. J. Louis Martyn taught us to go farther: he insisted that the church situation could be read off the very surface of the text, while it takes a great deal of cautious probing to say anything definite about what the text lets us know of the historical Jesus. Now sociology mediated through Rensberger, building on this reconstructed Johannine community, delineates the contours of the social forces that shaped it — and derives political lessons to be drawn by reflecting on those social forces.

Somewhere along the line, the text has been left behind. Not only have too many speculations been built on other speculations, but the *obvious* features of the text, such as its Christology, its claims to bring witness, its insistence on the uniqueness and exclusiveness of Jesus the Messiah, its remarkable ability to distinguish between what happened 'back there' during Jesus' ministry and what was discerned only later, are all lost. Many scholars doubt that John 3:3,5 is primarily about baptism, and that John 6 is primarily about the eucharist; but at very least, the point must be argued, and not assumed on the basis of a doubtful assumption as to how easy it is to read the ecclesiastical realities of the end of the first century off the surface of the text. And how can the Johannine emphasis on the uniqueness of Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, as the one who dies so that the nation may be saved, as the shepherd who gives his life for his sheep, be so quickly transmuted into a call that we in our turn take away the sin of the world by opposing injustice? I am not for a moment suggesting we should ignore injustice; I am merely saying that this is an extraordinary reading of John's gospel.

Indeed, I have gradually come to the conclusion the Fourth Gospel was not written primarily for church consumption anyway, but as an evangelistic booklet. I realize this point is debatable; but the very fact that it is debatable but is not, by and large, being debated, is profoundly troubling and indicative of what is going wrong in Johannine scholarship. The hesitant suggestions of earlier scholars have now become the 'givens' of this generation of scholars, who feel free to build fresh, hesitant suggestions on top of them. I am tempted to say that the emperor has no clothes — or, more conservatively, he is down to his underwear.

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### Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays

A.J.M. Wedderburn (ed.)  
Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989,  
207 pp., £20.

The question of Paul's relationship to Jesus is important and controversial. Paul speaks of himself as a slave of Jesus Christ, and it is clear that the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus are very important to him. But what about Jesus' life and teaching? Remarkably Paul refers very little to what Jesus did and said in his Palestinian ministry. Was he not very interested in the ministry? Did he presuppose that the readers of his letters knew the stories of Jesus? Or what?

Many scholars have tried to answer these questions over the years. Among books at present in print, J.W. Fraser's *Jesus and Paul* (Marcham Manor Press, 1974) is still as useful a discussion as any, and argues for close links between Jesus and Paul. In the collection of essays *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare* (eds. P. Richardson and J.C. Hurd, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984) there are some useful contributions, notably by Charles Scobie who argues that the Gentile mission which was so important for Paul had its roots in Jesus' ministry (contrary to the view of many critics; Scobie unnecessarily doubts the authenticity of Mt. 10:5-6) and by Larry Hurtado who examines the so-called Christ-hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 and argues that Paul here has in mind not just the humiliation of Jesus' death, but also the humility of his ministry and probably the 'servant' traditions we find in the gospels (e.g. Mk. 10:45; Jn. 13). An article by W. Klassen finds striking similarities between the way Jesus treated women as people and Paul's attitude, but he — quite unnecessarily — sees the pastoral epistles as quite different and non-Pauline.

Wedderburn's book is also collected essays. The editor, who is now at the University of Durham, has brought together six seminar papers given at the Society for New Testament Studies, all of which have been published before (though not all in English); he has also included in the collection the well-known survey article by Victor Furnish, 'The Jesus-Paul Debate: from Baur to Bultmann', and has provided his own introduction and postscript to the volume.

The result is a particularly interesting and useful volume, though of a demanding academic standard, not recommended for beginners. Two articles are by Christian Wolf: the first is an exegetical study of 2 Corinthians 5:14ff.: some scholars have argued that Paul speaks of his lack of interest in the earthly Jesus

in 2 Corinthians 5:16; Wolf demolishes this view and says 'Paul is here emphasizing that through his call all his former standards are destroyed, those by which he judged and condemned what he heard of Jesus' death and being raised from the dead; the death of the crucified one under a curse and his resurrection were now disclosed to the apostle as God's work, reconciling and bestowing new life' (pp. 97,98). Wolf's second article shows the similarity of Jesus' and Paul's approach to (a) poverty and homelessness, (b) renunciation of marriage, (c) service, (d) persecution; Paul is a true follower of Jesus.

Wedderburn's own three essays are also of considerable value: in the first he explores the significant parallelism between Jesus' teaching on the kingdom and Paul's on justification, and speculates that Paul used justification/righteousness terminology rather than kingdom terminology, on the one hand, because some of those he opposed were misusing 'kingdom' language in a triumphalistic way (1 Cor. 4:8 – Wedderburn thinks that one of the explanations of Paul's reticence about using the words of Jesus was because his opponents, including his Judaizing opponents, were fond of using Jesus' words against him); on the other hand, it may have been because his opponents accused him of preaching an 'unrighteous' gospel. In his second article Wedderburn helpfully compares Jesus' openness to sinners with Paul's openness to Gentiles. He suggests that Paul was influenced in this by the Hellenistic Christians of Jerusalem such as Stephen, who took a liberal line toward Gentiles before Paul. Wedderburn is surely right in arguing that Paul's interest in Gentile mission goes right back to the time of his conversion, and in criticizing Francis Watson's view that Paul turned to Gentile ministry after a period of frustrated ministry to Jews. But, although there is very probably a link between the thinking of the Hellenists of Jerusalem and the theology of Paul, Wedderburn's view of a significant pro-Gentile movement in Jerusalem that was offensive to Pharisaic Jews and antedated Paul's conversion is difficult to substantiate. Wedderburn's final article is quite a difficult discussion of the ways in which the history of Jesus was important for Paul's faith.

Perhaps the most disappointing thing about this book is its almost unrelieved pessimism about demonstrating that Paul knew traditions of Jesus' teaching and ministry; the question is addressed in an article by Nicholas Walter, and Wedderburn as editor endorses Walter's opinion that 'the amount which we can say with confidence that he knew is small indeed' (p. 191). The present reviewer came to much more optimistic conclusions in the *Gospel Perspectives* volumes 4 & 5, which fail to get into Wedderburn's bibliography. But, if that is disappointing, Wedderburn's belief in the importance of showing continuity between Jesus and Paul is welcome: 'While the Spirit of Jesus may lead it [Christian theology] into new apprehension of truth, the Spirit which leads it must remain that of Jesus. Continuity with him remains the touchstone by which all past statements of Christian theology, including Paul's, must be judged, and is the challenge confronting all present affirmations of Christian faith and its practice.'

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### Abraham in Galatians. Epistolary and Rhetorical contexts

G.W. Hanson

Sheffield: JSOT, 1989, 324 pp.,  
£23.50.

Paul's use of the Abraham narratives of Genesis is a significant part of the argument of his letter to the Galatians. Hanson's study seeks to draw out the logic of this use within the context of the letter as a whole. For this reason the book presents us with far more than just a discussion of the relevant sections. Indeed, it falls naturally into five separate parts, each able to be read independently of the others, though together forming a coherent discussion of the argument of the whole epistle.

The first provides structural analyses of the letter from several perspectives, both epistolary and rhetorical. Hanson's concern to place the letter within the context of real letters of the first century, and his stress on the significance of rhetorical structure (as distinct from mere supposed parallels), is to be warmly welcomed, and enables him to explore the coherence of Paul's argument in a way which marks a significant advance. With close attention to the text of Galatians, Hanson explores both the analyses of previous scholars (particularly H.D. Betz and J. Bligh), and the various rhetorical methods used by Paul's contemporaries.

His trenchant criticisms of weaknesses of Betz' analyses lead him to suggest a rather different rhetorical model for Paul's letter: that of a 'rebuke-request' letter. This has three advantages over Betz' 'apologetic' letter. It gives full weight to the fact that this is a letter, not a law-court speech; it is well-attested in the surviving materials of the first century; and it is flexible enough to permit the inclusion in the analysis of various sections which fit ill in Betz' model, not least the two chapters containing the Abraham material. Since the request begins at 4:12, the second Abraham passage functions as part of this latter section. This will lead Hanson to his own specific analysis of its significance.

In the second part Hanson turns to the two Abraham sections (3:1-29; 4:21-31), building upon the logical structure developed in the first part. The logical developments of the two sections are explored, and their different rhetorical modes, reflecting their different functions (one in the Rebuke, the second in the Request), are examined. The major break at 4:12 means that the second is by no means a mere appendage to the earlier argument, but rather 'was carefully crafted by Paul to add biblical weight to his request that the Galatians protect their freedom in Christ by expelling the troublemakers' (p. 154).

However, one major question seems to remain unanswered. If rhetoric is the art of persuasion we need to ask not just about the various techniques used, but also about their persuasive value. If Paul is facing a church which has already been persuaded by the opponents, one might be justified in wondering how cogent they would have found Paul's tactical redefinitions of the key terms, his radical reinterpretations of the key texts. Could he reasonably have expected them to accept the logic of his position? The answer must presumably be Yes, but it is not clear from Hanson's study how this might be so. In that, though, Hanson's study is no worse than any others in the field.

Three appendices discuss the opponents' use of the Abraham traditions, Abraham in Jewish literature, and the relationship between Paul and Jewish exegesis. Again, much to be welcomed is Hanson's awareness that any persuasive context for Galatians must indicate how the Galatians could ever have been persuaded to accept a custom so offensive as circumcision was felt to be in the Graeco-Roman world (Appendix 1), though his sketch could helpfully have been fleshed out in the context of the contemporary social situation.

As an introduction to Galatian issues, this book functions better than many commentaries. Rarely does Hanson allow himself to become bogged down in details, maintaining a broad sweep of perspective which allows us to see where he thinks Paul is going. The appendices add helpful discussions of other key issues.

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### Paul and the Popular Philosophers

Abraham J. Malherbe

Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress,  
1989, 192 pp., \$19.95.

This book contains a collection of technical essays by Abraham Malherbe, most of which have been published elsewhere in scholarly journals or books. The publication of his articles together is timely since they furnish detailed support for his recent and more general work titled *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Fortress, 1987). Nevertheless, the essays themselves are not confined to an analysis of parallels between Thessalonians and Greek philosophical writings. A number of different topics are explored, which cannot be covered in a short review, and thus it will be helpful to list in order the title of each essay: 1. 'Self-Definition among the Cynics'; 2. 'Mt Genoitio in the Diatribe and Paul'; 3. 'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thessalonians 2'; 4. 'Exhortation in 1 Thessalonians'; 5. 'Paul: Hellenistic Philosopher or Christian Pastor?'; 6. 'The Beasts at Ephesus'; 7. 'Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War'; 8. 'Medical Imagery in the Pastoral Epistles'; 9. 'In Season and Out of Season': 2 Timothy 4:2'; 10. 'Not in a Corner': Early Christian Apologetic in Acts 26:26'; 11. 'A Physical Description of Paul'.

Despite the diversity of themes covered, a consistent thesis informs the present work. Malherbe argues that Paul and other writers in the Pauline tradition consciously adapted Hellenistic sources, particularly from the Cynic tradition, shaping them to address the situation of their own readers. This does not mean that Paul could be identified as a Cynic or a Stoic, for there are remarkable differences, but he often used such traditions in exhorting his readers. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Paul, according to Malherbe, employs Cynic traditions of the ideal philosopher in portraying his ministry in Thessalonica. Many hucksters went about hawking their message, and thus it was necessary for Paul to distinguish himself from charlatans. Malherbe concludes that the close parallels between Paul's defence and Cynic traditions (especially from Dio Chrysostom) suggest that Paul is not responding to specific criticisms from Thessalonica. He is merely providing a typical

vindication of his behaviour since there were so many charlatans spreading their message.

Malherbe rightly cautions us from concluding that Paul is necessarily responding to criticisms from opponents in 1 Thessalonians 2. The defence of his ministry may have been a different function in the context of the letter, and the suggestion that such an apologetic was common since so many charlatans were peddling their message is credible. But is the author right in saying that Paul is consciously adapting Cynic traditions? There is no doubt that some notable parallels are drawn between Paul and the Cynics. Further evidence is needed to prove that these parallels confirm the conscious use of philosophic traditions by Paul. Malherbe himself distinguishes Paul from the Cynics in a number of ways, and thus more rigorous criteria and proof are needed to show that Paul was adapting Cynic traditions and that the Thessalonians would recognize him as doing such.

In an essay on the Paul of Acts in which he focuses particularly on Paul's claim that 'nothing was done in a corner' (Acts 26:26), Malherbe attempts to prove that Paul is represented as a moral philosopher. Some fascinating parallels are highlighted, and one could see such a perspective being supported from Paul's speech at Athens (but note the reference to resurrection in the speech!). Nonetheless, Malherbe's essay is unconvincing because the speech in Acts 26 is surely rooted in the OT and Judaism, not in moral philosophy. In Acts 26 Paul speaks to a fellow-Jew (Agrippa), emphasizes his Pharisaic past, stresses the hope of the twelve tribes, focuses on the resurrection, notes that the voice came to him in Aramaic (or Hebrew), and emphasizes the fulfilment of the OT scriptures. Any reference to Paul as a moral philosopher here is at best tangential and in actuality far removed from the context.

In conclusion, Malherbe usefully draws some parallels between Pauline literature and Greek philosophical tradition. Paul probably was aware of some of these traditions because he was educated and such teachings were 'in the air'. But greater attention should be devoted to methodological considerations. Conscious dependence upon Cynic traditions is not established merely by similar words or by a similar theme. Of course, the Jewish Paul was not cut off from the Hellenistic world, and Hellenism and Judaism cannot be placed into watertight compartments (Hengel). Nevertheless, Malherbe overestimates the influence of Cynic traditions upon Paul and underestimates the role of the OT and Jewish tradition.

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**From Plight to Solution:  
A Jewish Framework for  
Understanding Paul's View of  
the Law in Galatians and  
Romans (SuppNovT 61)**  
Frank Thielman

Leiden: Brill, 1989, 159 pp.

This is the published form of Thielman's doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of D. Moody Smith at Duke University. His concern is to examine afresh the extraordinarily complex questions surrounding Paul's understanding of the law. In his first

chapter, Thielman summarizes the debate from Montefiore to Dunn. Before the work of E.P. Sanders, scholars tended to congregate around four positions: (1) Some (Windisch, Grundmann, Bläser) argued that Jewish soteriology turned on works-righteousness, and that Paul's polemic against Judaism was in this respect telling and right on the mark. (2) Some (Montefiore, Parkes) thought Paul unintelligible if interpreted against the background of rabbinic soteriology, but could be explained by appealing to the pessimism inherent in Paul's background in Hellenistic Judaism. (3) Others thought Paul's position the logical development of his knowledge of Jewish eschatology — whether grounded in his quarrel with Judaizing opponents (Schweitzer, Davies) or in his familiarity with the pessimism of Hellenistic Judaism (Schoeps). (4) Still others (Moore, Enslin, Bultmann, Wilkens and others) judged Paul's view to be unintelligible on any reading of Jewish background and law, but explainable 'on the basis of his prior conviction that Jesus was the universal savior' (p. 25). Thielman summarizes the criticisms that were levelled against each group, but argues that the weaknesses of the first three groups seemed especially strong, leaving the fourth group to pave the way for E.P. Sanders. Thielman summarizes Sanders' view, and briefly reports the criticisms offered by Räisänen, Weder and Dunn, along with some weaknesses in their own positions.

Sanders thinks that Paul can be understood only if we see that he argues 'from solution to plight': Paul has already accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and works backward from that 'solution'. Thielman's contribution lies in his attempt to delineate within ancient Judaism a pattern of argument that runs from plight to solution, a pattern that Paul adopts in Galatians and Romans. Thielman's brief (pp. 28-45) second chapter sets out the pattern within Judaism; his third and fourth chapters treat Galatians and Romans respectively. The fifth chapter ('Paul, Torah, and Judaism in Galatians and Romans') is a summary of the argument, along with some pointed suggestions as to how various components in the current debate should be modified in the light of this thesis. An appendix engages the work of Lloyd Gaston and John G. Gager on Paul's view of the law.

The pattern that Thielman uncovers runs like this: Some authors speak of Israel's failure in terms of disobedience to the law, and of Israel's redemption 'in terms of God's intervention on her behalf to enable her to keep the law' (p. 28). Half of the second chapter traces this pattern in the OT. The other half is evenly divided between the Dead Sea Scrolls (especially 1QH) and other Jewish literature of the Second Temple period. Thielman thinks this same pattern 'from plight to solution' is found in Galatians and Romans. The law still functions in the eschatological community of believers, as they are enabled to 'fulfil' it through the power of the eschatological Spirit. Paul is negative toward those parts of the law that divide Jew from Gentile (circumcision, food laws, Sabbath-keeping — overtones of Dunn's position), but this 'does not threaten the place which he gives to the ethical commands of the law in the eschatological age', and indeed in this he is following 'a common tendency within the literature of Diaspora Judaism' (p. 118). If Paul passes negative judgments about the law's capacity to command obedience, these judgments do not themselves suggest that the law has been abrogated *simpliciter*. 'Only the law's effect of defining sin and enclosing the sinner under sin along with the subsequent curse of the law has been abolished, not the law itself' (p. 118).

There is no doubt that Thielman is right to emphasize the pattern he first draws from the pages of the OT. The question is whether this provides an adequate explanation of Paul's use of the law. What justification does the pattern provide for abrogating those parts of the law that divide Jews and Gentiles? Might he not have read in the pattern that the Gentiles should join the Jews? Where does the pattern establish the abrogation (or at least the principal irrelevance) of the sacrificial and priestly laws as *lex*? Does Paul think the eschatological community should prescribe capital punishment in the case of adultery? Although there is a handful of passages that make some sort of connection between ethics and law, is it not much more typical of Paul to tie his ethics to the Spirit, or to what it means to live up to the calling we have in Christ, or to obedience to Christ or the like? True, Thielman rightly emphasizes those passages that picture the Christian fulfilling the law through the Spirit. But what does this mean? Does it mean the law continues as *lex*? Does typology enter at some point? Is there a prophetic element in law (cf. Rom. 3:21b)? Does Paul view the law as *lex*, or as law-covenant (now superseded by a 'new covenant'), or as anticipatory model ('type')? How much does his understanding of νόμος change from context to context?

Thielman's book is too brief to answer the difficult questions. His thesis is an updated version of a major stream in classic Protestantism, and is to be welcomed in that, over against many current trends, it does help us to see there are more lines of continuity than is sometimes thought, and that the pattern that argues from plight to solution should not be dismissed too quickly. But I doubt that this book will convince many that the problems Thielman completely outlines in his first chapter will be greatly alleviated by these proposals.

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### The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters:

The Bible and its Modern  
Interpreters

Eldon Jay Epp and George W.  
MacRae (eds)

Philadelphia: Fortress/Atlanta:

Scholars, 1989, xxxii + 601 pp.,  
\$34.95.

The editors have assembled a series of articles of generally high quality which reflect some of the major developments in the study of the NT since around 1945.

The scope of the volume is nothing less than prodigious. In 'Part One: The World of the New Testament', there are articles on Greco-Roman religion and philosophy (A.J. Malherbe), Judaism (A.J. Saldarini), and Qumran (J.M. O'Connor). Malherbe's article might have opened a little less negatively, in assessing the degree of effort scholars expend within his field, had it been written nearer the end than the beginning of the present decade, but it is a fine, programmatic piece, marred only by a tendency to refer to works without description, and then to comment upon them. By contrast, Saldarini's early *terminus ad quem* results in a serious distortion of the current state of the discipline, in that no mention is made of the significant new wave of Targumic studies related to the NT, and the approach to the question of dating rabbinic references is itself

dated in the old positivism of discounting sources which are later than the NT, despite the fact that earlier material might be contained within them. On the whole, the volume may be said not to engage seriously with the Judaic milieu of the NT, in that there is no article on Hellenistic Judaism. The piece on Qumran is, as might be expected, competent, but the essay itself makes it obvious that the evidence must now be treated as a part of the complex phenomenon of early Judaism, not as a limited inquiry regarding the possible influence of the sectarians upon the NT.

Part Two presents discussions of 'Methods of New Testament Scholarship', including textual criticism (Epp), philology (S. Brown), form and redaction criticism (E.V. McKnight), and literary criticism (W.A. Beardslee). Epp's essay is lucid and stimulating, and presents just the blend of discussion of issues and reference to bibliography which is characteristic of the volume as a whole at its best. Brown's contribution is a nice surprise: in the midst of a book concentrated on the state of the discipline, it offers a highly individual and reflective consideration of what it means to study the speech of the NT. 'Form and Redaction Criticism' is more typical of the project, in presenting a wide survey of the fields. Beardslee contributes an equally competent survey, but also issues an exciting challenge: to craft an interpretative stance which is equal to the task of providing a theory of meaning.

Part Three informatively discusses 'The Literature of the New Testament', and presents discrete chapters on canon (H.Y. Gamble), the Synoptics (H.C. Kee), John (D.M. Smith), Luke and Acts (C.H. Talbert), Paul (V.P. Furnish), Hebrews (P.E. Hughes), James, 1, 2 Peter and Jude (B.A. Pearson), Revelation (E.S. Fiorenza), the 'Apocrypha' of the NT (R.M. Wilson), and the Apostolic Fathers (W.R. Schoedel). If there are no surprises in this Part, that is probably because there should not be any, but it is good (and somewhat innovative) to see the last two articles under the category of the literature of the NT.

The last Part treats of 'Jesus and Christology' (J. Reumann) and 'New Testament Theology' (R.H. Fuller). Both provide a suitable coda, in that they sound the *leitmotif* of the debt to Bultmann which is heard repeatedly from essay to essay. Perhaps because that is the case, they miss a major development which characterizes the present environment as theologically post-Bultmannian: where Bultmann located the decision of faith where the kerygma differed from Judaism, *Jesus and his movement* are now seen as describable only within the terms of reference of early Judaism. In that sense, the volume may be said to close with the same weakness with which it opens.

My criticism is only intended to point out that, although the volume usefully surveys the field delineated, there is a movement afoot which is left out, a movement which would both describe Jesus more critically and shift the centre from which a theology based upon the NT would proceed. Epp himself remarks upon the lack of articles on the social world of the NT and feminist interpretation (p. xxv), but both perspectives, particularly the first, do in fact find expression from time to time. Lastly, it might be mentioned that — for a volume which occasionally reads as a bibliography of bibliographies — there are some odd omissions. The index of authors has no mention of W.S. Campbell, C.A. Evans, R.B. Hays, D. Lull, B.B. Scott, W.R. Telford, A.C. Thiselton, and C.M. Tuckett, although all of them have contributed signally to topics which are treated. In addition, some scholars who are mentioned are only

referred to for subsidiary contributions, so that R. Baukham is not mentioned for 2 Peter and Jude, the present writer is not mentioned for the kingdom of God or the Isaiah Targum, P.H. Davids is not mentioned for his commentary on James, and H. Schürmann is not mentioned for redaction criticism. Of course, it was not the intent of the volume to be exhaustive, but at least some of those omissions will be regarded as surprising. Readers who already are at home in the world of analysing the NT will nonetheless find that the volume is an interesting tool of study, and a testament to the vitality of our discipline.

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**Knowing the Truth:  
A Sociological Approach to  
New Testament Interpretation**  
Howard Clark Kee  
Minneapolis: Fortress Press,  
1989, 120 pp., \$8.95.

Professor Kee, the distinguished author of *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (1983) and of *Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (1986), has written a very useful if concise introduction to one of the most popular recent approaches to the NT — the sociological approach. As he critiques a large number of scholars from a variety of viewpoints in a brief compass, this slim volume is at times little more than a bibliographical essay.

Kee dedicates the volume to sociologists Peter and Brigitte Berger, from whom he has gained basic insights into the sociology of knowledge. From this vantage point Kee offers trenchant criticisms of the reductionist tendencies of the History-of-Religions school, Adolf von Harnack, S.J. Case, Shailer Matthews, Rudolf Bultmann, and his latter-day disciples, e.g. Helmut Koester.

Kee remarks: 'Especially since the discovery of the gnostic gospels, a historical theory has been promulgated that the noncanonical gospels preserve more faithfully the historical Jesus tradition than the canonical gospels do, since in the former there is little if any interest in his activities and his predictions about the future. Instead, Jesus comes across as a teacher of timeless truths for those who are already "in the know". This has an understandable appeal in terms of contemporary intellectual values, but it is scarcely an appropriate ground on which to base what are presented as historical judgments' (p. 24).

He is also critical of the anachronistic use by unnamed scholars (one thinks of Morton Smith) in using parallels from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* to elucidate the gospels portraits of Jesus' (pp. 23, 54). Nor does he have much use for structuralist or Marxist approaches. Kee, who has been deeply influenced by Jacob Neusner's researches to view the use of rabbinical traditions to reconstruct the Judaism of the first century as anachronistic, criticizes the revised Schürer and the studies of E.P. Sanders for their use of such sources.

Kee has appreciative comments on Eugene Nida and Anthony Thiselton for their linguistic and hermeneutical insights. But he takes to task such scholars as Edwin Judge and Derek Tidball (p. 37) for their failure 'to discriminate between the social contexts of the authentic Pauline letters, of the stories in Acts, and of the later material attributed to Paul'. From his other

studies one can discern that Kee has been influenced by the alleged lack of archaeological evidence for first-century synagogue buildings to conclude that Luke-Acts is a document from the early second century, as they refer to synagogue buildings. But this is to take an overly sceptical attitude about the identification of buildings at Masada and Herodium as first-century synagogues. (Kee's scepticism coincides with the view of L.M. White and M. Chiat, but runs counter to the vast majority of scholars — J. Gutmann, G. Foerster, A. Kloner, L.I. Levine, Z. Ma'oz, E.M. Meyers, E. Netzer, S. Saller, F. Strange, Y. Yadin — on the subject.) He also seriously underestimates the fragmentary nature of the archaeological evidence, which should not be preferred to the testimony of the NT, Josephus, and Philo.

His final remarks are cautionary as he warns against three approaches (p. 106): 'The first is the reductionist approach, which accounts for the appeal of Christianity by identifying its dynamic primarily or even exclusively with economic or political factors. Second is the abstractionist approach, such as that of structuralism, which subsumes all the evidence under a rigid, allegedly universal pattern of binary opposition, in which every action evokes its opposite. Third is the formalist approach, which chooses a set of categories, ostensibly deriving from the social sciences, and then forces the evidence of Christian origins into this pattern, obscuring important differences by sweeping generalizations.'

On a more positive note as illustrated in his own books, Kee urges: 'Rather, the historian must seek to enter into the symbolic universe of the community that produced this evidence, and to identify both what the shared assumptions were as well as what explicit claims and norms were declared by the group. Unless this analytical approach is undertaken, it is virtually certain that the unconscious assumptions and values of the interpreter will be imposed on the ancient evidence' (p. 53). To assist scholars in this task, Kee has prepared in chapter III a list of questions on boundary, authority, status, role, ritual, group function, symbolic universe, and social construction of reality issues.

If there is a weakness in Kee's otherwise excellent volume, it is his failure to be critical of certain sociological constructs such as 'cognitive dissonance' (p. 67), used in such commended works as John Gager's *Kingdom and Community* (p. 116). This concept was developed from Leon Festinger's flawed conclusions about the disappointments of a flying saucer cult (See my 'Sociology, Scripture and the Supernatural', *JETS* 27 (1984), pp. 169-192.)

Edwin Yamauchi, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

**Radicals and the Future of the Church**  
Don Cupitt  
London: SCM, 1989, 183 pp.,  
£6.95.

The author describes this as 'the last of a series of books about faith in the postmodern age', the first of which was *Life Lines* (1986). Readers should follow three rules in reading this work. First, note that Don Cupitt uses the royal 'we'. From the outset 'we', 'our', 'us' may in any given case mean 'I', 'my', 'me' — in chapter titles as well as the text. Alternatively, the pronouns or possessive adjectives may be taken as they stand as long as they are taken to stand for a

group of Cupittian radicals. Secondly, avoid the habit of asking: how on earth is that consistently Christian? with reference to the author's commitments. He means what he says: 'Your God has to be, let's be blunt about it, your own personal and temporary improvization' (p. 14). Don Cupitt may be sincere in his personal allegiance to Jesus but he explicitly rejects Christianity except in a form which you devise for yourself. Thirdly, do not think that connections between statements in the argument are often logical. Cupitt frequently associates things that sometimes go hand in hand rather than relating them logically. In principle that is fine as long as we remember it.

The book moves from a statement of the difficulties with Christianity through a description of an alternative Christianity to proposals for how radicals can function within a church. Traditionally, Christianity is fatally committed to realism: a belief in a real God out there, objectively independent of us. But this is just an excuse for all kinds of oppression, especially of women. Alternatively, Christianity is creative individual living, freely and aesthetically gliding through life's decisions and serving the social needs of the neighbour. Art presents us with the paradigm for such an attitude – a position for which Cupitt, of course, claims no originality. The title of the book indicates its distinctive slant. The author argues that radicals should remain in the church 'and attempt by deception, by reinterpretation, by political stratagems and by perverting the minds of the young to do something for the transformation of Christianity and the future of religion' (p. 125). (Only by reading the work can one judge how much irony, if any, there is in this statement. Don Cupitt should not be judged on the basis of a review more than the thinkers he discusses, e.g. Kierkegaard, should be judged on the basis of his own descriptions.) The point of weakness in the church which the radical might just exploit successfully is the contradiction between its external orthodoxy in belief and its practical formation of ethical decisions. This is 'our Trojan horse' and the author concludes with a brief sketch of reformed church life as he would like it to be.

The author writes with a nimbleness that makes protagonists seem flat-footed, so far as style goes. Furthermore, when Cupitt gets it right he is peerless. And at points he does. His remarks on evasive preaching, on the split between doctrine and ethics, on the media and reality are spot-on, illuminating and true observations. But observations they are. The contents of his proposal are tragically errant.

1. Much of the argument rests on a philosophical claim that 'post-modernity' has shown how language cannot refer to a reality outside itself, rendering a single fixed immutable truth. Philosophically, his mistake here is like that of a student of history who concludes by looking just at history that incarnation could never be possible, or of the cognitive psychologist who concludes by studying the mind that revelation is impossible. It is not the study of language that discloses the possibilities of language (any more than the study of history discloses the possibilities of history or the study of mind the possibilities of mind), for only when he who is outside it (God) uses it to refer to himself can we know its capacities. That does not dispose of philosophical problems which in their nature can be with us for ever if we want, but no one must assume that Cupitt has remotely succeeded in disposing of Christianity philosophically.

2. Behind this philosophical sophistication, as one almost always finds, there lie ordinary difficulties. God, for Cupitt, causes

'massive inhumanity, social injustice and psychological damage' (p. 168). This charge must not be dismissed simply because it is old hat. Rather we must seek to show by example that these are perversions and not expressions of belief in God, though of course criteria for what constitutes humanity, justice and psychological health will not always be the same.

3. Behind this again there appears to be – though I cannot judge – a deep personal bitterness. Urbanity does not, nor is it meant to, conceal detestation. Obsessive repetitiveness leads the author to such suggestions as the possibility that primitive vocabulary is used in Anglican worship 'to make the radicals [Cupitt] feel uncomfortable' (p. 168); that 'the people who have the most realistic view of God are just the ones who are the most angry, emotionally crippled and violently prejudiced against minorities' (p. 87), and generally that naivete and misanthropy are about the lightest charges to be brought against orthodoxy. It sounds pathological, which is why counter-argument on such central theses as 'rationality is sexist' or 'orthodoxy is sexism' is of little avail, but perhaps the author is doing himself an injustice.

If the reviewer, who found the author condescending, to say the least, himself sounds condescending, I regret it. Doubtless Cupitt lives by his convictions better than I do by mine. This work should encourage us to revisit our convictions; serious orthodoxy should be prepared for self-correction and fresh appropriation of its beliefs wherever it is needed. But it should not be replaced by what is on offer here.

Stephen Williams, Whitefield Institute, Oxford.

**Christianity and the Nature of Science**  
J.P. Moreland  
Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989,  
263 pp.

J.P. Moreland has provided us with a technical and detailed analysis of the nature of presuppositions in science. He first draws attention to the popular misconception of science. He goes on to criticize the concept of 'the scientific method' as illusory. Moreland rightly points out the limitation of science, as the philosophical presupposition that lies outside of science is a refutation of scientism. The problems of scientific realism, the belief in the existence of scientific truth, as contrasted with antirealism, the stipulation that science is only a convenient theoretical construct, are also discussed. After enumerating various occasions on which antirealism may actually be preferred, Moreland offers his *eclectic* solution to the problem. While not willing to abandon scientific realism altogether, Moreland nonetheless advocates adopting 'realism or antirealism on a case by case basis' (p. 170). Moreland's concluding chapter presents the goal of his treatise, to justify creationism as a valid scientific theory.

As a practising molecular biologist who is intensely interested in the integration of science and theology, I commend Moreland's effort in clarifying the philosophical nature of the creation-evolution debate. However, I cannot agree with the solution suggested by Moreland, the establishment of creationism as an alternative *scientific* model to evolution, though I concur with him on the philosophical nature of the debate. My reasons are as follows:

(1) The classical dictum, 'Faith seeking Understanding', outlines the Christian framework of epistemology. Our understanding of God and his world is predicated on an act of obedience in accepting God as our Creator and Redeemer. Calvin further elaborates on the revelation of God. The knowledge of God the Creator and the knowledge of God the Redeemer are complementary and necessary for people to have a saving knowledge of God. Therefore, theology was the philosophical underpinning of all the intellectual pursuits of the medieval ages, hence the cliché, 'Theology is the queen of all sciences'. While Moreland's attack on the cultural myth that 'science is a rational, truth-seeking discipline and theology is not' (p. 101) is justified, I do nevertheless find his extrapolation of using scientific methodologies to study theology far-fetched, since science is only one of many ways in the search for truth.

(2) Moreland suggests that Karl Popper's criterion of demarcation of a good scientific theory, empirical falsifiability (i.e. the parameters and concepts involved must be subject to empirical scrutiny such that their validity can be established or discredited), is not widely accepted in philosophical circles. However, Popper's definition of scientific methodology was the basis for the late Judge William R. Overton's decision to reject scientific creationism in the famous creation science trial in Arkansas which was also apparently upheld by the US Supreme Court in the Louisiana case. Empirical scientists depend on the design of controllable experimental conditions in which each variable is tested against a control, with exactly the same treatment except for the parameters being tested. I do believe that Popper's hypothesis gives empirical science a fruitful scientific methodology.

(3) As an empirical scientist, I view science as a methodology. The goal of science is to establish explanations of natural phenomena strictly in terms of other natural phenomena, chiefly by hypotheses and experimentation. It is in this context that the often misquoted remark of Laplace, 'I have no need of the God-hypothesis', should be placed. Moreland, joining the camp of Kuhn and others, enunciates that science is also embedded in philosophical paradigms. Paradigmatic shifts have played important roles in the history and philosophy of science. It is difficult to separate the methodological and the metaphysical elements of science. Moreland also concurs with the distinction between 'origin science' (or 'historical science') and 'operational science' (or 'empirical science'). 'Origin science' is more metaphysical than methodological. Discussion in this area of science is often coloured by one's outlook on life. I submit that the scientific methodology can be more strictly applied in 'operation science' since meaningful consensus can more easily be reached among practising scientists. The success of 'operation science' is evidenced by the technological explosion of the modern scientific era.

(4) Even Moreland admits that creationism as a scientific model 'is less adequate than evolutionary theory regarding fruitfulness in guiding new research' (p. 242). I would like to add that all 'origin sciences' are much less fruitful in guiding new research than 'operational sciences'. Evolutionary discussion was introduced into the scientific arena by Darwin's postulation of a mechanism of natural selection, which is an empirically falsifiable concept, despite some claims to the contrary. Popper



defended it recently. Natural selection has been well documented as a mechanism that explains the theory of microevolution, but it fails to account for macroevolution or organic evolution. In fact, the evolutionary model of the origin of life on earth is a fruitless scientific model. The late Max Delbruck, Nobel laureate molecular biologist who was also an evolutionist, once remarked, 'In recent years various theories have outlined the possible connection between molecular selection, natural selection and irreversible thermodynamics within prebiotic biochemical trial processes. While all these theories seem quite plausible and intelligent, in my opinion they tell us very little about the origin of life. I have made it my rule not to read this literature on prebiotic evolution until someone comes up with a recipe that says "do this and do that, and in three months, things will crawl in there". When someone is able to create life in a shorter time than was originally taken by Nature, I will once more start reading that literature' (Max Delbruck, 'Mind from Matter', Palo Alto, Blackwell, 1986, p. 31; cited by G.T. Javor in *Origin*, 1987, 14:7-20).

Thus the best solution to the creation/evolution controversy, in my opinion, is not the introduction of creationism as a scientific model. Rather, it is to bring to the realization of the secular mind that evolution as a model for explaining the origin of life is a theory that is not empirically falsifiable. Evolution and creationism are both models of 'Origin Science' that are by nature more speculative than empirical. However, the evolution model has the testable mechanism of natural selection to explain microevolution, which brings it into the realm of 'operation science' at the level of explaining the origins of biological variations. Creationism lacks such testable mechanism and thus is not fruitful in guiding research in 'operation science'. The recent decision in California to require the teaching of evolution as a scientific theory rather than a fact seems to be in the right direction towards the resolution of this conflict. Moreland's book, while clarifying the philosophical nature of the conflict, fails to offer a substantive alternative to such a solution.

**Pattle Pun**, Wheaton College, Illinois.

### Themes in Hinduism and Christianity

**Roger H. Hooker**  
Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 396 pp., DM74.

Roger Hooker's intimate personal relationships with both leading Hindus at Varanasi and ordinary Hindus in India and Britain has given him a thorough understanding of Hindu thought-forms. It was refreshing to read such a book as this. The philosophical background of the various streams of Hinduism is matched by a knowledge of the underlying concepts which actually determine how Hindus think and believe.

Roger Hooker takes seven themes, devoting one chapter to each. I think it is significant that the first theme dealt with is that of myth. Hooker points out the tremendous importance of traditional stories in the formation of all Hindus' belief systems and religious practice. As westerners we are perhaps apt to concentrate too much on theological and philosophical thought in its abstract formulations. In many other cultures ancient myths are foundational, although some Indians today

with a more modern scientific outlook may be a little embarrassed by the mythological nature of such traditions. As Hooker points out, the danger of the erosion of a framework of traditional stories and characters is 'that our only common language is that of secular materialism'.

This first fascinating chapter introduces us to the following six themes: time, evil, purity, images, renunciation and woman. In each of these Hooker shows a deeply sympathetic approach to Hindu ideas in which he clearly walks in their sandals. For example, he rejects a simplistic Christian rejection of 'idolatry' and shows the deeper underlying significance of idol figures. He helpfully analyses various approaches to the question of idol figures — iconomachals who reject all use of images, symbolists who allow images but insist that the deity does not dwell in them, incense-burners who claim that the deity does dwell within the image, literalists who believe that the image literally is the deity. Such definitions allow us to place different movements within the Hindu tradition in varying categories in relationship to images. Then — and only then — can we begin to relate the various Christian traditions and denominations to Hinduism.

While Roger Hooker rightly and attractively shows his love for Hindus and their traditions, he does also give some evangelical critique. His humility and love prevent his disagreements with Hindu thought from ever becoming aggressive or sharp, but rather he seeks to open the door for further dialogue with Hindus.

In every way this is a book to be most heartily recommended. Anybody with an interest in relating to Hindus or witnessing in that context will want to read it. It is simple in language and argument, but it is at the same time profound in its background of scholarship and emphatic understanding.

**Martin Goldsmith**, All Nations Christian College, Ware.

### Christian Ethics, Options and Issues

**Norman L. Geisler**  
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989; Leicester: Apollos, Inter-Varsity Press, 1990, 335 pp., £14.95.

In many ways this is a revision and update of two former books Geisler did on ethics, *Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics*, and *Christian Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*. However, Geisler himself states, 'This book is not a revision of previous works, but the structure, content, and much of the thought are new'. After pointing out the shift occurring in our culture, 'where the relativity of Einstein is considered absolute, and the absolutes of the Bible are considered relative', Geisler states his two-fold objective of providing 'a clear understanding of the issues and a courageous application of God's Word to them'. Geisler also plainly states that this book is for Christians who recognize the Bible as the sole authority.

Many books are available on the market on the subject of ethics. What makes Geisler's book unique is its assistance to the newcomer working through his or her personal system of ethics, as well as its service to everyone as a reference work surveying the different ethical systems and issues. The modern world has pre-

sented several new ethical issues, such as biomedical ethics and ecology, as well as introduced new twists to the old issues, such as war and euthanasia.

The book is divided into two parts. The first seven chapters deal with the different ethical choices facing the reader. The opening chapter orients him to the subject of ethical choice by briefly discussing contrasting systems of morality. The six major systems of ethics are identified, followed by a short but helpful section on how each of the different theories handles the question, 'Is it ever right to lie to save a life?' A separate chapter introducing each of the various theories of ethical choice then follows. The standard relative positions of antinomianism ('Lying is neither right nor wrong'), situationism ('Lying is sometimes right') and generalism ('Lying is generally wrong') are included, as well as the different absolute positions of unqualified ('Lying is always wrong'), conflicting ('Lying is forgivable') and graded absolutism ('Lying is sometimes right if it fulfils the higher law'). He briefly but completely explains each view, then evaluates it, concluded by a short summary. While he admits unqualified absolutism is the view held by most Christians, he does surface important problems which those who hold this view must answer. Geisler also addresses objections to his own view of graded absolutism, in earlier works referred to as hierarchialism, thus making the book an honest evaluation of all six views.

The second and larger section of the book presents different ethical problems in society, namely abortion, euthanasia, biomedical issues, capital punishment, war, civil disobedience, homosexuality, marriage and divorce, and ecology. Geisler presents all the various issues and positions taken on each subject, and evaluates them against the position of graded absolutism. While some may differ with the position of graded absolutism, his arguments and conclusions are helpful for each of the ethical systems. His format follows the general debate pattern of position, rebuttal, counterpoint and conclusion. Far from being merely a conservative defence of evangelical ethics or an exercise in ethical application, the book offers intelligent discussions of all sides of difficult modern ethical questions from a biblically absolute view.

Some notable omissions that would be helpful for future ethical works include materialism, poverty, and racism. Also, for many overseas readers, addressing the issue of polygamy would provide beneficial information.

This excellent book concludes with a glossary of single-sentence definitions, a large bibliography and subject, author and Scripture indexes. Geisler has condensed a graduate level course on ethics into an easy-to-read primer/reference work. The discussions are current and complete and take the reader effortlessly through intelligent Christian thought on profoundly difficult questions. *Christian Ethics, Options and Issues* is a book you will return to often as you face ethical dilemmas in our modern and progressive world.

**H. Wayne House.**

### Economics Today: A Christian Critique

**Donald A. Hay**  
Leicester: Apollos, Inter-Varsity Press, 1989, 336 pp., £10.95.

Although this book is written by an academic economist, and its primary target audience is

that of the university economics student, it is also intended to be intelligible and significant for those interested in social ethics. The main contribution is the application of the method of social principles to economic problems. The method consists in an extensive examination of the biblical material relevant to social and economic life in order to derive principles, valid across time and space, to govern Christian thinking on contemporary economic issues. This thematic position occupies the middle ground between two popular alternatives: the rather loose appeal to biblical tradition or, its opposite, the direct application of scriptural detail.

Hay's central organizing concept, discussed in the opening two chapters, is that of responsible stewardship. This notion underlies the set of principles he outlines. These may be briefly enumerated under three headings: creation and man's dominion; man and his work; the distribution of goods. Man is accountable for his use of the created order, his personal resources and talents. Thus, responsible dominion precludes waste or abuse of what God has entrusted to women and men. The chief means of exercising stewardship is through productive work. Man has a right and an obligation, therefore, to work, understood broadly as a co-operative social activity. Further, everyone has a right to the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. No one should consume more than is necessary, and the rich are under obligation to provide for the poor who are unable to sustain themselves by work.

The author stresses that though these principles are ideals, they are applicable beyond the covenant community to secular society. However, he is keenly aware that, in a fallen world, pragmatic concessions to first best standards are inevitable. Hay also adopts a critical attitude towards his principles, emphasizing their essential provisionality. He acknowledges scope for legitimate disagreement even at this relatively abstract level. Hay rejects, for example, the argument of Brian Griffiths that the biblical material requires private property and a market economy.

Chapter 3 analyses the methodological and philosophical basis of modern economics. Not surprisingly, he finds the utilitarian roots of economic theory inconsistent with a Christian view of man in community. A Christian alternative has radical implications for public policy recommendations and the agenda for economic research. The emphasis is shifted from consequentialist concerns with efficiency, growth and equality to actions and institutions that promote stewardship, useful work, protection for the disadvantaged and so on.

The final chapters seek to apply his derivative social principles to five general issues: the relative merits of market and planned economies, problems of macroeconomic policy, relations between the North and South, and the limits to economic growth. Policy prescription is largely absent due to space limitations. He notes that the prescriptive task is problematic due to intrinsic ethical complexities, but urges the need for such difficult judgments to be attended to (with cheerful tolerance).

As a contribution to the on-going evangelical social ethics debate, this book is to be welcomed. Hay's informed economic analysis takes the reader beyond the naïve platitudes of popular discussion.

Ian Smith, Tyndale House.

### **Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today**

L. William Countryman

London: SCM, 1989, 290 pp., £12.50 (originally published by Fortress Press, 1988).

This is a fascinating and stimulating book, if also, in the final analysis, an unsatisfactory one. At first sight the title looks luridly sensationalist, a desperate attempt by author and publisher to get another book about sexual ethics noticed. But it is justified by the fact that Countryman sees *purity* and *property* as the two categories for understanding what the Bible says about the ethics. 'Dirt' represents how sexual practices regarded as impure are seen; 'greed' denotes a failure to respect the sexual property of others.

Clearly these are important concepts for understanding the biblical material in its cultural context, and Countryman analyses many scriptural passages in a fresh and interesting way. He accepts Mary Douglas' thesis that the rationale behind the Israelite purity system is the ideal of what constitutes a whole, complete specimen of its kind. There should therefore be no mixing of kinds. Nor may one person combine mutually exclusive functions: when a man dresses as a woman or acts as a homosexual partner, he is performing a female role which is unacceptable. In inter-testamental times Judaism splintered into different groups which adhered to purity laws with varying degrees of strictness, but the concept was still very much alive in NT times.

Jesus radically questions this way of understanding. In Mark 7 he declares all foods clean, and he subordinates physical purity to another kind of purity, that of intention. Countryman finds it striking how Jesus describes entry into the kingdom of God in terms of something unclean, *i.e.* being born (again). The emphases of the evangelists differ, but they are united in their view that 'for Christians, physical purity is no longer a determinative element in their relationship with God' (p. 94). Paul's thinking is consistent with this. He regarded humility and peaceableness within the community as leading Christian virtues, not sexual purity.

What then does Countryman make of Romans 1:24-27? He thinks that Paul treated homosexual behaviour as an integral if unpleasantly dirty aspect of Gentile culture, but not actually as sinful. Paul uses it as an illustration in order to captivate the sympathies of his Jewish readers, confident that he would not alienate Gentile readers who already knew where he stood on the purity issue (*i.e.* that he defended their right to remain unclean in a physical sense). I found this one of the most unconvincing pieces of exegesis in the book. It fails to reckon with the strength of language used by Paul about such behaviour; it is also blind to the possibility of some underlying concept of moral *order* which lies behind his use of the words 'natural/unnatural', and which may well transcend culturally relative purity regulations.

Countryman then reexamines biblical material in terms of the property motif. This makes sense of OT condemnations of adultery, which was regarded as an offence against another woman's husband (stealing his property) rather than disloyalty to one's own partner. Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians

to control their lusts so that no one take advantage of his brother (1 Thes. 4:6) is in keeping with such a view. Again Jesus radically changes things. His assertion that if either husband or wife divorce and remarry they commit adultery against their original partner represents a decisive levelling of status. Jesus gives both husband and wife a permanent and indissoluble claim upon the other. Surprisingly, Countryman fails to detect a similar mutuality in Ephesians 5:22-33, having eyes only for the subordination theme in that passage. But he thinks that Paul's conservatism with regard to the relations of the sexes should be understood primarily as an adaptation to what he thought was the end time; in ethical theory Paul was not materially less radical than Jesus. Restraints on sexual behaviour are no longer motivated fundamentally by purity or property considerations but by love and concern for the peace of the community.

In chapter 12 Countryman attempts to apply his findings to the modern world. He sketches the outline of a sexual ethic intended to be 'both intelligible and practical and also coherent with the gospel of grace' (p. 240). This turns out to be thoroughly liberal and permissive. Bestiality should occasion little concern. Insistence on celibacy for homosexuals, where they have not been given such a gift, is contrary to the NT witness. Erotic literature and art has an important place in sexual education. Adultery is redefined in terms of the use of a sexual relationship for one's own satisfaction with minimal regard for the partner (an important insight, to be sure). The door is tamely opened to abortion on the grounds that 'The child who has actually passed through the birth channel seems qualitatively different from the one still in the womb' (p. 255) and 'No one should be obligated to bear children' (p. 256). And what begins as a strong defence of marriage as a one-flesh union turns into a ready willingness to dissolve many marriages as not real marriages and to sanction trial periods of living together before recognizing many relationships as marriages. The principles which Countryman derives from his biblical survey need not necessarily lead to conclusions which echo current fashions so uncritically. Yet there remains a weakness at the heart of the exegesis which I have identified earlier: the lack of an underlying concept of moral order. It is linked to Countryman's almost total neglect of Genesis 1-3. Sexual ethics needs to be grounded in an adequate theology of creation.

Richard Higginson, Ridley Hall, Cambridge.

### **The Gospel in a Pluralist Society**

L. Newbigin

London: SPCK/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, 244 pp., £8.95.

### **Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way: Studies in Integral Evangelism**

V. Samuel and A. Hauser (eds.)

Oxford: Regnum Books, 1989, 228 pp., £9.95.

These two books demonstrate the increasing maturity of contemporary reflection upon mission and evangelism, and in particular the benefits of a thorough engagement between ecumenical and evangelical theology.

Lesslie Newbigin has had an extraordinary life by any standards, as readers of his recent autobiography, *Unfinished Agenda*, will appreciate. His latest book complements the autobiography by providing, in rare fashion, the distillation of the wisdom of a lifetime. It is written for an informed but general readership, and avoids technical or scholarly digressions. Yet it sustains an argument with considerable intellectual power, and ranges over a wide theological domain.

The early chapters are chiefly concerned with the distinction between fact and opinion in post-Enlightenment thought, and the insidious tendency to place religious belief firmly in the latter category. Philosophically, Newbigin relies heavily upon the secular prophet, Michael Polanyi, and he demonstrates the relevance of Polanyi's rich insights for theology. There is also a certain debt to Alastair MacIntyre. But what makes Newbigin so interesting is the deep correlation which he identifies between these modern social philosophers and streams of biblical thought.

The modern confinement of faith to the realm of mere opinion has made it even harder to anchor Christian belief in the historical events retold in the Bible. For Newbigin this is a disaster which must be reversed, and the central chapters of the book are concerned with the relation between God and history, which he sees focused in the incarnation: 'the whole of Christian teaching would fall to the ground if it were the case that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus were not events in real history' (p. 66). Yet this prompts the question, which presses with ever increasing urgency upon the contemporary church, of just *why* the historical anchorage of Christianity is so important. Newbigin's answer is rooted in the historical givenness of human reality, and the fact that God always deals with people in their historical actuality, and especially in the network of communal relations in which human life is found. Rightly, he wants to erect a fundamental barrier to any move to construe the relation of God as primarily, or exclusively, with the individual soul.

What I missed at this point was an adequate — or, indeed, any — discussion of the atonement, and without this I found Newbigin's assertions about the importance of historical event in the story of Christ less than fully convincing, and needing further development. This central section contains an interesting treatment of election, somewhat along the lines advocated by Karl Barth, which would also have been strengthened by a consideration of the atonement. Perhaps Newbigin is a little over-sensitive to any focus on the salvation of the individual, and this leads to a certain under-development of the whole doctrine of salvation. Partly as a consequence, one is left wondering just how his theology relates to the various branches of 'postmodern' or narrative theology.

The final chapters contain a creative discussion of the relation of the gospel to culture, centred around a trenchant plea that the church should attempt to reclaim a role in the determination of 'public truth' as a key part of its evangelistic mission. It would have been helpful to hear how this role might vary in different situations, for example, where the church's actual or nominal membership is either a majority or minority of the population. A fuller discussion of these issues would have helped secure Newbigin against the oft-repeated, and probably unfair, charge that he is influenced by a desire to return to a past Christendom.

*Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way* is a collection of fourteen essays in honour of the

German churchman Walter Arnold, who helped to arrange the Stuttgart Consultation on Evangelism in 1987. Although varied, and somewhat uneven in quality, these essays share Newbigin's concern for evangelism which addresses people in their historical context and total situation.

Issues of justice and peace are raised as aspects — or concomitants? — of evangelism, but there is a full recognition that we are not so much building the kingdom as experiencing it in a provisional and proleptic form. But there is much work still to be done here, especially in the area of political and economic analysis, where the models employed often seem superficial. As a result, there is a rather idealistic feel to some of the statements which are advanced.

Several writers concentrate upon the question of the adaptation of missionary strategy in particular cultural situations, but none is more effective than David Gitari's reflection upon the experiences of the church among the nomadic peoples of Northern Kenya. Vinay Samuel contributes a perceptive essay on the underlying theological questions. Both insist that a process akin to the incarnation of the gospel in a culture is required, when those Christians in the context itself will be led to discern how aspects of the culture are to varying degrees challenged, tolerated, endorsed and transformed.

There is an unusual and suggestive essay by Swedish missiologist Per Harling on communication in music. He makes the somewhat startling claim that during the 1980s the time used for music-listening was twelve times the time in earlier decades, and that the presence of commercial music throughout life in the post-industrial society is enormously potent. Today almost no popular record is produced without having the lyrics printed on the cover, and to many young people this 'cover poetry' is the only kind of life-interpreting text they get during their adolescence. How should the church respond? Per Harling is content to pose the question, and to sketch one dimension of the answer in modern Swedish hymnody.

Both these books are to be warmly recommended as we move into what will be regarded in most denominations as a special decade of evangelism.

Peter Forster, St John's College, Durham.

### Music and the Experience of God

David Power, Mary Collins and Mellonee Burnim (eds.)

Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989, xvi + 155 pp.

T. & T. Clark ought to be congratulated for yet another fine issue in their *Concilium* series, this one focusing on the place of music in our encounter with God. It consists of a series of essays by theologians, liturgists, musicologists and ethnomusicologists (those who study music in different cultural contexts), spanning a wide variety of topics from plainsong charts to negro spirituals. The outlook is thoroughly international, and lessons are drawn from other religious traditions, among them tribal religions in Africa, Asia and North America. The opening set of articles examines contemporary problems in liturgical music, the second set looks at music in black African worship, the

third examines aspects of ritual music, and the fourth offers theological reflections on music in public worship. In general the style is readable, but poor translations have made one or two of the essays obscure (notably that by Adrien Nocent).

Theologically, it is evident from the outset that we are on mainly Roman Catholic territory, and a basic knowledge of recent developments in Catholic church music would certainly help the reader. In particular, one needs to bear in mind the repeated plea since the second Vatican Council that a suitable place within the church be found for local musical traditions, that the imposition of one 'sacred' style is likely to do more harm than good. Even so, the book has implications far beyond Catholicism. Here I can only highlight some of the most important themes to emerge. First, there is a general agreement that music in worship must serve the Word, and rightly so. Music must never usurp the gospel itself. Yet, second, alongside this runs an awareness that music is not merely some kind of neutral vehicle for the transmission of a 'message'; it carries its own meaning. Studying the role of music in non-Western communities reminds us that it can be a powerful means of communication — for good or ill — prior to any formulated word. The upshot of this is that when we are trying to assess the viability of various forms of music in worship, we need to be sensitive to what the music conveys on its own. David Power remarks: 'It could be that much of the popular music of the Western world not finding its way into church assemblies has its roots in this perception' (p. 149). This point relates to a third, wider, theme, which runs throughout the book, namely that we cannot afford to see music in some kind of vacuum, as we are prone to do in the West. We cannot isolate music from our physical make-up, from other human activities, from its social setting. As the ethnomusicologists remind us here, this is highly artificial: music's capacity to enrich our lives cannot be understood apart from its physical effect and its corporate, social context. As David Power puts it, music is a way of 'situating a self or a people in time and space' (p. 149). The point is underlined in the articles by James Cone and Mellonee Burnim on black music — both stress the importance of bodily rhythm and movement as integral to music. And it is re-affirmed in David Dargie's tale of the Western bowdlerization of South African Xhosa music by Western missionaries, when African rhythm and form were expunged in the name of orthodoxy. The lesson is clear: to think seriously about music in our churches means listening to those who have pondered carefully the function of music in communities elsewhere.

Sadly, I can think of no comparable volume from a Protestant source which tackles these important issues in such depth. The insights of this book, if extended, expanded and carefully applied, could revitalize the music of any denomination. In her introduction, Mary Collins comments that a 'critical theology of music in Christian worship awaits further development' (p. 5). Maybe; but this book is a significant contribution to that task.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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| R. Hubbard <b>The Book of Ruth</b> , NICOT   | (Frederick W. Bush)   |
| A.S. van der Woude (ed.) <b>The World of the Old Testament</b> (Bible Handbook, Vol. II)   | (Michael Holmes)      |
| E.S. Gerstenberger <b>Psalms: Part 1 with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry</b> (FOTL XIV)  | (Temper Longman III)  |
| Ronald M. Hals <b>Ezekiel</b> (The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Vol. 19)   | (Leslie C. Allen)     |
| Marvin R. Wilson <b>Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith</b>  | (Louis Goldberg)      |
| Robert A. Guelich <b>Mark 1-8:26</b> (Word Biblical Commentary 34A)  | (Larry W. Hurtado)    |
| Brian E. Beck <b>Christian Character in the Gospel of Luke</b>   | (Howard C. Bigg)      |
| Bernard B. Scott <b>Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus</b>   | (Craig L. Blomberg)   |
| E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies <b>Studying the Synoptic Gospels</b>  | (I. Howard Marshall)  |
| Robert T. Fortna <b>The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessors. From Narrative Source to Present Gospel</b>  | (Gary M. Burge)       |
| David Rensberger <b>Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John</b>   | (D.A. Carson)         |
| A.J.M. Wedderburn (ed.) <b>Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays</b>  | (David Wenham)        |
| G.W. Hanson <b>Abraham in Galatians. Epistolary and Rhetorical contexts</b>  | (D.R. de Lacey)       |
| Abraham J. Malherbe <b>Paul and the Popular Philosophers</b>   | (Thomas R. Schreiner) |
| Frank Thielman <b>From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans</b> (SuppNovT 61) | (D.A. Carson)         |
| Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae (eds.) <b>The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters</b>   | (Bruce Chilton)       |
| Howard Clark Kee <b>Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation</b>   | (Edwin Yamauchi)      |
| Don Cupitt <b>Radicals and the Future of the Church</b>  | (Stephen Williams)    |
| J.P. Moreland <b>Christianity and the Nature of Science</b>  | (Pattle Pun)          |
| Roger H. Hooker <b>Themes in Hinduism and Christianity</b>   | (Martin Goldsmith)    |
| Norman L. Geisler <b>Christian Ethics, Options and Issues</b>  | (H. Wayne House)      |
| Donald A. Hay <b>Economics Today: A Christian Critique</b>   | (Ian Smith)           |
| L. William Countryman <b>Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today</b>                            | (Richard Higginson)   |
| L. Neobigin <b>The Gospel in a Pluralist Society</b>   | (Peter Forster)       |
| V. Samuel and A. Hauser (eds.) <b>Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way: Studies in Integral Evangelism</b>   | (Jeremy Begbie)       |
| David Power, Mary Collins and Mellonee Burnim (eds.) <b>Music and the Experience of God</b>  |                       |

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)