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Editorial: Thinking Theologically

Stephen Williams

Dr Stephen Williams was Professor of Theology at the United Theological College, Aberystwyth, Wales, and is now associate director of the Whitefield Institute, Oxford. This address was given to the TSF some years ago, and we are pleased to publish an abbreviated and edited form of it, as a guest editorial.

Let us start with ‘thinking’. Evangelicals often stand accused of not thinking; they grasp a belief and then cling to it everlastingly with the sweet reasonableness of a terrier dog. Sometimes the criticism is justified. There may be two reasons for such a failure to think, one to do with fear, the other with faith.

Sometimes, those who refuse to think are temperamentally inclined to one-eyed dogmatism. But there may also be a fear that what is held in faith looks pretty suspect in the light of reason. Fear may cause some Christians to take hold of the most detailed tenets of Christian doctrine by the age of 21 and then allow not a jot or a tittle to be removed or changed through a lifetime. Now certainly we must have root Christian convictions in which we should be growing and being strengthened without wavering. But total intellectual immutability amounts to a claim to intellectual perfection within the limits of time—and, of course, if we have attained that, there is no further need to think. But Jesus Christ liberates us from the fear that often underlies such attitudes and produces in its place the first intellectual virtue—humility.

Humility is actually a spiritual virtue which we must cultivate in the realm of thought. Of course, humility can be abused. G.K. Chesterton lamented that we are producing a breed of person too mentally modest to believe the multiplication table. Humility can lead us to assurance, rather than the lack of it, for we should be humble enough to acknowledge truth when it shines in its power. Serious thought is always humbling, for it forces us to accept that we can’t figure everything out. But if we remember that ultimate truth is in him who is the same, yesterday, today and forever, then we need not be anxious about our thinking, for there is no corner of the world or of the mind where God is untrue.

A second obstacle to thinking is a mistaken view of faith. Is Christianity not a matter of faith, not reason? Do not ‘thinkers’ overestimate worldly wisdom and displace the ‘folly of the Gospel’? The issue of faith and reason is an ancient one, but our concern here is with the kind of thinking that goes on *within* faith, not in conflict with it. It is natural and right for faith to seek understanding. Take for example, sexual ethics. One may believe on biblical grounds that heterosexual marriage is the normative context for

sexual relations. Commitment to such conviction does not await full understanding of all the reasons. But it is a good and vital thing for theological thinking to reflect on the 'why' of such biblical injunctions, and that reflection may draw other social and psychological factors into its reasoning. We may not finally understand everything, but what we do understand will strengthen faith and obedience. God's word always leads us into deeply integrated personal and social living, and reflection upon it will honour, not subordinate, faith. Indeed, the Bible itself often gives reasons for its instructions and appeals to our thinking (Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature spring to mind).

This invites us to connect our theological thinking with our personal experience. Pure thought on profound realities will not long stay pure or illuminating if not nourished by experience. Many people fear that evangelical students studying theology will capitulate to liberalism. They are less watchful of the danger of a student retaining evangelical beliefs but drying up spiritually and losing all vital experience of God. We can use all the pious vocabulary, yet get more enjoyment from books on the atonement than from the company of the Saviour. But when that happens, theological thought itself also suffers because the subject matter of theology cannot be understood merely by informed reflection. One may, for example, knock one's head against the wall trying to relate sovereign grace and human responsibility. But experience soon teaches us that when we do right we cannot congratulate ourselves and when we do wrong we cannot blame God. Both realities coexist in experience. This is not to use experience as an excuse for theological self-contradiction, but rather to say that important distinctions and nuances are only grasped fully in experience, and not by mere reflection that ignores it.

Let us now turn to the word 'logically' which is compounded in the word 'theologically'. Logic plays a part in all reflection in one way or another. It may play tricks on us. And it can be abused, too, to enable somebody to win an argument through superior debating skills without necessarily possessing the truth. But human thought is often a process of argument with oneself, and in that sense logical thought matters a lot.

Logical thought means that the right word is more important than the big word. Theological students revel in words like 'heuristic', 'staurocentric', 'hominization', 'existential'. But it is more important, first of all, to be able correctly and clearly to use 'but', 'however', 'therefore', 'thus', 'although', 'if … then', 'so'. For these are the terms that help us grasp, or express, the logic of an argument, and not just be swayed by its rhetoric or conclusion. God, who gave us brains, expects us to use them clearly, to illuminate, not to obscure, to discern and discriminate, not to confuse and confound. The exercise of sanctified logical thought is an important part of the spiritual warfare required of all who engage in the battle for the truth. The apostle Paul is the clearest example of sharp and profound theological argument, linked to passion, devotion and personal experience. In our theological writings (from essays to encyclopaedias) we should, like him, prefer five clear words of sound meaning to a thousand words of profound woffle.

As to subject matter, our theological thinking should be directed to themes of importance. James Cone, the black theologian, once said that western theologians had spent more energy over the problem of relating the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith than the theological problem of world hunger. This does not deny that the first is important, but we should not be blind to pressing issues that require theological reflection also. It could be added that many theological courses require students to interact more with western theologians long dead than to listen to the living voices of theologians in

other parts of the world addressing contemporary issues. If the living God is concerned about living issues (such as dying people), then theology should not give the impression of living in an academic cemetery. Theology is an activity in the service of God and neighbour, so what it means to love both in our global village must affect the themes on which we concentrate our theological thinking.

The scope of our theological thinking must be totally comprehensive. Many of us foster attitudes on child-rearing, use of money, Sunday, humour, sport, political questions, the economy, and many other things—attitudes that are somehow exempted from serious theological scrutiny. 'Theological' unfortunately sounds intense, grim and kill-joy. But why give in to that stereotype? When theological thinking is a matter of thinking in the light of God's self-revelation and to his glory, then it will neglect literally nothing in the world, any more than we feel free to pick a few Christian virtues and abandon the rest.

The dynamic of our theological thinking should be loyalty to Christ himself, not positions or systems. Our thought must be governed by a Person, not an idea. Paul spoke of 'the mind of Christ—an understanding that emanated from the risen Lord himself. Logical skill and intellectual brilliance do not get near this; only purity of heart gets close. And when we are not certain as to what we must learn from Christ (which is not at all to set Christ against the Bible or the apostles), let us feel no qualms about being uncommitted or undogmatic. Where there is pressure (as there often is in student circles), to be dogmatic on a range of questions, however complex and in need of mature judgement, the outcome is often not so much theological thinking as a hybrid of speculation, pious guesses, nonsense, gross arrogance and occasional nuggets of truth!

Finally, remember that theological thinking is not the same thing as theological reading! Some students read too much and think too little. In the words of the author of *The Imitation of Christ,* on the last day we shall be asked what we have done, not what we have read. Or course thought can also displace action. But it will never do so while we hold together the great commandment to love the Lord our God with all our mind and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Science and faith: boa constrictors and warthogs?

Steve Bishop

Steve Bishop contributed the article 'Green Theology and Deep Ecology' in Vol 16.3 (April, 1991). The next issue of Themelios *will include a resource list on Science and Christianity which he has prepared.*

Introduction

The relationship between science and religion, and notably Christianity, is a perennial subject. It has been likened by Ted Peters (cited in Barbour 1990 p. 4) to a fight between a boa constrictor and a warthog: the victor swallows the loser. Many have claimed that science has swallowed Christianity:

> Between science and religion there has been a prolonged conflict, in which, until the last few years, science has invariably proved victorious. (Russell 1935 p. 7)

The conflict metaphor, which had its origin in the writings of John Draper (1875), became more popular through Andrew Dickson White (1896). The main thesis of White's and Draper's work was based on misinformation and half-truths, and many scholars have exposed the naïvety of the conflict category (*e.g.* Lindberg and Numbers 1986 and Russell 1989). Nevertheless, the conflict metaphor is still prevalent. It provides a pertinent example of how worldview colours perception of reality (Caudill 1985). The combatants in the conflicts that did exist were not science and Christianity:

> much of the conflict between science and religion turns out to have been between new science and the sanctified science of the previous generation. (Brooke 1991 p. 37)

Science and religion are not like boa constrictor and warthog. They are not in conflict — as a discussion of miracles will show. Neither are they totally independent. The fallacious view of science as objective and value-free, and faith as subjective and value-laden, has long been demolished by philosophers of science. Unfortunately, these views are still propounded by the popular media. Faith is integral to the scientific enterprise. If this is so, then a distinctively Christian view of science is possible.

A biblical perspective on science

If conflict is an inadequate way to describe the relationship between Christianity and science, what then is the relationship? In an attempt to answer this question we shall begin with a brief biblical overview. To do so I will utilize the creation, fall, redemption motif.

Creation

God, through Christ, is the source and sustainer of all things. Therefore, science has its roots in God. The command to humanity as the image-bearers of God is to subdue and rule the creation. This is not to be seen in terms of domination, but rather as a shepherd may look after her sheep or a gardener her garden (*e.g.* Houston 1979). It is an injunction to develop and fill the creation, to continue the creative work of God. Hence it is here we find the biblical basis for science: it is part of our calling to care for and open up God's good creation, to develop culture. Adam's naming of the animals can perhaps be seen in this context as one of the first scientific tasks, that of observation and classification.

Science, then, is a God-given cultural activity which is to be done in dependence on God and his Holy Spirit. It is not an autonomous activity, it is not a body of knowledge independent of God.

Fall

However, then came sin. This decisive event is well described by Walther Eichrodt:

> This event has the character of a 'Fall', that is, of a falling out of the line of the development willed by God. (Eichrodt 1972 p. 406)

No area of life is untainted by sin. Consequently all relationships are broken: humanity and God, humanity and the earth, humanity and humanity, male and female, humanity and the animals, animals and animals....Aspects of God's creation are given elevated roles they were not intended to have. This is exemplified in fallen 20th-century humanity's approach to science, technology and economics. They have become the unholy trinity of scientism, technicism and economicism. They have become idols, the gods of our age.[1] They are worshipped in place of, or in some cases as well as, God.

Science claims to be omnicompetent. The only way to reliable knowledge is through science. This is the view of no less a person than Bertrand Russell:

> Whatever knowledge is attainable, must be obtained by scientific methods; and what science cannot discover, mankind cannot know. (Russell 1935 p. 243)

and, more recently, the biologist Richard Dawkins:

> In the art of evaluating evidence, science comes into its own. The correct method for evaluating evidence is the scientific method. If a better one emerged, science would embrace it. (Dawkins 1992 p. 3)

Science subsumes every aspect of life: we have the science of beauty therapy, the science of catering, the science of food and cooking, the science of hairdressing,[2] . . . *etc.* Even ethical issues will

be replaced by science; according to the biologist Edward Wilson in his book *Sociobiology*:

> The time has come for ethics to be moved temporarily from the hands of the philosophers and biologicized. (cited in Midgley 1992 p. 261)

Wilson's reply to God's questions to Job (Job 38–39) are revealing:

> Yes, we do know and we have told. Jehovah's challenges have been met and scientists have pressed on to solve even greater puzzles. The physical basis of life is known; we understand approximately how and when it started on earth. New species have been created in the laboratory. . . .

Salvation comes through science. Even Francis Bacon saw science as undoing the effects of the fall.

The other extreme is that science is the scapegoat for almost all the ills of the world. Lynn White, Jr (1967) placed the blame for the 'ecologic crisis' on science and Christianity.[3] Many examples illustrate the problems scientific advances confront us with: Hiroshima, Bhopal, Love Canal, Chernobyl. The fall has distorted the God-given role and function of science: consequently, it has become both deified and demonized by different parties.

Redemption

As sin has affected every area and aspect of life, so too does redemption. Redemption potentially 'undoes' the fall. Redemption means that science can be restored to its right place. It should neither be divinized nor denigrated. It has an important, albeit limited, role to play in developing the creation. Redeemed humanity can now transform the scientific enterprise and redirect it so that it can be used wisely and responsibly under God to open up and develop the creation. One step to restoring science to its God-given role is to expose the false claim that science is neutral.

The myth of neutrality

It is often assumed that science is an objective, value-free activity. This myth has been promulgated by the school of philosophy known as positivism; it has in part been responsible for the elevation of science above religion. Positivism, founded by Auguste Comte (1798–1857), is the position that all knowledge is based on the senses, so we can only know through observation and experiment. More recent and more radical advocates of positivism were the Vienna Circle, and those named the logical positivists. The late Alfred Ayer (1910–89) was a logical positivist; his 'bestseller', *Language, Truth and Logic*, popularized this philosophy in the UK. Logical positivists maintain that experience is the source of knowledge. Mary Midgley makes this pertinent observation:

> They [scientists] moved gradually from the traditional Comtian Positivism, which claimed to bring spiritual matters under the dominion of science, to logical-positivist positions which put such matters outside the province altogether. The resulting muddled metaphysic still underlies many of our problems today. (Midgley 1992 p. 45)

Science, however, is subjective and value-laden. It is not neutral. This point is poignantly made by an Alternative Nobel Prize winner:

> There is now a growing realisation that science has embodied within it many of the ideological assumptions of the society which has given rise to it. (Cooley 1987 pp. 90–91)

To the scientists and technologists who view their work as neutral, he has this warning:

> . . . they are dangerously mistaken in regarding their work as being neutral. Such a naive view was ruthlessly exploited in the Third Reich as Albert Speer pointed out in his book *Inside the Third Reich*: 'Basically, I exploited the phenomenon of the technician's often blind devotion to his task. Because of what appeared to be the moral neutrality of technology, these people were without any scruples about their activities.' (Cooley 1987 p. 176)

Science has both an intrinsic and an extrinsic 'non-neutrality'.

Extrinsic values

These are the sociological factors which negate any claim to neutrality. Science is not done in a social, economic, political or cultural vacuum. Leslie Stevenson makes a salient point:

> [The scientist] will now have to recognize that the funds for his research will probably be given with a fairly close eye to possible applications, be they military, industrial, medical, or whatever. Such research cannot be said to be value-free. (1989 p. 216)

Intrinsic values

Philosophical factors also reveal neutrality to be a myth. The most obvious of these is the fact/value dualism promulgated by the positivists. Much debate about science presupposes a distinction between facts and values. Facts are objective and public, values are subjective and personal. This distinction is a fallacy. Facts are value-laden and are often determined by culture: for Kepler, it was a fact that the earth goes round the sun, and yet for Tycho Brahe, it was a fact that the sun goes around the earth! Our observations are theory-dependent. We see what we want to see. Our worldview affects all that we do. Every human activity is bound to a worldview: science is no exception. Any claims to neutrality are hollow. This is also the testimony of more recent advances in the philosophy of science. It is to a brief and inevitably oversimplified overview of the philosophy of science that we now turn.

A brief philosophy of science

The major school of philosophy that has dominated the philosophy of science in the past is *inductivism*. Inductivism is the scientific method that moves from a series of observations to a hypothesis; from the specific (this block of ice melts at 0°C) to the general (all ice melts at 0°C). This view of science has long been discarded by philosophers of science, yet many school teachers of science still hold an inductivist view of science (Hodson 1986).

The death-blow to inductivism is the recognition that observation is not neutral. Observation is theory-dependent; it is therefore impossible to be a neutral observer. What we 'see' will depend on what we know and what we expect to see. Any number of optical illusions illustrate this point.

If observation is theory dependent then it follows that observation will be governed by any pre-existing theory: sugar in a liquid dissolves; we no longer see it disappear (Hodson 1986 p. 218)! In a similar vein, N.R. Hanson asks, 'Do Kepler and Tycho Brahe see the same thing in the east at dawn?' (Hanson 1958 p. 5).

Deductivism is a close relative of inductivism. Instead of moving from the specific (events) to the general (laws, theories), deductivism starts with a law or theory and deduces another event. If the event deduced does not occur then the law or theory may require some modification.

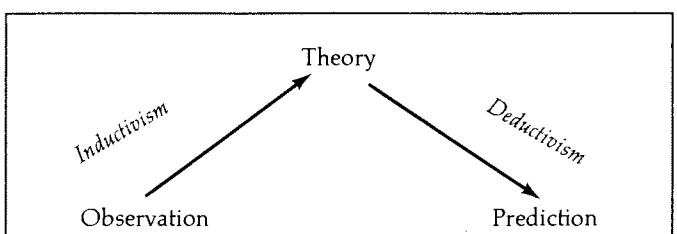

Figure 1. A graphical representation of induction and deduction

Both inductivism and deductivism assume the neutrality and autonomy of science. They assume that there is a universal scientific method. Recent philosophical developments have undermined both these assumptions and have placed more emphasis on the social context of science. They have even gone as far as denying the existence of any method that could be called scientific. These developments are associated with Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend and Polanyi, whose ideas we will examine briefly.

Sir Karl R. Popper (1902–)

One of Popper's concerns was to demarcate science from pseudoscience. He rejected the positivist idea that verification was decisive; for Popper, scientific theories could not be proved, they could only be falsified. Science could not represent a body of objective truths, it was merely statements, laws and theories that so far had not been disproved.

Rejecting an inductive view of science, Popper advocated *hypothetico-deductivism*. Deductions are made on the basis of an hypothesis. If the deductions can be shown to be false then the hypothesis must be rejected or at best modified. Imre Lakatos (1922–73) developed and modified this approach (Lakatos 1970).

Thomas S. Kuhn (b.1922)

Originally trained as a theoretical physicist, Kuhn wrote his major work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*[4] after being exposed to a history of science course; he describes the book as 'an attempt to explain to myself and friends how I happened to be drawn from science to its history in the first place' (p. vii). Kuhn rejects the popular view of science as 'development-by-accumulation' (p. 2), a view popularized in standard histories of science. He introduced the concept of paradigm shifts to explain how he saw the development of science.

For Kuhn, three phases take place in the development of science: normal science, crisis and revolutionary science. Normal science is what the majority of scientists do. He calls it 'puzzle solving' (p. 30). It provides an 'articulation' of the dominant paradigm. Occasionally in the history of science we have been confronted by crises, where the dominant paradigm does not explain certain phenomena. At this point several competing theories vie for dominance: this is the revolutionary phase. Eventually, one of these competing theories will become more widely accepted than the others, and consequently it takes over as the dominant paradigm: revolutionary science becomes normal science and we have come full circle.

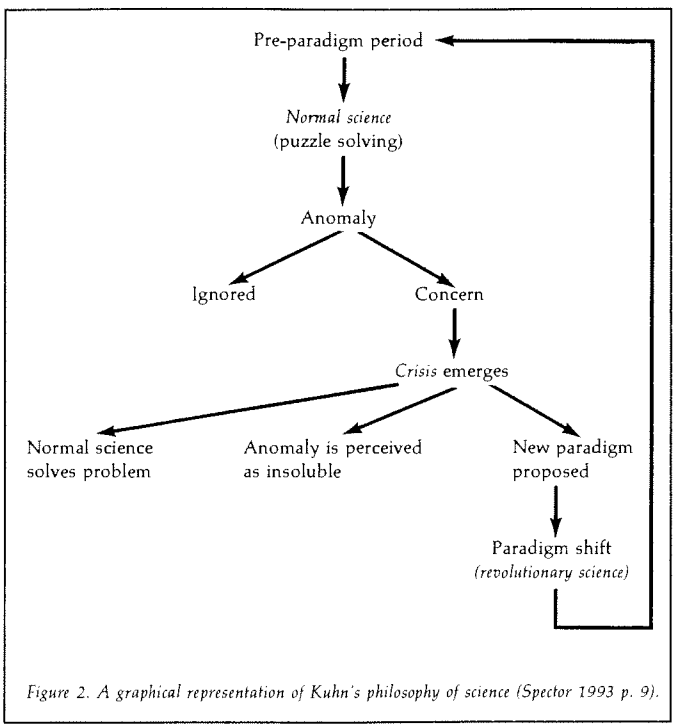

Figure 2. A graphical representation of Kuhn's philosophy of science (Spector 1993 p. 9).

Kuhn places much emphasis on the role of paradigms, and rightly so. This emphasis serves once more to show that science is value- (or theory-) laden. Paradigms, or worldviews, shape all our thinking. These paradigms are social in nature, they are communally held and communally determined by the scientific community.

The weakness of Kuhn's position is that science is condemned to a 'perpetual revolution' (Hacking 1983). This is because Kuhn is a relativist: 'truth' is determined by the dominant paradigm. Kuhn overemphasizes the social dimension of science and consequently distorts reality. Science is reduced to a social dimension.

Lakatos, criticizing Kuhn's view, claims that for Kuhn 'scientific change is a kind of religious change' (Lakatos 1970 p. 93). It could be said that the philosophy of science is at present undergoing a Kuhnian revolution; certainly Kuhn's work has caused a paradigm shift to occur in the philosophy of science.

The difference between Popper (and the positivists) and Kuhn can be seen by how they would respond to the following questions about science: 1. Is it an exemplar of rationality? 2. Is there a distinction between observation and theory? 3. Is it cumulative? 4. Does it have a tight deductive structure? 5. Are scientific concepts precise? 6. Is there a methodological unity of science? 7. Can the context of justification be separated from that of discovery? 8. Is science outside time and history? For Popper, the answers to all questions is 'yes'; for Kuhn, 'no' to all questions except the first (Hacking 1983).

Paul Feyerabend (b. 1924)

Feyerabend maintains that there is no such thing as *the* scientific method; rather, 'anything goes'! His is an anarchistic view of the scientific method. One of the strengths of Feyerabend is that he debunks the superiority of science over other realms of knowledge. We cannot reject other types of knowledge because they do not conform to the 'scientific method', a method that for Feyerabend does not exist (Feyerabend 1975).[5]

Michael Polanyi (1891–1976)

The Hungarian-born scientist-turned-philosopher, Polanyi, claims that knowledge has what he calls a 'tacit dimension': it is personal in nature. 'We can know more than we can tell' (Polanyi 1966 p. 4) perhaps best describes his thesis.

Polanyi has made an important contribution to both the philosophy of science and epistemology, a contribution that has important insights for Christians. Unfortunately, his work is little known among Christians. This is not helped by the fact that Polanyi's work is difficult, primarily because of his 'breadth of knowledge' and because he 'is advocating a U-turn in accepted ways of thinking' (Scott 1989).[6] The work of Lesslie Newbigin's 'Gospel and culture' programme may remedy this neglect of Polanyi. Polanyi has influenced much of Newbigin's thought (see *e.g.* Newbigin 1986; 1990; Scott 1992).

Polanyi expounds what he describes as a 'post-critical philosophy', in the spirit of Augustine (1958 p. 266):

> We must now recognize belief once more as the source of all knowledge. Tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and of a cultural heritage, affiliation to a like-minded community: such are the impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary network. (1958 p. 266)

Several factors are integral to knowledge for Polanyi; these include: a tacit dimension, passion, a network of beliefs, and commitment. All are interconnected. Commitment can be seen as a network of beliefs and this network has a tacit dimension. It is difficult to tie Polanyi down at times because he does not provide a systematic exposition, rather many illustrations and examples.

Passion. The positivists denied any personal, subjective aspect to science; Popper acknowledges it but marginalizes it; Polanyi makes it fundamental to knowledge. This is clearly seen in the role of passion in knowledge:

> . . . scientific passions are no mere psychological by-product, but have a logical function which contributes an indispensable element to science. (1958 p. 134)

> The personal participation of the knower in the knowledge he believes himself to possess takes place within a flow of passion. We recognise intellectual beauty as a guide to discovery and as a mark of truth. (1958 p. 300)

The tacit dimension. Riding a bike, recognizing a face in a crowd, swimming, the mastery of tools, are all complex skills. Yet we are not always able to articulate or analyse what we know: 'we can know more than we can tell'. Knowledge of these skills, or indeed anything, involves two parts — one implicit, the other explicit; these, Polanyi called the *subsidiary* (or *proximal*) and the *focal* (or *distal*) aspects respectively. Both are mutually exclusive and irreducible (1958 p. 56). In the process of knowing we attend *from* the subsidiary to the focal. The subsidiary is what we know, but we are not always aware that we know. It is this important aspect of knowing that makes all knowledge *personal:*

> . . . into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, . . . this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge. (1958 p. viii)

This undermines the whole notion of objectivity and neutrality of science. It destroys the whole positivist programme.

A network of beliefs. Knowledge, as well as being personal, also functions within a network of beliefs. This network is not merely about bringing pattern and order to knowledge; it also acts as a vision of reality which filters the sense data before they become observations. This vision of reality provides a framework of ultimate beliefs for knowledge. These beliefs are accepted a-critically on the basis of commitment: they are irrefutable and unprovable.

The scientific enterprise relies upon this tacit framework of beliefs. Hence, Polanyi has shown that faith, not doubt (as Popper held) is a vital aspect of science:

> The scientist's conviction that science *works* is no better, so far, than the astronomer's belief in horoscopes or the fundamentalist's belief in the letter of the Bible. A belief always works in the eyes of the believer (1946 p. 47).

Among these beliefs is: 'the belief that there is something there to be understood' (1946 p. 30). He goes on to say:

> Thus to accord validity to science – or to any other of the great domains of the mind – is to express a faith which can be upheld only within a community. We realize here the connexion between Science, Faith and Society adumbrated in these essays (Polanyi 1946 p. 59).

Commitment is another important aspect. It has two poles: a personal and an external, universal pole. It is this latter pole that prevents Polanyi's epistemology from slipping into subjectivism (1958 p. 65). Knowledge cannot be divorced from personal commitment:

> Science is a system of beliefs to which we are committed. Such a system cannot be accounted for either from experience as seen within a different system, or by reason without any experience. Yet this does not signify that we are free to take it or leave it, but simply reflects the fact that it is a system of beliefs to which we are committed and which cannot be represented in non-commital terms. (1958 p. 171)

Along with Kuhn, he sees a vital role for the scientific community in the scientific enterprise. Science progresses through faith in the accepted views; it is these views that are determined by the scientific community.

Polanyi's work thus provides us with important insights: science and faith are not two independent realms, but are both aspects of the same reality; faith informs and shapes science; and the personal is not divorced from science.

Realism versus relativism

One of the major debates in the philosophy of science over the last decade is the realist versus antirealist/relativist controversy. It was in essence this that characterized the difference in approach between Popper and Kuhn. Kuhn claimed that 'Sir Karl's view of science and my own are very nearly identical' (Kuhn 1970 p. 1). Popper's response is to reject Kuhn's relativism. He sees relativism as being unable to stand up to criticism.

For the Christian, science is a God-given corporate human activity whereby we explore and investigate God's good creation in an attempt to understand its order and structure. By its very nature as a human activity, its results and conclusions can only be tentative, fallible and provisional; hence a *naïve* realist view of science is untenable. This is the 'naïve' idea that scientific laws and theories provide an accurate literal description of an objective world. For the naïve literalist there is a one-to-one correspondence between theory and reality. Likewise, a *relativist* position is flawed because we are dealing with a God-given reality which is not the product of social agreement (*pace* Kuhn).

The theoretical physicist Paul Davies has made this revealing statement:

> Few scientists would be willing to suppose that the laws of physics are merely human inventions. To be sure they are formulated by humans, but the physicist is motivated by the *belief* that the laws of physics reflect some aspects of reality. *Without this connection with reality, science is reduced to a meaningless charade.* (Davies 1988 p. 59; my emphasis)

Relativism undermines the very basis of scientific investigation. It denies that there is an objective reality to investigate. I would therefore want to suggest that a *critical* realist view of science is more appropriate for a Christian: that is, that science provides us with a fallible description of the external world. This is the position advocated by many writers, including Arthur Peacocke (1979), Ian Barbour (1966), Stanley Jaki and John Polkinghorne. Jaki claims that the major lesson of the history of science is that scientists 'cannot live without a realist notion of the universe as the totality of all interacting things' (1978 p. 276). For Polkinghorne, 'The realist view . . . is the only one adequate to scientific experience, carefully considered'. But he goes on to say: 'If realism is to prove defensible it has to be critical, rather than a naïve, realism' (1986 p. 22).

Our knowledge of the world is fallible and imperfect. This inevitably means that we have to propose tentative and provisional models and explanations that only represent what we know at present of reality. This does not deny that there is any 'real world' 'out there'. If we have no access to the real world, then science becomes a farce. How can we collect data? There is nothing by which we can judge the truthfulness of our hypotheses, theories or laws. It denies any God-given order to creation; and ultimately it denies the God who is faithful to his creation.

Not all Christians, however, advocate critical realism. Reformed philosopher Gordon H. Clark adopts an instrumentalist view (*i.e.*, theories are useful tools, but not necessarily true). James Moreland advocates an 'eclectic approach to science that adopts a realist/antirealist view on a case-by-case basis' (1989 p. 203). I find his reasons for eclecticism could be fulfilled if one adopts a critical realist approach.

Science as a faith activity

During the Holy Week of 1992, instead of the usual 'religious' programmes the BBC showed a series of programmes called '*Soul*',[7] which dealt with the way science has paved the way for a more mystical approach to life. Perhaps in future Holy Weeks we will be given a regular diet of science programmes instead of the usual re-run of *Jesus?* Science has become the new religion, it seems.

Polanyi has shown that faith is integral to scientific investigation: science is an inherently religious activity. Professor Coulson has commented:

> Science itself must be a religious activity: 'a fit subject for a Sabbath day's study', as John Ray put it in the seventeenth century. (Coulson 1971 p. 44)

We have already mentioned that science is a human activity and scientific work is inevitably shaped by the scientist's worldview. A worldview, by definition, rests on certain ultimate questions, such as 'What is reality?' and 'What does it mean to be human?'. The answers to these questions cannot be empirically tested: they are the product of faith. Hence, scientific activity is inherently religious.

We can express this line of argument as follows:

1. We all have a worldview.
2. A worldview is a product of faith, shaped by religious commitments.
3. All human activity is shaped by worldviews.
4. Science as a human activity is therefore religious.

The religious nature of science is shown in the beliefs that are necessary for the scientific enterprise. These include the following:

Belief in a material world. If the material world is a mere illusion then scientific activity is foolish.

Belief that the world is orderly. Thomas Torrance makes an insightful remark:

> Belief in order, the conviction that, whatever may appear to the contrary in so-called random or chance events, reality is intrinsically orderly, constitutes one of the ultimate controlling factors in all rational and scientific activity. (Torrance 1985 p. 16)

The question remains for the scientist, where does this order come from?

Belief that understanding the world is a valuable exercise. If it were not so, what would be the point of science?

Belief that the world and its order can be known. If it cannot be known then scientific activity would be impossible!

Belief in the trustworthiness of other scientific work. If the scientist did not have faith in colleagues' results published in the scientific journals then most of his/her time would be spent confirming all the previous work, leaving no time for any fresh research that builds on previous work. This does not imply that all that is published is accurate!

The five beliefs above are necessary for the scientific enterprise; they are also, with the exception of the last one, integral to a Christian worldview. It is therefore no accident that a Christian worldview was necessary for the birth and development of modern science.

The birth of science

The major contribution of the Hungarian-born theologian and Benedictine priest, Stanley Jaki, to the history and philosophy of science has been to show that it was, and could only have been, Christianity that provided the right atmosphere and conditions for science to flourish.

> The birth of science came only when the seeds of science were planted in a soil which Christian faith in God made receptive to natural theology and to the epistemology implied in it. (Jaki 1978 p. 160)

It was the philosopher M. B. Foster (1934), in a seminal paper, who showed the debt that the origins and the nature of science owed to Christian theology. The historian R. Hooykaas (1972) likewise came to similar conclusions. Hooykaas sees science as 'more a consequence than a cause of a certain religious [*i.e.* Judaeo-Christian] view', and that the 'vitamins and hormones' of science were biblical. Torrance has shown that natural science is based on 'three masterful ideas' (Torrance 1980 p. 52) developed by the early church:

(i) The rational unity of the universe: the source of order is God.

(ii) The contingent, *i.e.* neither necessary nor eternal, rationality or intelligibility of the universe. This is a consequence of God's creation *ex nihilo*, which included both space and time.

(iii) The freedom of the universe. A freedom which is contingent provides a release from the 'tyranny of Determinism'. This freedom is not the product of randomness or chance but is the freedom 'of the God of infinite love and truth upon which it rests and by which it is maintained' (Torrance 1980 pp. 58-59). It is these Christian beliefs that made Christianity so influential in the development of science.

It was the rule rather than the exception, historically, that the 'founding fathers' of science had Christian commitments (*e.g.* Russell 1985, 1987). And today there has been no shortage of scientists who stand up and claim to be Christians (*cf.* Berry 1991, Mott 1991).

If Christian beliefs about the nature of reality were the presuppositions vital for the development of science, why is it that the Christian belief in miracles has often proved a stumbling block for those who try to integrate science and faith? How is belief in an orderly world to be reconciled with the claim that miracles happen?

Law, scientific law and miracles

Has science replaced the need to resort to supernatural explanations of miracles? Does God violate his own laws to produce a miraculous event?

In an attempt to unravel some of these knotty questions, we start by examining what is meant by law. 'Law' is one of those Humpty Dumpty words — it can mean whatever we want it to mean. It has a wide range of semantic meaning, dependent partly on what 'language game' is being played. We need to make a distinction between the way scientists and theologians use the term law.

Scientists and philosophers of science are not agreed on its meaning. One view is that laws are human constructs imposed on reality: they are inventions. At the other extreme is the view that laws are inherent in reality: hence, they are discovered. A middle view, which is the one I take, is that laws are human representations of a God-given reality; they are constantly in need of modification to better represent reality, and at best they will assymptotically approach reality.

Likewise, there is no precision to the meaning of the word 'law' in Scripture.

Al Wolters makes some important observations:

> [Law] is both compelling (laws of nature) and appealing (norms), and the range of its validity can be both sweeping (general) and individual (particular). (Wolters 1986 p. 17)

Scripture is unequivocal: God orders his creation, both human and non-human, through his decrees and laws (Ps. 147:15-20). Scientific 'laws' are human constructions, although they are bound to the creation order. Their usefulness is dependent upon how close they come to the laws by which God orders his creation. They are not, as Kant maintained, human constructions *imposed* on reality.

'Miracle', like 'law', is a slippery concept.[8] The popular conception of a miracle is threefold: it is a violation of a natural law, it is a divine intervention and it is a supernatural event. All are inadequate.

Swinburne, Mackie and Hume all define miracle as a violation or transgression (Hume) of a law of nature. This notion is a left-over from the 18th century when deism was at its peak. Eichrodt points out that it certainly would not

> occur to the devout Old Testament believer to make a breach of the Laws of Nature a *condicio sine qua non* of the miraculous character of an event. (p. 163)[9]

God does not violate his own laws, but works with and through them; he is faithful to the creation order, which had its origin in him. This is not to say that God is subject to his laws. Perhaps Augustine was near to the truth when he described a portent (miracle) as an event that 'happens not contrary to nature, but contrary to what we know as nature' (*De Civitate Dei* XII.8). Fuller objects to such a definition because it may mean, scientific advances permitting, that 'we shall know so much about nature that there will be no place for miracle after all' (1963 p. 8). The objection is ill-founded.

It is likewise a mistake to describe miracles as divine interventions. An intervention implies that the intervener is absent prior to the intervention. God is present in all of creation, it is therefore illogical to describe his action in the creation as an intervention (Davies 1992).

Can we describe miracles as a supernatural phenomenon? The idea that miracles are supernatural events has its origin in rationalism, not in the scriptures. God is the God of the laws of nature: he does not violate his own principles to work a miracle. Miracles are natural events.[10] Eichrodt, again, points out that 'even the course of Nature itself counts as a miracle' (p. 162). Nature is not autonomous: all things are held together by Christ. He is both the source and sustainer of all things. Fallen nature is not normal, as rationalism assumes, and supernaturalism, with its nature/supernature dualism, need not be invoked to explain that which rationalism cannot. As Diemer puts it:

> The fundamental fault of supernaturalism is that it begins with a rationalistic and deistic theory of nature in which only a nature torn loose from its moorings and impoverished is reckoned with. . . . As long as rationalism exists, supernaturalism will not disappear. Supernaturalism fills the vacuum that rationalism creates. (Diemer nd p. 17)

How then are we to explain miracles? John Polkinghorne suggests that the fundamental problem of miracles is

> how these strange events can be set within a consistent overall pattern of God's reliable activity; how can we accept them without subscribing to a capricious interventionist God, who is a concept of paganism rather than Christianity. (Polkinghorne 1989 p. 51)

To this we might add: 'and without subscribing to an unbiblical supernaturalism'.

Miracles are part of the created order. In performing miraculous events, Jesus was restoring the creation to its original order. They are glimpses of the consummated kingdom of God, signposts to the kingdom, or, as Polkinghorne has it, 'transparent moments in which the Kingdom is found to be manifestly present'; they are restoring humans and the creation to their proper relationships.

Aspects of the fall are temporarily halted: sickness and death are robbed of their dominion. The ultimate example, of course, is of Jesus' resurrection: he is the firstfruits of what it will be to have a transformed resurrection body; we like him will be raised to immortality.

This means that scientific descriptions of miracles are permissible but they are not the whole truth. They may be able to explain them in certain cases, but as has often been said, 'explanation is not explaining away'. Hence, *contra* Fuller, scientific explanations will not mean that there will be no place for miracles.

Conclusion

I am all too aware that much ground has been covered in this far too cursory overview, and that far too many questions will have been raised rather than answered—but that is not such a bad thing. It would be presumptuous, therefore, to offer any conclusions. And any conclusions, like the scientific enterprise, can only be tentative, fallible, corrigible and value-laden. Suffice to say that science is a God-ordained corporate human activity, and like all truth can never be in conflict with him who is the Truth.

Neither are science and faith two separate, independent, distinct realms: both are engaged in a search for truth, both have their source and origin in God, and ultimately, science is rooted in faith commitments. Faith is integral to the scientific enterprise.

The prophet Isaiah paints a picture of the lion and the lamb lying down together in harmony on the new earth. Perhaps too we will see the boa constrictor and warthog coexisting in peace.

[1]An excellent analysis of contemporary idolatry is provided by the Christian economist Bob Goudzwaard 1984.

[2]These terms are the titles of books; all are published by Hodder and Stoughton!

[3]For a critique of White's thesis see Bishop 1991 and references therein, especially footnote 2. Other recent critiques of White include Ian Bradley 1990 and Bauckham (forthcoming).

[4]Originally published in 1962 by the University of Chicago Press; an enlarged second edition appeared in 1970. The page numbers I cite are taken from a reprint of the second edition (New American Library, 1986).

[5]Useful discussions on Feyerabend are to be found in Newton Smith 1981 and Chalmers 1982.

[6]Scott's book (1989) provides an excellent introduction to Polanyi's main ideas.

[7]Presented by Anthony Clare and produced by Angela Tilby, the series was broadcast in the UK on 13, 15 and 16 April 1992.

[8]I am not concerned here with the historicity of miracles. On this see, for example, Wenham and Blomberg 1986.

[9]However, Eichrodt thinks that some events that do violate the laws are not unknown: he cites Nu. 16:30; Jos. 10:10ff. and 2 Ki. 20:10 as examples.

[10]On this and the following discussion see J. H. Diemer no date and 1977.

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Postmodernism, pluralism and John Hick

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Whether the movement known as postmodernism proves to be a major cultural shift or merely a hiatus in the progress of modernism will not be evident for some time, but its present influence is undeniable. Prophets vehemently proclaim the demise of the worn-out Enlightenment project with its uncritical faith in the omnicompetence of reason and the ability of science both to describe accurately the way the world is, and also to manipulate it to conform to man's needs. Wedded with industrialization and technological advance, the legacy of the Age of Reason is seen to be obsession with the cash-nexus, with forecasting, planning, managing and controlling. It is alleged that modernism is arrogant, manipulative and imperialistic in its exploitation both of the world's limited resources and of those vulnerable cultures which cannot keep up with the march of 'civilization'. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century optimism is perceived to have given way to bewildered ideological exhaustion in the wake of the demise of Communism, impending ecological disaster, the rank profusion of urban jungles and the threat of international anarchy. The very universe itself seems to have responded to secular man's attempt to 'disenchant the world', to use Weber's memorable phrase, by wrapping itself again in a cloak of inscrutability. The central discoveries of science and mathematics in this century seem to have a sobering resonance way beyond their particular disciplines: relativity (Einstein), uncertainty (Heisenberg), incompleteness (Gödel), unpredictability (chaos theory).

In response to cultural awe-deprivation, postmodernism stresses man's finitude in an ultimately mysterious universe. All attempts at objective and comprehensive descriptions of the way the world is are interpreted as but an expression of unwarranted *hubris*. All theories which claim universal applicability and all religions which demand the allegiance of the whole human family are dismissed as spurious because they fall into the discredited class of 'meta-narratives'. Instead we should bask in the welter of different and contradictory cultural voices. We should work towards Foucault's *heterotopia*, dipping eclectically into whatever we find pleasant or useful for the present moment. Since objective truth is beyond our grasp, we must pragmatically follow whatever ideas we find useful and conducive. It will be evident to the discerning reader that the pick-'n-mix philosophy of the New Age movement is just one example of this wider cultural movement. To convey something of the crusading spirit of postmodernism, let me quote T. Eagleton:

> Post-modernism signals the death of such 'metanarratives' whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a 'universal' human history. We are now in the process of wakening from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish for the totality, into the laid-back pluralism of the post-modern. . . . Science and philosophy must jettison their grandiose metaphysical claims and view themselves more modestly as just another set of narratives.[1]

A.S. Ahmed also expresses well the postmodernist mindset which 'must look for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; avoid choices between black and white, "either-or" and accept "both-and"; evoke many levels of meaning and combinations of focus; and accept self-discovery through self-knowledge.'[2]

But what is the relevance of all this for the student of theology? Just that it constitutes the *Zeitgeist* behind some of the most influential works of contemporary Western theology. This claim could easily be substantiated by an analysis of the recent work of Don Cupitt, for example, but in this article I wish to concentrate on John Hick's recent and justly acclaimed volume, *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989), which is laid back in tone (Hick is a universalist), recommends a pragmatic test for the evaluation of the world's religions and dismisses, without using the term, all meta-narratives in the face of an inscrutable universe and an ineffable divinity. Hick's earlier 'Copernican revolution' had replaced Christ as the centre of the religions with God at the centre and different saints and prophets (Christ included) orbiting, but in this recent volume he presents a modified picture which allows non-theists like Therevada Buddhists into the solar system. At the centre is now what he likes to call 'the Real', a neo-Kantian unknowable numinosity which may or may not be interpreted in theistic terms. Just as light is indescribable in itself but may manifest itself as waves or particles, so the Real may be apprehended as, say, personal by the Muslim or impersonal by the Transcendental Meditator.

Hick begins with a phenomenological study of the world's religions and notes that a major development occurred during what he calls (following Jaspers) 'the axial age' of the mid-first millennium BCE when religious concerns shifted from the maintenance of social well-being to the personal quest for self-transcendence and salvation beyond this world. Within a very short period variants of this doctrine were being taught by Zoroaster, Gautama Buddha, Lao Tzu, Mahavira and the authors of the *Upanishads*, not to mention Jewish prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Hick sees the essence of all their teachings to be what religion is all about, namely the good news that there is an escape from ignorance and suffering by the provision of a path which leads away from self-centred regard to Reality-centredness and sainthood.

But why believe that there is a Real at all? Hick continues by surveying the traditional theistic arguments and finds none of them cogent. For example, looking at the moral argument he develops a natural law position and concludes that human nature and the way people interact dictates how they should live together without the requirement of some divine moral decree. Rather than seeking evidence for God as one would an item in the world, Hick prefers another approach. All perception, he observes, involves interpretation, or 'seeing as'. The physical world is open to very little variation of interpretation, but most of us claim to discern a deeper level of reality which may be called the ethical, and here 'seeing as' differs fairly widely between cultures. At a yet more profound level reality may be discerned as sacred and this religious apprehension forms the basis of the welter of the religions of the world, each of which interpret their discovery in a somewhat different way. Hick is therefore sympathetic to A. Plantinga's view that religious belief is a form of basic knowledge.

All religions, then, are a response to the holy but their profound disagreement regarding the nature of that central reality (personal or impersonal? good or beyond moral categories? *etc.*) indicates, according to Hick, that no-one can experience the Real in an unmediated form. Both the human perceptual apparatus and cultural conceptual factors colour the way the Real is 'seen as'. Just as dreams are the product of the interaction of the outside world with our psyches, so even the mystic's experience of the Real is always mediated. How then can the Real be described in itself? Startlingly, Hick responds by insisting that nothing at all can correctly be said about it: 'Thus it cannot be said to be one or many, person or thing, substance or process, good or evil, purposive or non-purposive. . . . We cannot even speak of this as a thing or an entity.'[3]

It follows that it is impossible to judge between religions according to their doctrinal accuracy. Instead, Hick offers the ethical criterion: does the religion work in terms of the production of saints? Does it produce individuals who are free from self-centredness and who are serene, charitable to others, pure and strong of soul? Using this test, Hick concludes that all of the major religions present a mixed picture and in the last analysis there is not much to choose between them. They are all approximately equal as effective paths to salvation.

Finally, Hick turns to an examination of the remaining disagreements between the religious systems: for example, do we have one life or are we reincarnated? did Jesus die on the cross or was he replaced by a substitute, as most Muslims contend? Hick dismisses these vestigial problems as not worth worrying about either because the truth is irrevocably lost in the mists of history or because the matter is immaterial to the process of salvation and inner transformation.

Having completed a brief, but I trust fair, exposition of Hick's present position on religious pluralism, I shall now subject it to a number of philosophical criticisms, to be followed by some final observations on postmodernism and theology.

1. Hick attempts to overcome the scandal of particularity by identifying the essence of post-axial religions as the quest for self-transcendence beyond this world, but is even this minimalist account comprehensive enough? Is he not perpetuating the scandal by excluding pre-axial religion which, of course, still thrives in many parts of the world as primal religion. And what of post-axial religions like Confucianism, which are primarily concerned with the affairs and relationships of this world? The fact is that the various religions cannot be reduced to a common core. They each have their own interests and agendas, their own diagnoses of the human predicament and proffered cures. To the basic human questions: where have I come from? what am I? where am I going? the religions will offer a welter of answers as they will to the fundamental query, what must I do to be saved?[4] One has only to meet advanced practitioners of the different faiths to recognize that they are just not going in the same direction.

2. In attempting to accommodate all religions, Hick manages to alienate those he most wants to include, since it is axiomatic to, for example, Zen Buddhists and devotees of Advaita Hinduism that (notwithstanding Hick's claim to the contrary) ultimate reality *can* be experienced directly without mediation. (They would, however, thoroughly disagree concerning the nature of that reality — for Zen but emphatically not for. Advaita, *samsara* **is** *nirvana.)* While Hick cheerfully tells them that he is on their side, they will curtly inform him that they are not on his! While telling them that they are right, they will tell him that he is wrong.

3. Hick slips into the logical fallacy of the quantifier-shift when he adduces references to an ineffable reality in the sacred texts of the world's religions and deduces from this that they must all be referring to the same object, namely the Real. It cannot be validly inferred from 'many people have seen an *x* (*e.g.* a tree)' to 'there is an *x* (*e.g.* a tree) which many people have seen'. The fallacy is more patent in the parallel, flawed argument that since I saw something out of my window that I didn't know the name for and you saw something on holiday that you didn't know the name for, we must have seen the same thing. Arguably there can be many different kinds and sources of ineffable experience. For instance, the 14th-century Flemish mystic Ruysbroeck reprimanded the monks in his charge for assuming their mystical quest was over because they had reached an ineffable state: he interpreted this as merely the soul having emptied itself of all thoughts and sense experience as a prelude to the possibility of a genuine religious experience — a gracious visitation of the ineffable God.[5]

4. If the Real is utterly ineffable in itself and beyond all qualities, as Hick claims, why assume that the religions are correct and the atheist is mistaken? If the featureless Real can manifest itself to the Hindu as *nirvana,* why not to the atheist as purposeless interacting particles? Why is one more right than the other? In fact, total ineffability entails total agnosticism. That which is conceptually empty is indistinguishable from nothing. All the great theologians have realized that the *via negativa* can only be used in conjunction with some positive statements about what God is: for example, Aquinas insisted that God was immutable (not subject to change) and eternal (not subject to time) but he also taught positively that God was creator of all things other than himself. Actually, it is far from clear that even the monotheistic religions are worshipping the same being, as some have claimed, using the argument that since there is only one God, worship directed to God cannot help but find his address. P. Geach exposes the fallacy of this view by telling a little story:

> An unscrupulous canvasser is securing the vote of a man for the candidate sponsored by the Prime Minister, at the relevant time Mr Harold Macmillan. The voter is in a state of senile confusion; he has hopelessly confounded Mr Macmillan with the labour hero Ramsay MacDonald of his own youth, and he associates the noun 'Unionist' not with the Conservative and Unionist Party, but with Trades Unions. Although at the relevant time there was only one Prime Minister, it would be quite unfair to count the old man as a supporter of the Prime Minister. Similarly, if a man has sufficiently misguided religious opinions he cannot count as a worshipper of the only true God.[6]

5. If God is beyond all categories, including good and evil (as Hick avers in his attempt at inclusivity), then in fact, certain religions like Advaita Hinduism are on the right track and Christianity, for example, is false in its truth claims. In fact, all truth claims are exclusive — to affirm something is to deny something else. This was a problem C.S. Lewis found with tolerant Hinduism and I am sure he would have been equally frustrated with the tolerant Hick. To Bede Griffiths, Lewis wrote in 1956, 'Your Hindus certainly sound delightful. But what do they *deny?* That has always been my trouble with Indians — to find any proposition they wd. [*sic*] pronounce false. But truth must surely involve exclusions'.[7] Hick attempts impartiality by seeking to place the Real beyond all truth claims, but by describing it as he does, he himself unwittingly makes truth claims by implicitly denying the specific truth claims of, say, Christianity that God is wholly good.

6. Applying this same insight, we must infer from Hick's insistence that the Real cannot be said to be purposive that religions which claim special revelation must be mistaken, yet this cuts at the heart of religions like Sikhism, Judaism and Islam. In his attempt to include all, he has managed to alienate most. Truth claims are exclusive — not everyone can be right.

7. If the Real cannot be said to be purposive, then grace must be denied, but if there is no help to be gained from the divine and if, as Hick claims, ethics is autonomous then surely religion becomes otiose. Why not become a humanist enamoured of religious symbolism, like Cupitt?

8. In fact, ethical convictions emerge from the notion of purpose, and so conclusions vary between worldviews. For example, answers to questions such as the following are far from clear given a merely human perspective: is a dolphin as valuable as a person? is a woman as valuable as a man? as an embryo? In a useful metaphor that goes back to C.S. Lewis, the moral code may be likened to orders sent to a fleet of ships. These orders will cover how to remain shipshape and avoid sinking (individual ethics), how to avoid bumping into each other (social ethics) and also, most importantly, how to carry out the purpose for which they were sent to sea. Ethics based on natural law can deal confidently with the first two, but has no answer to the third which requires information, that is revelation, from the One who designed and planned the universe.

9. If the Real is beyond good and evil, how can Hick consistently use the moral test to judge between putative saints from within the various traditions? An appropriate dispositional response depends on the nature of the Real. Surely a Real beyond moral categories could equally inspire a Nietzsche or a Crowley as a Nanak or a Christ?

10. It is insensitive to claim, as Hick does, that the remaining clear disagreements between religions are secondary and unimportant. For example, the question of whether Jesus was the unique incarnation of God remains central to Christians, Muslims and Hindus, all of whom hold their opposing positions on this issue with passionate concern. The issue is not a trifle. So much is at stake. As A. McGrath reminds us: 'Suppose Jesus Christ is *not* God, but just a man. Then the cross shows the love of one human being for others. It is human, not divine, love. The cross shows the love of God for us, because it is the Son of God that went to the cross for us'.[8]

11. In fact, Hick's pluralist thesis is viable only if the incarnation doctrine is false. But to relativize Jesus is to deny him. If Christians are right about their Lord, then he is Lord of everyone whatever their religion.

While attempting to be supremely tolerant and inclusive, Hick manages, then, to present a thesis which, if accepted, would have a devastating effect on Christian theology and practice. Not only would the doctrines of incarnation and atonement have to be discarded, but also the evangelization imperative, as well as other, less obvious aspects of the faith such as the belief in divine providence. And as for intercessory prayer – presumably we ought to follow Paul Tillich in dropping it in favour of meditation.

As was suggested in the introduction, Hick's work is a theological version of the postmodernist response to the crusading arrogance of the Enlightenment meta-narrative which was convinced that it was in the process of discovering an exact description of the world which it had a duty to export to all cultures. Thanks to the pioneering work of scholars like T.S. Kuhn, philosophers of science are now aware that we cannot hope to see the world as it is in itself: rather, we construct imaginative models which are always provisional and revisable. Old-style positivism is dead. Out of the ashes two groups have emerged: postmodernist relativists like P. Feyerabend, who argue that the scientific worldview of the alchemist or magician is just as valid (or invalid) as that of the Harvard physics professor, and critical realists like H. Putnam who accept the notion of models but insist that successive scientific constructs better approximate the way the world really is; models can be criticized and evaluated and genuine progress in knowledge is possible.

Religious pluralists have reacted against the religious equivalent of positivism, namely exclusivistic fundamentalism, which maintains that it alone possesses an accurate, if not exhaustive, description of God and his purposes which one must precisely believe in order to be saved. On the relativist wing, as has been demonstrated, is John Hick, who argues that the models of God in all religions are equally valid (or invalid). Keith Ward, on the other hand, is a clear example of a critical realist theologian with his notion of 'convergent pluralism'. Ward believes that important truths about God can be truly affirmed and that a more and more accurate model of him will be achieved as the truth progressively emerges through inter-faith dialogue and attention to ongoing scientific discoveries.[9] Like Hick, however, Ward refuses to give primacy to Christianity and he too is uncomfortable with the doctrines of incarnation and atonement.

Let me conclude with some personal jottings about the way ahead for evangelical theology. I suggest that we must refuse the temptation of either retreating back to the false security of fundamentalist positivism or falling into the arms of postmodernist relativism. Instead, we must acknowledge that theology is emergent and progressive (simple acquaintance with historical theology makes that clear enough) and we must take heed of human discoveries from whatever discipline. Further, we should be open to insights from other religions, for as C. Pinnock asks, 'Why do we look so hopefully to Plato and expect nothing from Buddha? I think we are now entering a period in history when the world religions will begin to impinge on theology as philosophy has always done'.[10] However, just as there are some basic elements which appear in any sound scientific model of the world (*e.g.* both Newton's and Einstein's diverse paradigms acknowledged the existence of gravity but explained it differently), so we must contend that it is Jesus Christ who provides the hermeneutical key to the nature and purpose of reality, for he is the supreme exegete of God (Jn. 1:18). E. Brunner put it beautifully:

> From the standpoint of Jesus Christ, the non-Christian religions seem like stammering words from some half-forgotten saying; none of them is without a breath of the Holy, and yet none of them is the Holy. None of them is without its impressive truth, and yet none of them is the truth; for their truth is Jesus Christ.[11]

We need to keep in balance a strong view of both special revelation and general revelation: the specificity of God's revelation and redemptive acts, and the wideness of his mercy and loving concern for the whole human race.

We must also be willing to separate out the ontological and epistemological elements of soteriology, for while the fundamentalist exclusivist will affirm both that if Christ had not died on the cross heaven would be empty (ontological) and also that one must believe on Jesus as one's personal saviour in order to be saved (epistemological), the pluralist will deny both. It must be realized, in contrast, that it is perfectly consistent to affirm the ontological proposition as non-negotiable (*i.e.* humans can be saved only through Christ), while preserving some explorative agnosticism concerning the epistemological question (whether God will save any without *knowledge* of Christ).

Finally, we must pray for fire in the belly. Perhaps re-read Barth, who stood against a not dissimilar, laid-back, both-and liberal theology of his own day, to which he responded with *krisis* theology, portraying God not as the Unknowable devoid of qualities but as the awesome Judge who demands decision. Kierkegaard too fought passionately against the both-and accommodations of Hegelianism with such rousing declarations as, 'Either/or is the pass which admits to the absolute – God be praised! Yea, either/or is the key to heaven . . . both-and is the way to hell'.[12] We must be faithful servants of Yahweh, who has declared, 'I have set before you life and death. . . . Now choose life' (Dt. 30:19).

[1]Quoted in D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Blackwell, 1980), p. 9.

[2]A.S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam* (Routledge, 1992), p. 10.

[3]J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (Macmillan, 1989), p. 246.

[4]For a detailed treatment of this insight see H.A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices* (Apollos, 1991), pp. 108-111. This book provides an excellent critique of pluralism in general and J. Hick in particular.

[5]See R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 170-174.

[6]In M. Warner (ed.), *Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 89.

[7]W.H. Lewis (ed.), *Letters of C.S. Lewis* (Collins, 1966), p. 267.

[8]A. McGrath, *Making Sense of the Cross* (IVP, 1992), p. 40.

[9]See K. Ward, *A Vision to Pursue* (SCM, 1991).

[10]C. Pinnock, 'The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions', in M.A. Noll and D.F. Wells (eds.), *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World* (Eerdmans, 1988), p. 159.

[11]Quoted in A. Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, 1983), p. 17.

[12]R. Bretall (ed.), *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 19.

Some recent literature on John: a review article[1]

David Ball

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For even the most serious student, the secondary literature on the fourth gospel is so vast that it is difficult to know where to begin. Here, perhaps more than anywhere, the wisdom of Solomon has not been heeded (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Rather than dealing with the whole of Johannine scholarship, this article simply reviews eight recently published books. In conclusion, a few observations are made about how the reviewed books relate to current trends in the study of the gospel and a few suggestions are made about where such trends may be leading.

B. Lindars, *John*, New Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991)

For the newcomer to Johannine studies, Lindars' contribution to the New Testament Guides series offers valuable insights on the gospel from one of its most lucid and influential scholars. As an introductory work to the gospel, this book is both concise and readable and is likely to become one of the first books that a student of John will encounter. Written just before his untimely death, Lindars' work aims to give the student a basic grounding in the gospel itself as well as a balanced survey of the scholarship surrounding it. However, it needs to be approached with a certain amount of caution as Lindars' style sometimes suggests that there is only one way of looking at issues. This is particularly true of historical matters. While Lindars accepts that John contains historical material, he is dismissive of those who maintain that John is based on eye witness accounts. Furthermore, his discussion of Johannine authorship is not as conclusive as he would have his readers believe. His suggestion that the beloved disciple is simply a literary device to teach the true meaning of discipleship neither reflects Johannine scholarship as a whole, nor seems to account for the gospel's own emphasis on the beloved disciple as an eye witness of events. In addition, Lindars too easily dismisses the external evidence for apostolic authorship as an attempt by the church to validate the gospel's authority. While such a conclusion is a possibility, it is by no means a certainty and there are other interpretations which account for the evidence just as adequately.

In his chapter on the readers of the gospel, Lindars gives a lucid overview of the way scholarship has approached the question of the gospel's audience. For this purpose, he conveniently divides scholarship into two basic approaches: those who have studied the parallels to John in other religions and those who think that John's audience can be determined from within the text of the gospel. Beginning with the former group, he shows how scholarship has moved from the belief that the gospel's closest parallels are Gnostic to the current belief that the gospel is essentially Jewish. However, when he turns to the second group, Lindars seems again to present a one-sided case in his acceptance of the arguments of Brown (1979) and Martyn (1979). It is true that much (perhaps the majority) of Johannine scholarship has been persuaded that it is possible to read the gospel not only as the history of Jesus but also as the history of John's own community. It is also true that many Johannine scholars have been persuaded that this community was an isolated sect. However, to present these ideas as if there is no other interpretation of the material in John is surely not the place of an introduction to the gospel, especially when it claims to offer a 'balanced survey of the important critical issues' (back cover).

The best part of Lindars' book for me is his chapter entitled 'Understanding John'. Here he succinctly addresses the key theological issues of the gospel, simultaneously showing his excellent and balanced grasp of those issues and of the gospel's message. In his final chapter, Lindars also makes the significant point that, after all our critical studies of the gospel, its message must still be applied. This is surely a point that we all need to learn. While many of his conclusions differ from my own, it is surely the wisdom of a great scholar who is not concerned simply with head knowledge but also with its application. While this book is a useful window on Lindars' own views on the gospel, it is perhaps not as helpful as an introduction to the world of Johannine studies. However, when read with a certain hermeneutical suspicion, Lindars' book has several useful things to say.

G.R. Beasley-Murray, **The Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel** (Peabody, Massachussetts: Hendrickson, 1991)

For those who were slightly disappointed by Beasley-Murray's contribution to the Word Biblical Commentary series (1987),[2] the set of theological studies of John by the same author provides something of an antidote. These studies originally formed the 1990 Payton Lectures and the lecture form makes them pleasant to read. Furthermore, the studies do not require a great knowledge of Johannine scholarship and are therefore accessible to both undergraduates and ministers. Beginning with an essay that shares the title of the book, Beasley-Murray leads his reader through six studies on various aspects of Johannine theology. The author is concerned with the overriding message of the gospel, which he sees as the message of God's saving sovereignty in the person of Jesus, summed up in the offer of life.

It is refreshing to read a book on John that firmly believes the gospel's portrayal of Jesus is relevant today and refrains from hypothetical reconstructions of either the gospel or its community. Furthermore, Beasley-Murray draws on modern studies of John's Christology while at the same time challenging many long-held views on the gospel. His discussion of the mission of the Son of God thus applies recent research of the messenger concept to help elucidate the gospel's view of Jesus' relationship with God. His discussion of the gospel's Son of Man sayings is critical of those who see no theological importance for the resurrection of John, as well as those who see no place for the forgiveness of sins in John's view of the cross.

Beasley-Murray's discussion of the Holy Spirit wisely begins with the role of the Spirit in Jesus' own ministry before developing John's view of the ongoing role of the Spirit amongst believers. Beasley-Murray emphasizes the Spirit's role as 'prosecuting attorney' against the world. This explains the use of the term Paraclete and provides a direct parallel with the application of the same term to Jesus in 1 John. Finally, Beasley-Murray addresses the role of the sacraments, the church and ministry in the gospel. His discussion of these hotly contested subjects is again both balanced and critical. The discussion of the role of the church within the gospel is a sound attempt to deal with the theology of the gospel. For Beasley-Murray, this theology suggests the establishment of a new community based on the Jesus whom the evangelist portrays.

Although this book does not provide much new material for those familiar with John, it will be of benefit to those who want to get to grips with the distinctive aspects of Johannine theology. The pastoral concern of the author often shows through, for these studies are not simply academic. Beasley-Murray wishes to show how the Gospel of John may speak to today's church. Here is both the strength and the limitation of this book. For an undergraduate who is looking for a book that may directly address issues in a

secular course, this book may not be the most helpful. However, the significance of this book is that it goes beyond the academic study of John to challenge its readers with the gospel's message of life.

L. Morris, **Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John** (Leicester/Grand Rapids: IVP/Eerdmans, 1989)[3]

Morris takes a similar approach to that of Beasley-Murray. As an adaptation of Morris' own teaching on John, it is likewise accessible to student and pastor alike. Those who are familiar with Morris' previous work on John will not find much new here. Furthermore, Morris' work more closely reflects the state of Johannine scholarship in the mid-70s when he taught the class on which his book is based. The apparently dated views of Morris, along with his strongly evangelical approach to the gospel, mean that this book will probably not find its way onto many booklists in secular departments. This is a shame since it is a very careful discussion of many issues critical to the study of John.

Morris sees John 20:30-31 as a summary of the gospel's theological purpose. The diverse theological themes of the gospel are held together by this overriding purpose which displays itself in the signs and discourses as well as in the characterization of Jesus. This book addresses the major Johannine themes such as belief, life and the 'I am' sayings. It also discusses more directly Christological aspects such as the Johannine view of Christ, the Son of God, the Spirit and the Father. One particularly important subject in Morris' book is his discussion of the humanity of Jesus in John. This is an area that has often been neglected, as scholarship still tends to hold to Käsemann's docetic view of Jesus.

As a clear introduction to the principal themes of Johannine theology, this book will be of immense help to undergraduates. Furthermore, since Morris concerns himself with the gospel itself, the themes he addresses will continue to be of importance in the study of the gospel long after some of the current trends in scholarship have passed on.

John W. Pryor, **John: Evangelist of the Covenant People: The Narrative and Themes of the Fourth Gospel** (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1992)[4]

Here is a book that is eminently readable, displays a fresh approach and presents a convincing argument. Pryor sees, and in the first part of his book ably satisfies, a need for 'a study of John's Gospel which begins with and concentrates on a sequential reading of the text, not verse by verse but in the longer units which make up the book' (p. 1). While this may sound like a 'literary approach' in that it deals with the meaning of the final text of the gospel, it is in fact more indebted to traditional forms of criticism.

Pryor's main argument is that John presents Jesus as the fulfilment of Judaism and that the new community takes the place of Israel as the covenant people. In his sequential reading, he briskly takes us through the whole gospel, interacting with scholarly opinion as he goes. Pryor's 'narrative' approach is distinctive because it deals with longer units of the gospel. As a result, the message of the whole gospel always remains in view. Critical problems that may interrupt the flow of this reading are either dealt with in endnotes or in excurses at the end of the first main section.

The second part of Pryor's book pursues his thesis in three theological studies. The first of these argues that Jesus is portrayed as a prophet like Moses and that it is Jesus and not Israel who is God's true Son. It follows that the divine covenant of sonship is found in Jesus and not in Israel. In the second of his studies, Pryor argues that the application of the title 'Lord' to Jesus by John is but one demonstration that John's community was not sectarian but stood in the mainstream of Christian belief. For John, Jesus is the covenant Lord of the community in much the same way as Yahweh was in the OT. It is a pity that Pryor does not work out the Christological implications of such a parallel. Instead, he affirms that the Lord continues to be present in the community through the presence of the Spirit. Pryor then turns to John's view of the church, in which Jesus is both the founder and the representative of the new community. As a result, Johannine believers are under the obligation to 'remain in' Jesus and to love one another. This love for each other, however, is not to exclude the world, but contains an obligation to it. Pryor also asserts that the cross is essential as a foundation for John's community (against Bultmann, 1955, p. 54), and suggests that this includes the idea of sacrifice (against Forestell, 1974). The community is gathered both by Jesus' revelatory word and by the cleansing effects of the cross. This is in accordance with the covenant faith of Israel. However, birth into the covenant people now occurs through new birth by the Spirit and not through the natural birth into Judaism.

Pryor stands against the mainstream of Johannine scholarship in his belief that John knew the synoptics. Against much modern scholarship, he also thinks that a 'two-level reading of John's Gospel' such as that proposed by Martyn lacks enough controls to be properly established. At the same time Pryor believes that much can be learned about the setting of the Johannine community through a careful study of the gospel and background material. While I agree that this method is preferable to that of Martyn, what worries me is Pryor's view of the role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the gospel. For the ongoing teaching role of the Paraclete all too easily leads Pryor to the common conclusion that this role involves a significant re-shaping of history. Thus the gospel does not reproduce the words of Jesus, but consists of 'a Spirit-inspired shaping of the traditions to bring out their true meaning for the community in the situation of their present experiences' (p. 147). If we are to believe Pryor's earlier 'reading' of the gospel, this 'Spirit-inspired shaping' often cares more about the 'present experiences' of the readers than the situation of Jesus' own day. However, this is an excellent book, which deals with the fundamental question of Jesus' relationship to the OT. It deserves a wide readership for a clear and persuasive argument.

D.A. Carson, **The Gospel According to John** (Leicester/Grand Rapids: IVP/Eerdmans, 1991)

Since last writing about John for *Themelios* (14.2), Carson's own commentary on John has been published. This is intended to provide the student of the Bible with a handy, up-to-date commentary, with the primary emphasis on exegesis. Characteristically, Carson shows much independence of thought, which challenges the current state of scholarship at many points.

The introduction contains a survey of the state of Johannine scholarship. Here Carson further develops some of the criticisms he made of that scholarship in his last article for *Themelios* (Carson, 1989, pp. 60-62). Here, Carson expounds his belief that the gospel is primarily an evangelistic document. He argues that the place to begin a discussion of the gospel's purpose is with the evangelist's statement of purpose in 20:30-31. Contrasting this with the similar statement in 1 John 5:13 that is clearly written for believers, Carson argues that the statement in the gospel appears to be evangelistic. Although I am not sure that 'evangelistic' is the right word ('missionary' may be better), Carson has drawn attention to the fact that there are places within the gospel that seem to assume a non-believing audience. As a result he challenges the widely held belief that the Gospel of John is written for a (rather inward-looking) Christian community. It has to be said that Carson's major emphasis on the evangelistic nature of the gospel will probably fall on deaf ears in scholarly circles, unless a better account is made of the material in the gospel that appears to have believers in mind. Neither is the majority of scholarship likely to adopt the belief that John closely represents the teaching of the historical Jesus, nor the conviction that internal and external evidence is best accounted for by apostolic authorship, though Carson makes a cogent case for his views.

When it comes to the actual commentary, Carson usually prefers the 'plain meaning of the text' rather than symbolic or sacramental interpretations. Thus, Jesus' claim in John 6:54 that 'he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life' does not suggest that 'there is *no* allusion to the Lord's table. But such allusions as exist prompt the thoughtful reader to look behind the eucharist, to that to which the eucharist itself points', *i.e.*, to the work of the cross (p. 297). Carson clearly sees the OT and Judaism as John's primary conceptual background. In all this, I broadly agree and have found his commentary both thought-provoking and helpful.

This commentary is an invaluable aid to (but not a substitute for) a detailed reading of the gospel. It offers a credible and scholarly exegesis from an evangelical standpoint. As such it will benefit those whose courses may exclude such works. It will also be of great use for those who wish to explain God's word to others. For such people, Carson provides a helpful (if brief) section in his introduction on preaching from the fourth gospel. This commentary has already taken its place on my shelf next to Morris (1971) and Barrett (1978) as a clear one-volume exegetical commentary on John.

J. Ashton, **Understanding the Fourth Gospel** (Oxford: OUP, 1990)

Most of the previous books can hardly be said to represent the mainstream of Johannine scholarships. Ashton, however, stands firmly in the historical-critical tradition of scholars such as Bultmann and Dodd. The title itself seems to echo Dodd's work (1953), and Ashton clearly sees Bultmann as the single most important influence on understanding the gospel this century. Ashton's work begins with a survey of Johannine scholarship before Bultmann, then reflects on Bultmann's influence, before discussing the direction of study since Bultmann. Those wishing to know how Johannine scholarship has developed this century need look no further, for this is a clear and well-reasoned survey. At the same time the difficulty of writing a concise review of Johannine scholarship is amply shown in the fact that it takes Ashton over 100 pages. As a representative of the mainstream of Johannine scholarship, it is hardly surprising that Ashton sees Martyn's work as the most significant step since the work of Bultmann.

After his detailed survey, Ashton looks at the gospel under two main headings: Genesis and Revelation. In a series of studies, the first of these seeks to discover the origins of the gospel. Following on from his belief that John is sectarian in nature, Ashton looks at the idea of 'Religious dissent' before addressing the question of 'The Community and its book'. From there he takes up some of the themes of dualism, the Messiah, Son of God and Son of Man. Each of these chapters is detailed enough to be a separate study in itself and will provide useful material for anyone studying these aspects of the gospel. However, as part of Ashton's overall argument, they lead him to the conclusion that the origins of the gospel are found in Jewish thought and so he believes that contemporary Jewish thought is the means by which the gospel will be correctly understood. Here Ashton is in agreement with modern scholarship over against Bultmann, who believed that the gospel's origins were to be found in Gnostic thought.

In the second major section, Ashton develops Bultmann's belief that revelation is the main theological motif in John. Starting with the question of the gospel's genre, Ashton finds many parallels with what has come to be known as 'Apocalyptic literature'. These parallels lead him to believe, following Martyn, that like apocalyptic writings the gospel assumes two levels of understanding. The first level is what the gospel ostensibly portrays: the ministry of Jesus. The second stage of understanding is the post-resurrection era, in which the Paraclete takes on the revelatory role of Jesus:

> During Jesus' life time . . . the significance of his words and deeds remains opaque: they assume the character of a mystery, one whose meaning cannot be grasped until the dawn of a new age, when in a second stage, it will at last receive its authoritative interpretation (p. 405).

Quoting the work of Martyn, Ashton suggests that John diverges from the apocalyptic model in the fact that the 'initial stage is not the scene of "things to come" in heaven. It is the scene of Jesus' life and teaching. John's two stages are past and present, not future and present' (p. 412; Martyn, 1978, pp. 136ff.). Ashton goes further than Martyn in his belief that 'John was "analytically conscious" of the two levels of understanding with which he worked' (p. 435). He likens the gospel to the artist who purports to represent one era of history, while actually commenting on his own. By this means the evangelist's 'religious genius impelled him to disclose more and more of what he called "the truth", that is to say the revelation of Jesus' (p. 434).

Although Ashton acknowledges some sacrificial language concerning the death of Jesus in the Gospel of John, he sees the crucifixion primarily in terms of revelation. He further points out that it is not in the crucifixion itself that God's glory is revealed but in its significance. Thus 'the Christian believer is not expected to see the crucifixion as a kind of exaltation or glorification but to see *past* the physical reality of Jesus' death to its true significance' (p. 496). Since he thinks that Jesus' glory has been manifest from the start, he does not regard the resurrection stories as highlighting this glory. Rather, he sees them in terms of faith (20:1-10), recognition (20:1, 11-18) and mission (20:19-23).

This book is not only significant because of its great length. It represents a well-argued and detailed study of the gospel by a respected scholar. The first half of this book shows its indebtedness to scholarship since Bultmann. Here Ashton is correct in rejecting Gnosticism as the background to the thought of the gospel. The second part is remarkable in that it combines many of the interpretations of Bultmann with the 'two-level' theories of Johannine genre espoused by Martyn. Here Ashton should certainly be credited for highlighting some similarities between John and apocalyptic literature. However, his 'two-level' apocalyptic reading of John has two major problems.

The first problem is the question of how we are to determine the legitimacy of a 'two-level' reading of the gospel and will be addressed below (see 'Concluding observations'). The second problem concerns the genre of the fourth gospel. It is one thing to say that there are similarities between John and apocalyptic literature but it is quite another thing to say that John consciously thought of his work as apocalyptic. Ashton dismisses the more obvious similarities between John and biography or history on what I think is a rather spurious definition of history. He thinks that 'a Gospel is more of a creed than a biography: it is a proclamation of faith' (p. 432). Thus for Ashton, 'the evangelists were not writing history at all' (p. 432).[5] It seems to me that this is a false distinction between history and creed. This also appears to be a classic case of importing 20th-century rationalist ideals about the objectiveness of historians onto first-century texts. Furthermore, it is questionable whether the writing down of events can ever be as objective as idealists once thought (see Stibbe, below). Ashton's definitions ultimately lead him to the sad conclusion that 'Neither the resurrection itself nor the stories told to illustrate its significance are historical in any meaningful sense of the word' (p. 611). Although the gospel may display certain similarities with apocalyptic literature, to my mind it displays greater similarities with ancient forms of biography (Hengel, 1985, pp. 32f.). Furthermore, I am more persuaded by the arguments of Robinson (1985) that John's gospel is based on reliable history than the proposition that it is not history at all.

Neither the size nor the price of this book will endear it to any but the most ardent of students. My problems with Ashton's work stem from the fact that we share neither the same optimism in some of the results of modern scholarship nor the same pessimism about the historical reliability of the gospel. It seems a shame to me that such a scholarly work does not question some of the presuppositions of the scholarship on which it builds. For all that, this book represents the standpoint of many and is finely written. It will therefore probably prove to be very influential in the development of Johannine studies.

J.C. Thomas, **Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community** (JSNTS 61) (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991)

All the previous books have been general studies on John's gospel, ranging from the introductory work of Lindars to the scholarly tome of Ashton. The final two books are both revisions of PhD theses and therefore address specific issues of Johannine scholarship in great detail.

Thomas' work is basically an exegetical study of the significance of the footwashing in John 13. It is straightforward in its form. After an introduction, he argues the case for including the words εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας ('except for the feet') in the text of 13:10. He proceeds to look at historical parallels to the footwashing episode in both Jewish and Graeco-Roman material. From such a survey, he concludes that in the ancient world there was such a close connection between the idea of footwashing and the concept of preparation that the idiom 'with unwashed feet' came to mean 'without adequate preparation' (p. 59). The action of footwashing is also closely tied to the role of a servant. The footwashing in John 13 is distinct because it is motivated by love and because it violates the standards of status in which the inferior washes the feet of the superior. Thomas observes that the footwashing in John 13 is not a simple expression of hospitality but is used as a sign of cleansing and is specifically linked to Jesus' death. He also observes that 1 Timothy 5:9-10 suggests that footwashing was practised by widows in some early Christian churches.

The core of Thomas' book contains a detailed literary and exegetical analysis of John 13:1-20. Here Thomas emphasizes the highly significant position of the footwashing episode. Not only does it come at the beginning of the farewell discourses, it is also introduced as the first episode after Jesus' hour has arrived (v. 1). Thomas sees the farewell discourses in the light of similar farewell discourses in the OT and other Jewish literature. As such, they prepare for the departure of Jesus and are presented as the final teaching of Jesus to his disciples and all subsequent followers. As a preparation for this teaching and also for Jesus' death, the

footwashing takes on even greater significance. After studying the literary themes of the farewell discourses and the role of the disciples in the gospel as a whole, Thomas begins a detailed verse by verse exegesis. From this he concludes that the footwashing is inextricably bound to the passion of Jesus and its implications for the disciples. It is Jesus' love that leads him to take upon himself the role of the slave, in defiance of normal social practice. Jesus makes clear that the footwashing is not optional for the disciples but is necessary for them to share in his identity (v. 8). In three distinct commands (vv. 14,15,17), Jesus tells his disciples not only to follow his example of humble service but to wash one another's feet. Thomas sees this footwashing as an ongoing command which may be seen as a 'sign of preparation for mission . . . made possible by continual cleansing' (p. 16). Thomas also suggests that in the light of his observations scholars may have been too hasty in suggesting that two (contradictory) sources lie behind the footwashing of John 13.

In the light of the many historical reconstructions of John's audience that have been built on somewhat shaky foundations, the mention of historical reconstruction and the Johannine community in the title of Thomas' last chapter filled me with dread. However, this is an excellent example of how to engage in a study of the possible practices of the Johannine community. Thomas begins with early Christian texts that almost certainly imply a knowledge of Jesus' command in John 13 that the disciples should wash one another's feet. From these texts, Thomas shows that early readers of John's gospel appear to have taken Jesus' words literally and actually to have washed each other's feet. Then Thomas moves to other texts that suggest the practice of footwashing but may not be based on John 13. Among these he includes the verses in 1 Timothy 5. From actual examples of footwashings, he concludes that it is likely that the first readers of the gospel took the command of Jesus literally.[6] In fact he thinks that the burden of proof is on those who believe that the first readers of the gospel would take Jesus' words metaphorically, for all the evidence he presents points in the other direction. Having surmised that the community practised footwashing, Thomas suggests that its significance concerns the cleansing of post-baptismal sin and that it was probably observed in the context of a meal.

Although Thomas' book is basically a PhD thesis, those with a basic knowledge of Greek will find it readable and compelling. It will hopefully also set a trend by the fact that it has been published in both hardback and paperback form and so is more accessible to those with a restricted budget. Throughout it is also evident that Thomas has an underlying agenda: the theological and practical relevance of his findings for contemporary Christian worship. Has the church lost something of the significance of Jesus' death in supposing that the footwashing is merely an example of humble service? Thomas rightly concludes: 'There is clearly more direct biblical support for the practice of footwashing than for several later practices of the church . . . in the light of the evidence here presented, the issue of the relevance of footwashing for the contemporary church may well need reassessment' (p. 189). This is an excellent thesis, and one with a message: 'She who has ears, let her hear.'

M.W.G. Stibbe, **John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel** (SNTS 73) (Cambridge: CUP, 1992)[7]

Stibbe's book requires more than a passing acquaintance with both literary and theological theory. As such it will probably not feature on many undergraduate reading lists. Yet this is an important book, for it argues that narrative criticism, especially when redefined in the light of the gospel genre, has much to offer traditional scholarship on John. It thus goes some way to answering the criticisms that have been levelled at 'narrative' or 'literary' approaches to the study of the gospel.[8]

Stibbe devotes the first part of his book to creating his own narrative theory. He criticizes previous narrative critical studies of John for treating the fourth gospel as if it were a 20th-century novel and for ignoring questions of genre, social setting and history. His own approach therefore determines to treat all these questions seriously as well as the literary aspects of the gospel. He suggests structuralism as a model for determining genre and sociological studies as a means of identifying the social setting of the Johannine community. Stibbe expresses significant reservations about the soundness of the two-level approach of Martyn and Brown in determining the community. He thinks that a shift is needed away from these hypothetical reconstructions 'towards the more sociological approaches of Wayne Meeks and Bruce Malina' (p. 61; Meeks, 1972; Malina, 1985). The final part of Stibbe's narrative theory involves the question of history as narrative. In a very suggestive chapter he argues that the distinction scholarship has placed between history and narrative is in fact a false one. In order for history to make sense, it has to be given a narrative (story) form. This means that John's gospel can for the first time be studied scientifically both as story and as history.

The second half of Stibbe's work takes up each aspect of his new method and applies them one by one to the trial narrative of John 18–19. A practical narrative criticism of the trial argues that John is an artful storyteller. A genre criticism follows, which, somewhat surprisingly, finds close parallels with Dionysian mythology. Stibbe, however, emphasizes that John was not consciously alluding to the myth of Dionysus; instead, he thinks that the allusions to Dionysus are unconscious and come about because John unconsciously chose the genre of tragedy to rewrite his tradition about Jesus. Stibbe further suggests that a new family of faith is created at the cross, when Jesus calls the beloved disciple to take home his mother (19:25-27). Stibbe sees this episode in the life of Jesus as a legitimation of the Johannine community. Thus, an episode from the life of Jesus sheds light on the setting of the gospel. Stibbe's final chapter develops the idea that John can be both story and history at the same time. He stresses the basic historicity of the passion narrative, but suggests that the storyteller has used much imagination in the creation of the final story.

Although Stibbe's book comes to some surprising and somewhat questionable conclusions,[9] its overriding belief that the future of the 'narrative criticism' of the gospel is an integrated approach is surely correct. Stibbe's book is certainly a significant step in the right direction. However, it is Stibbe's discussion of history that promises to be the biggest step forward. He certainly appears to be on the right lines in suggesting that John can at the same time be both story and history. In the light of Ashton's work (see above), I would want to take this observation one stage further and suggest that John can at one and the same time be theology (or creed) and history. However, Stibbe's observations could lead to the danger of thinking that, because history requires a narrative form for it to make sense, all narratives can be seen as history. It is one thing to say that the evangelist has chosen details according to his own purpose, that history requires a narrative form in order to be understood, and that the evangelist has emphasized and explained things that may not have been obvious to the narrative audience. It seems to me that it is quite another thing to say that the evangelist was willing to 'embroider' or even to invent events in order to explain the true meaning of Jesus. On Stibbe's definition of history, I still wonder how far the author is allowed to use his imagination before what is written would better be described as fiction than history.

Some concluding observations

What follows is a brief attempt to show how the above works fit into Johannine studies as a whole and to highlight some significant changes within the study of the gospel.

John and the synoptics

Since the work of Dodd (1963, *e.g.* p. 387) on the importance of historical data within the Gospel of John, the vast majority of Johannine scholarship has worked with the supposition that John did not know the synoptics. Even the conservative voice of Morris (1969, pp. 15-63) concurred with this view.[10] The major exception to this point of view has been the voice of Barrett (1978, pp. 42-54), who contended that John knew Mark. It can hardly be said that there has been a wholesale shift in opinion on this matter. However, certain recent studies, including those of Pryor (esp. pp. 100-102), Carson (pp. 49-58) and Thomas (p. 83 n. 1)[11] have again raised the possibility that John knew the synoptics. The fact that Lazarus is presented to the reader as the brother of Mary 'who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair' (11:2) (even though this anointing does not take place until ch. 12), the fact that the evangelist seems to assume a knowledge of the Last Supper (13:4), and the similarity between the accounts of the walking on the water and the feeding of the five thousand (Jn. 6) and the passion narrative (Jn. 18–20) with those of the synoptics, suggest to me that scholarship has been too hasty in its wholesale abandonment of some sort of link with the synoptic accounts. It appears that the tide of scholarship just may have begun to turn in this area. However, unless we are to return to the idea that John was

written simply to counter (*e.g.* Windisch, 1926, pp. 8-11) or complement[12] the synoptics, a great deal more work needs to be done on exactly what such a relationship may be.

John and Judaism

Scholarship has correctly noticed that John's thoughtworld is essentially Jewish. All the books reviewed above confirm this. However, the precise relationship with Judaism is far from settled. One major question in this discussion which needs further attention concerns how much John knew, and is indebted to, Jewish traditions that are preserved within the Targums and Rabbinic Judaism. It is often forgotten that in their final forms the Targums and many Rabbinic traditions date from a time long after the composition of the gospel. Now that the Jewish nature of John has been widely acknowledged, there is the danger that scholars will seek for every sort of parallel within Judaism and assume that John was aware of such traditions. While a case can be made for John knowing certain traditions within Judaism, such as the knowledge of the Jewish lectionary system (Guilding, 1960), each parallel needs to be weighed according to its own merits. This is an area of Johannine scholarship where much caution is necessary and many more scholarly controls are needed to avoid the danger of reading into John Rabbinic traditions that are neither implied nor needed for a correct understanding of the text.

Traditional versus literary criticism

There will probably continue to be a methodological divide between the 'historical-critical' school and the 'literary' school of thought for a good few years to come. Furthermore, we are probably seeing only the beginning of a vast flood of 'literary' readings of the gospel, including 'literary' commentaries (*e.g.* Talbert, 1992). However, it seems that the gap is beginning to lessen and the number of scholars who are willing to place a foot in each camp is increasing. This is not only seen in the ambitious work of Stibbe, that deliberately tries to narrow the divide. It is also seen in Pryor's 'sequential' reading of the text and in Thomas' determination to deal with 'the final form of the text' alongside more traditional issues. It seems that many are beginning to realize that there are benefits to be found in both approaches to the text. Following Stibbe's excellent beginning, there is a further need to develop a truly integrated approach that is both holistic and exegetical.

The Johannine community: a way forward?

Over the last few years, the study of the Johannine community in John's gospel has been dominated by the theories of Martyn and Brown. As the review above has shown, this involves a two-level reading of the text of the gospel. At one level the gospel speaks of the life of the historical Jesus. However, while the gospel may purport to be about the earthly ministry of Jesus, this level has been transformed in the light of the events in the life of the Johannine community, so that the scholar can detect specific episodes which find their origin in the time of the community rather than in the time of Jesus. With Carson (1984, p. 14), I find it hard to believe in the detailed reconstructions of John's community that scholars such as Brown and Martyn (and Ashton) deduce from the gospel. I agree with Pryor that 'controls for this kind of approach to the text seem to me too difficult to establish' (p. 2). In other words, it is almost impossible to prove or disprove whether the story of healing of the man born blind originated with the healing within the Johannine community or whether it originated in the ministry of Jesus himself, as the story seems to suggest. I have to add that there is more 'historical' evidence that such healings occurred during the lifetime of Jesus (*cf. e.g.* Mk. 8:22-26; 10:46-52) than within John's community. Furthermore, the validity of some of the building blocks upon which Brown and Martyn's community is based has recently come in for a great deal of criticism.[13]

A theological approach to the question of John's community may provide a more fruitful way in to this difficult debate. For example, Beasley-Murray begins with the concept of the *true* vine and suggests that such an image assumes the establishment of a new community. From the theology of the gospel, he deduces that the church is rooted in Christ the Redeemer (p. 105): it is the fellowship of those who receive and keep the word of Christ (p. 107), of those who in Christ have the life of the saving sovereignty of God and hope in its fulfilment (p. 109), and of those united to Christ and therefore to one another (p. 111). Furthermore, the church is a fellowship created from all nations by the Redeemer of all nations (p. 114) and is the fellowship which is entrusted with the mission of Christ to the world (p. 115). It may be argued that such a theological discussion of the church within John has no bearing on its 'original' audience and is therefore irrelevant in the current discussions of community. However, while this approach does not address specific practices and beliefs within the Johannine audience, it must be acknowledged that it expresses the evangelist's 'vision' for the community for which he wrote. If his gospel had any effect upon its first hearers, it may be that this theology has a bearing on what may or may not have been believed by the community.

Pryor, Stibbe and Thomas provide another approach to this thorny issue. They think that practices and beliefs expressed in the gospel may throw light on the practices and beliefs of John's community. Such an approach must be evaluated according to the merits of each case. While it should be acknowledged that the gospel sheds light on the world of its audience as well as its author, it is difficult to know how far the audience of the gospel really did share the thoughtworld of its author. There seem to be very few controls to verify whether the incident at the cross (Jn. 19:25-27) is meant both to represent the creation of a new family of faith as well as to depict an episode from the life of Jesus (Stibbe, pp. 161-167). On the other hand, Thomas has made a very good case for the practice of footwashing within the early church. It follows that there is a high possibility that John's original audience adopted this practice (or at least that the evangelist intended them to).

In conclusion, it must be remembered that questions of John's audience are closely linked to questions of purpose. Thus, if Carson is correct to believe that John's primary purpose was evangelistic, we must ask ourselves whether searching after the practices of the Johannine community is no more than a scholarly wild goose chase.

[1]In recent years *Themelios* has been excellently served by two articles on the state of the literature associated with John's gospel. The first article (Carson, 1984) surveyed about 100 books and articles on the gospel. The second (Carson, 1989) drew on a similar selection of studies in order to focus on some important aspects of Johannine scholarship.

[2]For a brief discussion of Beasley-Murray's commentary, see Carson, 1989, pp. 58-59.

[3]For a fuller discussion of this work, see my review in *Anvil* 7.3 (1990), pp. 258-259. *Anvil*, an Anglican evangelical journal for theology and mission, has kindly given me permission to use material from reviews originally commissioned and published in *Anvil* (see reviews of Stibbe and Pryor).

[4]For a fuller discussion of this work, see my forthcoming review in *Anvil*.

[5]It is true that John is not history in the sense that a modern 'life of Jesus' may be regarded as history. It is also true that the gospel is a 'proclamation of faith' (Ashton, p. 432). However, it must be questioned whether the fact that the gospel is a proclamation of faith rules out any discussion of the gospel as history.

[6]Since there is no precedent for a superior washing the feet of an inferior, Thomas implies that this practice may go back to the person of Jesus himself (p. 169, n. 1).

[7]For a fuller discussion of this work, see my forthcoming review in *Anvil*.

[8]*E.g.* see Carson's criticisms of new criticism (1989), pp. 60-62.

[9]*E.g.* he is certain that the gospel portrays Lazarus as the beloved disciple (pp. 156-157) and he thinks that the genre of John's passion is closest to that of Greek tragedy (pp. 129-147).

[10]Although Morris denies a literary dependence between John and the synoptics, he acknowledges that John had a knowledge of some things that are recorded in the synoptics.

[11]Thomas (p. 83 n. 1) refers his readers to Goppelt (1981, pp. 16-17), de Solages (1979) and Smith (1979-80) for a similar view of the relationship between John and the synoptics.

[12]The idea that John complements the synoptics is much more acceptable as a theory and may even find backing in the statement by Clement of Alexandria that 'Last of all John perceiving that the bodily (or external) facts had been set forth in the [other] Gospels, at the instance of his disciples and with the inspiration of the Spirit composed a spiritual Gospel' (cited in Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesia* (H.E.), vi. 14.7). However, although we may legitimately use John to complement the synoptics, especially in matters of faith and doctrine, it has to be doubted whether that was the original purpose of the gospel. Against this, see Barrett (1978, p. 64).

[13]It is impossible in the scope of this article to do justice to what is a complex issue. I refer those who are interested to the arguments of Stibbe (pp. 56-61), Robinson (1985, pp. 80ff.) and Hengel (1989, pp. 114-117).

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The Star of Bethlehem, drawing giraffes, and other good things: a selection of New Testament journal articles 1990–92

David Wenham

Jesus said, 'No one has arisen greater than John the Baptist', but Christians have often not realized what a significant figure John was. Robert Webb's book *John the Baptizer and Prophet* (JSOT, 1991) may help put this right, and in the journals there have been several interesting articles. Webb himself in *JSNT* 43 (1991), pp. 103-111, 'The Activity of John the Baptist's Expected Figure at the Threshing Floor', argues that John is the thresher preparing the way for one who will take the separated wheat and chaff away to their respective destinies. Jerome Murphy O'Connor in *NTS* 36 (1990), pp. 359-374, 'John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses', reflects on the geography of John's ministry and (rather speculatively) on Jesus' link with John. John's influence continued in the period of the church: J. Ramsey Michaels in *TB* 42 (1991), pp. 245-260, 'Paul and John the Baptist: An Odd Couple', argues interestingly that Paul echoes John's teaching. Martinus C. De Boer in *NovT* 33 (1991), pp. 326-346, 'The Death of Jesus Christ and His Coming in the Flesh (1 John 4:2)', suggests that the breakaway group from the church referred to in 1 John were emphasizing Jesus' John-like baptizing ministry ('water'), as described in John 3–4, but not his death ('blood'). There is some reason also to think that there were followers of John who set John above Jesus, and that the NT is deliberately making it clear that John himself put Jesus way out in front (*e.g.* Jn. 1:20).

The prize for the most fascinating articles in this survey should probably go to Colin Humphreys, Professor of Material Science in Cambridge, who writes in *TynB* 43 (1992), pp. 31-56, on 'The Star of Bethlehem, A Comet in 5 BC and the Date of Christ's Birth', and (with W.G. Waddington) in *TynB* 43, pp. 331-352, on 'The Jewish Calendar, A Lunar Eclipse and the Date of Christ's Crucifixion'. They date the crucifixion to 3 April AD 33. Both articles have been published in earlier forms in scientific journals, and it is excellent to have well-documented and well-argued astronomical insights brought to bear on NT problems (though readers may like to note Roger Beckwith's 'Cautionary Notes on the Use of Calendars and Astronomy to Determine the Chronology of the Passion' in J. Vardam and E.M. Yamauchi (eds.), *Chronos Kairos Christos*, Eisenbrauns, 1989, pp. 183-205). Other useful articles bearing on the history of Jesus include Barry C. McGing in *CBQ* 53 (1991), pp. 416-438, on 'Pontius Pilate and the Sources', and Akio Ito in *JSNT* 43 (1991), pp. 5-13, on 'The Question of the Authenticity of the Ban on Swearing' (Mt. 5:33-37).

The Last Supper comes in for attention by Deborah B. Carmichael in *JSNT* 42 (1991), pp. 45-67, 'David Daube on Eucharist and the Passover Seder'. She revives the view of Daube and Eisler that the piece of unleavened bread broken off and set aside in the Jewish Passover and called the *afikoman* originally represented 'a longed-for redeemer who had not yet appeared'. Jesus identified himself with that redeemer when he took the bread and spoke of his body. Carmichael doubts if the tradition of Jesus taking the cup and speaking of his death goes back to Jesus, but M. Casey in *JTS* 41 (1990), pp. 1-12, 'The Original Aramaic Form of Jesus' Interpretation of the Cup', proposes an Aramaic original of Jesus' words. In *Churchman* 105 (1991), pp. 246-260, 'How Jesus Understood the Last Supper: A Parable of Action', I offer an explanation of the Supper in its context which might possibly help bridge some of the divisions between different Christian approaches to the eucharist.

Still on the question of Jesus' death, Daniel J. Antwi, in *Interpretation* 45 (1991), pp. 17-28, 'Did Jesus Consider His Death to be an Atoning Sacrifice?', argues helpfully that Jesus' forgiveness

of sins is to be linked to his coming up to Jerusalem, including to the temple: Jesus identified 'his role with that of the hitherto given institution for atonement'. The death of Jesus is an atoning death not only in the synoptics but also in the fourth gospel, as Max Turner argues in *EQ* 61 (1990), pp. 99-122, 'Atonement and the Death of Jesus in John: Some Questions to Bultmann and Forestell'. Turner also writes in *NovT* 33 (1991) on 'The Spirit and the Power of Jesus' Miracles in the Lucan Conception'. Other valuable articles on the gospels include those by Larry Hurtado in *JSNT* 40 (1990), pp. 15-32, on 'The Gospel of Mark: Evolutionary or Revolutionary Document?', commenting on the views of Burton Mack and W. Kelber, and by Peter Liu in *EQ* 64 (1992), pp. 291-317, 'Did the Lucan Jesus Desire Voluntary Poverty?'. The answer is yes. For those interested in the synoptic problem, yet another view is offered by Ronald Huggins in *NovT* 34 (1992), pp. 1-22, 'Matthean Posteriority: A preliminary Proposal': he proposes the order Mark–Luke–Matthew. John Wenham follows up his book *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke* (London: Hodder, 1990) with an article identifying Luke with one of the seventy in *EQ* 63 (1991), pp. 3-44, 'The Identification of Luke'.

Pauline scholars continue vigorously to debate Paul and the law. C.E.B. Cranfield responds to H. Räisänen's view in *JSNT* 38 (1990), pp. 77-85, 'Give a Dog a Bad Name. A Note on H. Räisänen's *Paul and the Law*', and to James Dunn in *JSNT* 43 (1991), pp. 89-101, ' "The Works of the Law" in the Epistle to the Romans'. Dunn replies in *JSNT* 46 (1992), pp. 99-117, 'Yet Once More — "The Works of the Law": A Response'. The exchange of views is courteous and helpful, with Dunn pointing out that he now sees 'works of the law' in a broader sense than his earlier writings may have suggested. Others addressing the same issue include Robert Sloan in *NovT* 33 (1991), pp. 35-60, 'Paul and the Law: Why the Law Cannot Save' (emphasizing Paul's own experience of the law's failure), Thomas R. Schreiner in *NovT* 33, pp. 217-244, ' "Works of Law" in Paul' (defending the view that Paul is opposing legalism), Frank Thielman in *NTS* 38 (1992), pp. 235-253, 'The Coherence of Paul's View of the Law: The Evidence of First Corinthians'. Cranfield in the first article nicely comments on the difficulty of offering a systematic account of Paul's view of the law: our position 'is a bit like that of a person who knows nothing about giraffes but has to try to draw a picture of one, having nothing to go on but someone's sketch of a giraffe, of which much of the central area has been obliterated'.

Paul is not only interested in the law! 1 Corinthians provides lots of other important talking points. Thus Earle Ellis in *Interpretation* 44 (1990), pp. 132-144, 'Soma in First Corinthians', looks at Paul's key concept of the body and at his 'in Christ' language, commenting helpfully on the sacraments in Paul. (In *ExpT* 104 (1992), pp. 45-47, 'The Pastorals and Paul', Ellis defends Pauline authenticity. Compare his *Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society*, Paternoster, 1989.) Margaret MacDonald in *NTS* 36 (1990), pp. 161-181, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit: the Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7', offers a number of interesting (and some speculative and less persuasive) observations about a much misunderstood chapter: she develops the idea that the problem in Corinth was a group of charismatically excited women, who thought that 'no male or female in Christ' meant that they could act like men (*e.g.* worshipping with heads uncovered) and that they should remain celibate. They probably saw holiness in these terms, perhaps appealing to some of Jesus' teaching (*e.g.* Lk. 18:29-30; 20:34-35). Paul opposes a view which he sees as likely to produce immortality and to be socially controversial. Bruce Winter addresses an important topic in *TynB* 41 (1990), pp. 209-226, 'Theological and Ethical Responses to Religious Pluralism — 1 Corinthians 8–10'. Also on 1 Corinthians, D. Instone Brewer in *NTS* 38 (1992), pp. 554-565, '1 Corinthians 9.9-11: A Literal Interpretation of "Do not muzzle the ox" ', argues that Paul operates with 'the contemporary understanding of the term "ox" in the Law as a reference to all types of labourer, human and animal'.

As for Paul's other letters, the view that Romans 11:25-27 suggests a 'special' way of salvation for Israel other than through faith in Jesus is reviewed and rejected by Reider Hvalvik in *JSNT* 38 (1990), pp. 87-107, 'A "Sonderweg" for Israel. A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11.25-27'. Brian Rapske in *TynB* 42 (1991), pp. 3-30, 'The Importance of Helpers to the Imprisoned Paul in the Book of Acts', asks and answers interesting questions about Paul's companions. Paul Bowers in *JSNT* 44 (1991), pp. 89-111, 'Church and Mission in Paul', comes to the conclusion that 'for Paul . . . active missionary outreach . . . was properly the role of select Christian believers . . . rather than the responsibility of Christian churches as churches'. Paul requires churches to support missionaries and to live in love and in a way that is attractive and welcoming to the outsider. Carey C. Newman in *EQ* 64 (1992), pp. 61-74, 'Transforming Images of Paul: A Review Essay of Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert*', examines critically Segal's important reinterpretation of Paul's conversion in terms of Jewish mystical experience.

Broader studies of NT theology include Paul Rainbow's review of Larry Hurtado's book *One God, one Lord* (Fortress, 1988) in *NovT* 33 (1991), pp. 78-91. Rainbow queries the currently fashionable emphasis on Jewish mediatorial figures as an explanation of Christology, and finds OT Messianic passages, like Psalm 110 and Daniel 7, to be more relevant. Charles Scobie has a trilogy of valuable articles on biblical theology in the *TynB*, the first two on questions of method in 42 (1991), pp. 31-60, 163-194, on 'The Challenge of Biblical Theology' and 'The Structure of Biblical Theology', the third applying the method in 43 (1992), pp. 283-306, 'Israel and the Nations'.

Summary articles are often very useful to the student. Stephen Barton surveys recent work on the community/sociological context of the NT in *JTS* 43 (1992), pp. 399-427, 'The Communal Dimension of Earliest Christianity'. Stanley Porter, author of the book *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament* (Peter Lang, 1989), summarizes recent thinking about the Greek language in *ExpT* 103 (1992), pp. 202-208, 'Keeping up with Recent Studies 17. Greek Language and Linguistics'. Is the aorist a background tense and the imperfect a foreground tense? Craig Blomberg, *Themelios*'s reviews editor and author of the significant *Interpreting the Parables* (IVP, 1990), distils some of his thinking in *CBQ* 53 (1991), pp. 50-78, 'Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where are We and Where Do We Go from Here?'.

Abbreviations

CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ExpT	*Expository Times*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
TynB	*Tyndale Bulletin*