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God and family: from sociology to covenant theology

A Van Seters

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Loyalty is a family value that can no longer be taken for granted. Too many families are hurting within and outside of our churches. Our mobility has made the extended family a virtual anachronism. People are or feel alone, wondering who to trust and for how long. This syndrome forces upon us questions about the basis of family loyalty (is it conditional or unconditional?) and about the relation of our loyalty to God and our loyalty to family. This paper offers some biblical perspectives in response to these questions.

Hermeneutical approach

Before dealing with specific texts or themes, we need to clarify our approach to biblical interpretation. Negatively, the shape of the family in the past is not assumed to be definitive for the family today. What is *described* in Scripture is not necessarily *proscribed*.

Positively, therefore, we need first of all to see the family in the biblical tradition in terms of its social context through a sociological analysis. Then we will attempt to see how the family is interpreted theologically in the past as the clue for how we can interpret our family life in the present. This will involve an analysis of the covenants in the Old Testament, followed by the peculiar statements of Jesus about the family in relation to the place of the family in the church of the first century.

Sociological analysis of the family in the Old Testament¹

The patriarchal family was within a pastoral society where kinship relationships were highly developed.

The kinship system was unilineal and patrilineal: lineage was traced through one parent, namely, the father. Children belonged judicially to him though the role of the mother in the family was still of importance. Marriage was endogamous and, therefore, contracted between kin. In this way women, children and property were kept within the lineage. Marriages with outsiders were forbidden. The family configuration was composite and extended. It consisted of a man plus his wife and their children (nuclear family) plus another wife or wives and their children (composite family) plus married sons and their families, plus married grandsons and their families (extended family). The leadership in this configuration centred on the patriarch (the oldest male father) and the sign of belonging was the covenant sign of circumcision administered to all males in the family.

This same sociological pattern continued throughout the wilderness wandering, but now the extended family was further extended beyond households (which included servants and guests), nomadic camps (several households travelling together), and individual clans, to an association of clans who were, or regarded themselves as being, related to each other.

In the Settlement there was a shift from a pastoral, nomadic society to an agricultural one where non-kinship relationships were more highly developed while high kinship relationships continued. The family was increasingly seen with reference to a particular clan of which there were twelve in clearly defined geographical territories. Leadership within the family was still patriarchal but within or between the clans a charismatic figure became a new unifying head.

When the monarchy was established, some of the roles of the extended family or clan were taken over by the state (*e.g.* social security, social and economic order and some religious functions). Though political centralization increased, clan ties persisted and finally led to a divided nation. The king's position also tended to eclipse Yahweh's role as the 'patriarchal' head of Israel as a family. The prophets represented Yahweh's opposition to pos-

¹ This section relies largely on C. R. Taber's 'Kinship and Family', *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume* (ed. K. Crim, New York, 1976), pp. 519-524.

sible ways in which kings usurped his leadership. In the post-exilic community endogamy was enforced more strenuously while the basic family unit continued to be in the patriarchal pattern.

The predominant structure of the family in twentieth-century western societies is the nuclear family. The patriarchal tradition continues to be reflected in marriages where the bride accepts the surname of her husband, but this is changing. Increasingly, legal changes recognize the rights of women and traditional sex roles are no longer as sharply defined.

All of this seems to be accompanied by an increasing lack of family identity, a search for relationships in a social order in which kinship relations tend to be minimal. This means that for the average person the biblical picture of the family seems more distant. Appealing to the patriarchal pattern, therefore, as an antidote for what is ailing the family is not only unconvincing but inappropriate. The key to humanizing the family and recovering meaningful relationships does not lie in copying a particular social pattern, but in discerning the relationship of the family and the nation to God in successive covenants.

Covenant theology in relation to sociological factors

The primary expression of Yahweh's relationship to his people in the Old Testament was covenant. But there were different kinds of covenants.

In Genesis 12, 15, and 17 we have the Abrahamic covenant when God's people were viewed as an extended family. The sign of this covenant was circumcision.² The form was that of *promise* through Yahweh's gracious initiation and Abraham's response of *faith*. The promises of land and posterity were blessings conveyed through the patriarchal son, though the favoured son was not selected by merit but by lineal mores (Isaac the first-born) and free choice (Jacob instead of Esau, Judah instead of Reuben). This was clearly an unconditional covenant.

Exodus 19-24 presents us with a different kind of covenant. This was the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant. The people of God were now a nation of twelve clans in a patrilineal society. The covenant form seems best explained by reference to the Hittite suzerainty treaty,³ an agreement between

² Rolland De Vaux suggests that circumcision was (probably) originally a Canaanite marriage initiation rite which Israel copied but to which it gave a new religious interpretation. *Ancient Israel* (Toronto and London, 1961), pp. 46ff.

³ Cf. Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary* (tr. D. E. Green, Philadelphia, 1971).

unequals in which the suzerain graciously offered a conquered vassal certain blessings under specific conditions. Hence an integral ingredient of this covenant was law: the Decalogue, the Covenant Code of case law and later the Holiness Code (Leviticus). The sign of this covenant was the passover with probable antecedents in both the pastoral and agricultural feasts. This was a family celebration in which the children both participated and were taught the mighty acts of Yahweh. This was a conditional covenant in which the blessings or curses were related to obedience or disobedience respectively.

The third covenant in the Old Testament is the Davidic (2 Samuel 7, Psalm 89). In keeping with patrilineage a covenant relating to the monarchy was expressed in a dynastic succession from father to son. This meant that the covenant form, succession, was not based on merit as with the charismatic judges. The promises to David were not nullified by disobedience. This covenant was again unconditional and its sign was the anointing with oil. So one family was the appointed and anointed saviour of the nation. At least this was what was articulated in the covenant even though the historian of the Deuteronomistic History interpreted what happened to the nation and the monarchy in terms of the Sinaitic covenant.

Finally, there is the new covenant (Jeremiah 31-32; Ezek. 36). Was this a conditional or an unconditional covenant? It focused on an inner transformation by the Spirit to do the will of God and emphasized the importance of forgiveness. The family was left in the background here and anticipated the New Testament view of the relationship between God and people related not to sociological but spiritual factors.

Before drawing some conclusions from this brisque survey of Old Testament covenants, let's look at what the New Testament says about the family.

New Testament view of the family

The radical statements of Jesus

Three statements of Jesus express a very different approach to the family.⁴ Mark 13:12-13 is an apocalyptic vision of the end and the tribulation when 'brother will be set against brother, a father against his child, children against their parents. Only the one who endures to the end will be saved.' The *eschaton* involves family division. This means a separation of family from faith and tribe from

⁴ Cf. Roy Harrisville, 'Jesus and the Family', *Interpretation* 23 (1969), pp. 425-438.

religion against all assumptions of the Torah that these belong together. In the past the legal system encouraged and occasioned a faith-as-family structure. Jesus' vision of the end departs from this tradition.

In Luke 14: 26, Jesus gives a radical call to discipleship: 'If anyone does not hate father, mother, wife, children, brother or sister, even his own soul (self), he can't be my disciple.' This involves a concrete decision to separate from one's family. In both Judaism and the Old Testament the family was considered the source of life (kin have the same life). The family is the 'soul' of life (*cf.* 1 Sa. 18: 18) and allegiance to family was considered almost as high as allegiance to God. But for Jesus, discipleship supersedes family allegiance.

The final passage focuses on discipleship *vis-à-vis* funeral obligations (Mt. 8: 21-22). Someone apparently wants to follow Jesus but makes a preliminary request: 'Let me first go and bury my father.' To this Jesus replies, 'Follow me and let the dead bury the dead.' Now according to Jewish law a person had an obligation to bury a relative. This was considered so paramount that it took precedence even over religious duties. So once again discipleship supersedes family allegiances.

From his consideration of these three passages Roy Harrisville concludes: 'These three utterances mark the end of family as religion or faith as nation and their underlying legal system.'⁶ J. J. von Allmen presses the matter further. For him Jesus enunciates God's call to people to embrace the kingdom. With the presence of the kingdom the family ceases to be decisive.⁸ Unlike the earlier covenants with Abraham, Moses and David, the new covenant is not limited in the New Testament to family and nation, biologically or ethnically. The new covenant focusses, rather, on the ruling of God in the lives of believers and disciples.

Tradition teaching and Jesus' extension of it

But there is another dimension in the teaching of Jesus which moves in a different direction. Five times in the synoptic gospels Jesus urges children to honour father and mother. In two of these passages (Mt. 15: 4-7 and Mk. 7: 9-12) there is an additional attack on those who would attempt to place religious offerings ahead of family obligations. Such people are called 'hypocrites'. Jesus' words clearly intensify the obedience-to-parents-commandment above any cultic interpretation of duty to God.

The centrality of the family in the first-century church

In addition, throughout the whole of the New Testament the value of home and family is extremely important. The healed were not urged to be followers, but were sent home. Clearly within the family of God there continued to be room for the human family. In fact, households originally formed the centres of worship. But the church as extended family was no longer based on kinship but on a commitment of faith. Yet it is clear from Ephesians 5 and 6 that the family continued to be vital for the church's corporate fellowship and public witness. The whole church was to manifest the harmony of love, submission, obedience and respect that was to be natural in a household. As this was nurtured in the church, there would be a developing of trust arising out of commitment to Christ. These qualities, so necessary to the church's life, were to be communicated through the family with due recognition that authority, love and care came from God and faith and obedience were the appropriate responses of believers.

The radical call to discipleship and the centrality of the family

Jesus' radical call to discipleship would certainly have been interpreted by his contemporaries as being in conflict with the central place of the family in Judaism and Old Testament religion.

But a careful understanding of the intended relationship between the law and the Sinaitic covenant allows a different interpretation. When law and covenant are separated one ends up either with legalism (law without covenant) or casuistry (covenant without law). Against the former, Jesus claimed that filial piety (faith as family) was not a good in itself; to have the law was not, by itself, a prerequisite for discipleship. On the other hand, one should not put honouring God against honouring parents as though the commandment concerning the latter had been voided. Jesus was saying that you can't ask the question of when parents can be disobeyed and then look in Scripture for the answer. That's casuistry. Of course, there may be times when there does seem to be an apparent conflict between choosing between parents and God. But that conflict can't be resolved through a casuistic handling of Scripture.

In contrast to both legalism and casuistry, Jesus holds law and covenant together. The relationship that exists through the covenant is concretized by the law. That's the relationship between the covenant at Sinai and the law expressed through the

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

⁸ 'Family' in *A Companion to the Bible* (ed. J. J. von Allmen, New York and Oxford, 1958), pp. 110ff.

various codes. But the new covenant is not without law; it is the law within. The result is that, within the new covenant, the disciple acts concretely and leaves the judgment up to God. One no longer has a legal verification but acts in freedom, yet this freedom is one of accepting one's dependency as a disciple. So discipleship and the community of disciples transcends all other loyalties. This is what Jesus implies when, in Mark 3: 31, 35, he says that his real mother, brothers and sisters are those who do the will of God.

The continuing importance of the old covenants

The New Testament is in continuity with the Torah story. The theology implicit in the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants continue to speak to us and our families.

The calling of Abraham, his response of faith and then the receiving of a promise is not tied exclusively to the sociological configuration of the original context. In John 6, Romans 4 and Hebrews 11, this is a paradigm for the first-century church. The unconditional nature of God's acceptance, central to this covenant, continues to be a key to humanizing our family relationships today. We, in our families, need to know that we are unconditionally accepted by one another, there are no limits to our love or feeling of being loved. This

dimension arises out of and is furthered by our experience of God's acceptance.

The choosing of the Israelites as a 'kingdom of priests', 'God's own possession' was conditional upon their being obedient (Ex. 19). This covenant was also picked up in the New Testament, especially in 1 Peter 2: 9-10, in identifying the nature and purpose of the church. There is no faith that does not incorporate obedience. Within the family we cannot separate trust from faithfulness. Where husbands and wives keep faith with each other, children have a model for obedience.

Hebrews 5: 8 and 9 emphasize not the faith but the obedience of Jesus in his redemptive activity on our behalf. He inspires us to obedience, not as a way of earning his grace but of responding gratefully to him for it. That response will inevitably, if it is real, be reflected in our family relationships.

The paradox of our being both unconditionally accepted and conditionally related to God (and within our families) is continued by the new covenant with its openness to both the law and the Spirit within, as well as the promise of a relationship that nothing can destroy. Loyalty encompasses both the conditional and the unconditional and remains a central value for the survival and maturing of the family. This is especially true when such loyalty is nurtured by God's *hesed* or loyalty, a term related to both kinds of covenant.

The Reverse Order of Ezra/Nehemiah Reconsidered

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The most important controversy which has arisen in regard to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is the question of the order of Ezra and Nehemiah. According to the traditional view, Ezra arrived in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (Ezr. 7: 7) in 458 BC, and Nehemiah arrived in the same king's twentieth year (Neh. 2: 1) in 445.

Many scholars have adopted a reverse order in which after Nehemiah arrived in 445, Ezra arrived in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II in 398. Other scholars have favoured an intermediate position which maintains the contemporaneity of the men but places Ezra later than the traditional view in the twenty-seventh or the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes I, that is in 438 or 428.

There are numerous lines of arguments which have been adduced in favour of the reverse order. We shall consider these arguments, and then the counter-arguments of those who are in favour of

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either the traditional or the intermediate position.

1. The High Priests

Advocates of a reverse order assume that the list of high priests in Ezra-Nehemiah is relatively complete and that one can identify certain of these with individuals mentioned by Josephus.

a. Jeshua

Jeshua was the high priest who was the contemporary of Zerubbabel during the reign of Cyrus (Ezr. 2: 2; Hag. 1: 1; Zc. 3: 1, *etc.*)

b. Joiakim

Joiakim was evidently the high priest during the reign of Darius I (late sixth century BC). Those who assume that the list of priests is complete assume that the same Joiakim had an unusually long period in office down to the mid-fifth century (Neh. 12: 12-21, 25-26).

c. Eliashib

Eliashib was the high priest at the time of Nehemiah, assisting in the rebuilding of the wall (Neh. 3: 1, 20-21; 13:28).

A priest named Eliashib was guilty of defiling the temple by assigning rooms to Tobiah the Ammonite (Neh. 13: 4, 7). Scholars disagree as to whether this Eliashib was the same as the high priest.

d. Joiada

Joiada was the son of Eliashib (Neh. 12: 11). It is uncertain from Nehemiah 13: 28 whether Joiada or his father was high priest at the time of Nehemiah's second return.

e. Johanan

Son of Joiada, grandson of Eliashib. (i) Ezra 10: 6 mentions that Ezra went to the chamber of 'Jehohanan the son of Eliashib.' (ii) Nehemiah 12: 11 mentions the son of Joiada, named Jonathan, who was the father of Jaddua. (iii) Nehemiah 12: 22 mentions a Johanan after Joiada and before Jaddua, and Nehemiah 12: 23 identifies Johanan as the son of Eliashib. (iv) Elephantine papyri (Cowley 30: 18; 31: 17, dated 411-410 BC) refer to Johanan as high priest (*ANET*, p. 492). (v) Josephus *Ant.* XI. 297ff. refers to a Johanan who killed his brother Jesus.

Are these five references all to the same individual? Scholars who argue that this was the case reason that in Nehemiah 12: 11 Jonathan is an error for Johanan, and that Nehemiah 12: 23 should mean that Johanan was the descendant (*i.e.* grandson) rather than the son of Eliashib. They would conclude that since the Elephantine papyri indicate that Johanan was high priest in 410 BC, it is much more likely that Ezra came 7 years later in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II (398) rather than 48 years earlier under Artaxerxes I (458).¹

It must be admitted that if these identifications are correct, this line of reasoning provides one of the strongest arguments for reversing the order of Ezra and Nehemiah.

On the other hand, there are a number of serious objections to such identifications. Would Ezra have consorted with a known murderer, as he would have if he had arrived in 398?² This would be the case if we were to identify Ezra's Jehohanan with the Johanan of Josephus.

Such an identification would be further undermined if Jehohanan was indeed the son of Eliashib rather than the grandson as some have proposed.³

It must be remembered that Jehohanan (Johanan) was a most common name; it is used by 14 different individuals in the Old Testament, 5 in Maccabees, and 17 in Josephus.⁴ It should also be noted that in Ezra 10: 6 Jehohanan is not identified as a high priest. C. G. Tuland concludes his analysis of the data as follows:

Thus far three basic differences exclude the identification of the high-priestly Jehohanan-Eliashib 'set' (of Neh. 3: 1, 20, 21; 12: 10, 11, 22, 23) found in the Aramaic papyri, Cowley Nos. 30 and 31, with the ordinary priests of Ezra 10: 6: 1. the difference in rank and title; 2. the difference in office; 3. the difference in family relationship.⁵

¹ P. R. Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon and Persia* (London, 1970), pp. 193, 285-86.

² P. R. Ackroyd, *Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah* (London, 1973), p. 258.

³ J. R. Porter, 'Son or grandson, Ezr. X.6', *JTS* 17 (1966), pp. 54-67.

⁴ W. M. F. Scott, 'Nehemiah-Ezra?' *ExpT* 58 (1946-47), p. 265.

⁵ C. G. Tuland, 'Ezra-Nehemiah or Nehemiah-Ezra?' *AUSS* 12 (1974), pp. 58-59.

f. Jaddua

A Jaddua, the son of Johanan, is mentioned in Nehemiah 12: 11, 22. Josephus (*Ant.* XI. 302ff.) identified this Jaddua with the high priest at the time of Alexander's invasion of Palestine.

Some conservative scholars who have tried to maintain the traditional order of Ezra/Nehemiah, have argued that the biblical Jaddua may have been a young man *c.* 400, who lived to an unusually advanced age in 333/332 BC.⁶ Such a supposition seems most unlikely.

It is probable that Josephus was quite mistaken and identified wrongly the Hellenistic Jaddua with his grandfather. Williamson notes that there are 'strong grounds for believing that Josephus "reduced" the Persian period by at least as much as

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two generations'.⁷ He may have been misled by the fact that there was an Artaxerxes and a Darius both in the fifth century and also in the fourth century.

Inspired by the evidence of papyronymy in the Samaria papyri, F. M. Cross has proposed a new reconstruction which offers a plausible harmonization of the biblical and extra-biblical data.⁸ Papyronymy or the repetition of the same name in alternating generations so that grandsons are named after their grandfathers was a common practice. B. Mazar has sought to show that the name Tobiah alternates over nine generations. In a recently published Ammonite inscription the royal name Amminadab recurs over six generations. The Samaria papyri indicate that the name Sanballat alternated over six generations.

Cross's reconstruction assumes that a pair of similar names has fallen out of our extant sources. His reconstructed list would include:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Contemporary of</i>
Jeshua	570	Zerubbabel
Joiakim ⁹	545	
Eliashib I	540	
Johanan I	520	Ezra
Eliashib II	495	Nehemiah
Joiada	470	
Johanan II	445	
Jaddua I ¹⁰	420	
Johanan III	395	
Jaddua II	370	Alexander

⁶ C. F. Keil, *The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther* (Grand Rapids, n.d.), p. 147.

⁷ H. G. M. Williamson, 'The Historical Value of Josephus' Antiquities XI.297-301', *JTS* 28 (1977), pp. 49-66.

⁸ F. M. Cross, Jr., 'A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration', *JBL* 94 (1975), pp. 4-18; *idem*, *Int* 29 (1975), pp. 187-203.

⁹ In Cross's reconstruction every high priest is the son of the preceding, except for Eliashib I, who is listed as the brother of Joiakim. But Nehemiah 12: 10 lists Eliashib as Joiakim's son. This point is raised by G. Widengren, 'Persian Period', *Israelite and Judaeon History*, ed. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (Philadelphia, 1977), p. 509.

¹⁰ As Jaddua is a caritative or endearing form of Joiada, Cross lists in alternate generations: Joiada, Jaddua II, and Jaddua III. This may confuse the average reader, however.

By this reconstruction Cross resolves two key issues. Ezra's contemporary is Johanan I, the son of Eliashib I, and not Johanan II, who is mentioned in the Elephantine papyri, as advocates of a reverse order have maintained. The Jaddua mentioned by Nehemiah would have been the grandfather of Jaddua II, who was the high priest at the time of Alexander.¹¹

2. The Contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah

As the text stands, Nehemiah and Ezra are noted together in Nehemiah 8: 9 at the reading of the law and in Nehemiah 12: 26, 36 at the dedication of the wall. As the name Nehemiah is lacking in the 1 Esdras 9: 49 parallel to Nehemiah 8: 9, it has been argued that Nehemiah's name has been inserted in the latter passage as a gloss. It has also been argued that Nehemiah 12: 26, 36 were also added to the original text. J. A. Emerton has asserted, 'No meeting between them is recorded and they never both play active parts in the same action; one is active, and at most, the other's name is mentioned in passing.'¹²

But it is not the case that one can delete either Ezra or Nehemiah from Nehemiah 12: 26 without any consequences, for to do so would leave one of the processions without a leader.

The fact that the references to the contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah are few is readily explicable. Bright points out:

The Chronicler's interests were predominantly ecclesiastical, and to these Nehemiah was peripheral. Nehemiah, on the other hand, intended his memoirs as a personal *apologia* not as a history of the contemporary Jewish community; he was concerned exclusively with what he himself had done.¹³

We have other examples of contemporary Old Testament figures who do not refer to each other, for example, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah.¹⁴

3. Meremoth the son of Uriah of the clan of Hakkoz

Ezra 2: 61-62/Nehemiah 7: 63-64 list the family of Hakkoz as one of those which was not able to prove its priestly status. In Ezra 8: 33 a Meremoth, the son of Uriah, from this family, is designated as one of the priests in charge of the temple treasury. In Nehemiah 3: 4, 21, we also have a Meremoth, the son of Uriah, who builds a double portion of the wall. Without a priestly title, he is evidently considered a layman.

Supporters of the reverse order argue that this suggests that Meremoth in his youth aided in the building of the wall, and in his old age (47 years

¹¹ Cross's reconstruction has been accepted by S. Talmon, 'Ezra and Nehemiah', *IDB*, Supplementary Volume, pp. 327-328.

¹² J. A. Emerton, 'Did Ezra Go to Jerusalem in 428 BC?' *JTS* 17 (1966), p. 16; N. H. Snaith, 'The Date of Ezra's Arrival in Jerusalem', *ZAW* 63 (1952), p. 63.

¹³ J. Bright, 'The Date of Ezra's Mission to Jerusalem', *Yehezkel Kaufmann Jubilee Volume*, ed. M. Haran (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 86; cf. M. W. Leesberg, 'Ezra and Nehemiah: A Review of the Return and Reform', *CTM* 33 (1962), p. 85.

¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* XI. 158 has Ezra passing away before the arrival of Nehemiah, a state of affairs which has not been taken seriously by scholars.

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later in 398) served as a treasurer. They suggest that Meremoth's family must have regained its priestly status after Nehemiah's time at Ezra's coming.

On the other hand, it can be also argued that the situation may be explained on the basis of the traditional order. K. Koch suggests, 'It seems as if Ezra acknowledged Meremoth at the time of his arrival in Jerusalem, but deposed him shortly afterward while carrying out his investigation.'¹⁵

Simpler is Kellermann's suggestion that despite the similar names and patronymics, we have to do with two individuals, one from a priestly and one from a lay family. Though Meremoth is not a very common name (three or four occurrences), Uriah is more common (six or seven occurrences).¹⁶

4. The Committee of Four

According to the proponents of the reverse order, it was Nehemiah who first appointed a commission of four temple treasurers (Neh. 13: 13). When Ezra arrived he found a similar committee (Ezr. 8: 33).

But it may be the case that Ezra earlier found a committee on his arrival, and that Nehemiah merely filled an existing committee with trustworthy men. The two committees, it should be noted, were not identical. Ezra's committee was made up of two priests and two Levites, but Nehemiah's was made up of a priest, a scribe, a Levite, and a layman.¹⁷

5. The list of wall builders

It is quite striking that we cannot identify with any certainty any of the wall builders of Nehemiah 3 with those listed as returning with Ezra (Ezr. 8: 1-20), which we might have expected if Ezra preceded Nehemiah. Such names as Meshullam (Neh. 3: 4, 30; *cf.* Ezr. 8: 16) may be too common for certain identification. Hattush in Nehemiah 3: 10 is not the same as the Hattush in Ezra 8: 2-3.

Ezra himself may have been too old to have participated in the rebuilding of the wall. A. E. Cundall suggests, 'But Neh. 3 mentions only the chief builders, who are likely to have been longstanding residents in 'Jerusalem.'¹⁸

Tuland believes that we can identify Hashabiah and Sherebiah—Levites who accompanied Ezra (Ezr. 8: 18-19)—with the Hashabiah and Sherebiah who signed the covenant according

¹⁵ K. Koch, 'Ezra and the Origins of Judaism', *JSS* 19 (1974), p. 190.

¹⁶ U. Kellermann, 'Erwägungen zum Problem der Esradatierung', *ZAW* 80 (1968), p. 69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁸ A. E. Cundall, 'Ezra and Nehemiah', *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, ed. D. Guthrie *et al.* (London, 1970), p. 396.

to Nehemiah 10: 9, 11-12. They could not have been Ezra's travelling companions in 398 as they were already leaders in 445.¹⁹

6. The thirteen-year gap

As the present text is arranged, after Ezra's arrival in 458 and his activities in that first year, we hear nothing further about his ministry until the public reading of the law some 13 years later (Neh. 8: 1—8). A number of scholars would sever Ezra's association with Nehemiah and place the reading of the law by Ezra in his first year.

G. L. Archer responds:

Yet Nehemiah 8 only records a solemn reading of the law in a public meeting on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles. It by no means implies that Ezra had not been diligently teaching the law to smaller groups of disciples and Levites during the preceding twelve years.²⁰

Less satisfactory are suggestions that Ezra may have returned to Mesopotamia, or that he may have fallen out of favour with the Persians by being associated with the attempt to rebuild the wall (Ezr. 4: 7-23).

7. The 'wall' of Ezra 9: 9

Whereas Nehemiah found the defences of Jerusalem destroyed (Neh. 1: 3; 2: 13, 17), Ezra thanked God for a 'wall' at Ezra 9: 9 (KJV). Bowman and others have used this verse to argue that Ezra must have come after Nehemiah had restored the wall.²¹

However, in Ezra 9: 9 the word used is not the usual word for a city wall, *ḥo[^]ma[^]*, but rather the word *gader*, which ordinarily refers to the enclosure of fields or vineyards. The LXX renders the word by *phragmos*. Moreover the fact that it is said to be 'in Judah and in Jerusalem' must surely mean that the word is used here in the figurative sense of 'protection' as the RSV (*cf.* NEB, JB) has rendered it.²²

8. The listing of Nehemiah before Ezra

Nehemiah is listed before Ezra in Nehemiah 12: 26. This fact impressed Albright, who adopted the intermediate position of dating Ezra's coming after Nehemiah's arrival but in association with the latter's second administration.²³

Other scholars, however, believe that this datum

¹⁹ Tuland, pp. 59-60.

²⁰ G. L. Archer, Jr, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (revised edn.; Chicago, 1974), p. 412.

²¹ R. A. Bowman, 'The Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah', *JB* III, p. 562.

²² L. H. Brockington, *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* (London, 1969), p. 32.

²³ W. F. Albright, 'The Date and Personality of the Chronicler', *JBL* 40 (1921), p. 121.

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has no bearing on the question of chronological sequence. As Harrison points out:

That Nehemiah may have been mentioned before Ezra in one particular passage (Neh. 12: 26) has actually little bearing upon the larger chronological problem, since it appears fairly obvious that Nehemiah would in any event have taken precedence in his own memoirs in his capacity as civil governor of Judaea.²⁴

9. The population of Jerusalem

It has been argued that whereas Nehemiah found Jerusalem almost uninhabited and took steps to repopulate it (Neh. 7:4; 11: 1-3; 13: 10-13), Ezra came to a city that was well populated (Ezr. 1: 1ff.). Therefore Ezra must have come after Nehemiah's repopulation programme.

But the context of Ezra 10: 1ff. implies that the large congregation of those who were sorry for becoming involved in mixed marriages came from throughout Judah.²⁵

10. The problem of mixed marriages

Both Ezra (9-10) and Nehemiah (13: 23-28) deal with the problem of mixed marriages. Ezra adopted a more rigorous approach, demanding the dissolution of all such marriages. Apart from the expulsion of Joiada, Nehemiah forbade any future mixed marriages.

Brockington holds that Ezra's handling most naturally follows Nehemiah's attempt, and regards this as 'the strongest argument' for the reverse order.²⁶ Furthermore, Bowman argues that the situation faced by Nehemiah must have been one of longstanding, since he found the children speaking in foreign dialects (Neh. 13: 23-24).

As to the latter argument, if Ezra's reforms took place in 457—some 25 years before Nehemiah's actions upon his second return after 432—this would certainly be time enough for children of some age to have been born to renewed mixed marriages. The idea that a more rigorous handling of the problem should come later is purely subjective. Perhaps a less rigorous course was felt to be more effective by Nehemiah.²⁷

11. The alleged failure of Ezra

Closely allied to the preceding argument is the often expressed idea that if Ezra preceded Nehemiah, he must have 'failed' as Nehemiah had to correct the same abuse. (Of course, the converse argument could be made, that if Nehemiah preceded Ezra, the former 'failed'.) For example, H. H. Rowley avers:

²⁴ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London, 1970), p. 197.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 196; Kellerman, pp. 65-68.

²⁶ Brockington, pp. 19-20.

²⁷ J. A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans* (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 64.

It is curious that some of those who are the most zealous to defend the chronological order of Ezra and Nehemiah as it appears in the Bible are willing to do so at the cost of jettisoning the Biblical representation of the character of Ezra, and the reduction of him to the stature of an incompetent who had to be rescued by Nehemiah after his failure.²⁸

It should be noted that God's spokesmen do not 'fail' when they faithfully deliver God's messages. The people who disobey are the ones who 'fail'. In the short period of time during his absence after his first term, numerous abuses appeared which Nehemiah had to correct during his second term (Neh. 13: 4-31). Cross remarks drily:

I am not impressed by such an argument. One may say that all the prophets and reformers failed in biblical history. A fairly close analogy is found in the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah, both of which failed.²⁹

12. The date of the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah

Inasmuch as the text as it now stands presents Ezra's priority over Nehemiah, if indeed Ezra came later the confusion must have arisen at a later date removed from the events, some hold in the third century BC. P. R. Ackroyd writes, 'But if, as seems more probable, the Chronicler was active in about the middle of the fourth century, not more than a generation after this late dating for Ezra (in 398), then the disorder would be very difficult to explain.'³⁰

Other scholars are convinced that the evidence points to an even earlier date for the work of the Chronicler. Cross concludes, 'The fact that all genealogies in Chr₃ end shortly before 400 BC virtually eliminates the popular view that Ezra followed Nehemiah in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes II, 398 BC.'³¹

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13. The Political Situation

Inasmuch as the early years of Artaxerxes I were troubled by a major revolt in Egypt, some have questioned whether Ezra would have been sent on an unprotected journey in 458. In the year 459/458 the king sent a 300,000-man army against Egypt. The roads would have been so filled with troop caravans, it has been argued, that there would have been no room for Ezra's caravan.³²

On the other hand, it could be argued that the presence of such troops would have made the caravan safe from robbers. Indeed, the precarious situation in Egypt probably made it desirable for the Persians to have a friendly agent in Palestine. F. Heichelheim, noting that Dor on the Palestinian coast is found on the Athenian tribute list for 454, concluded: 'If we

²⁸ H. H. Rowley, *Men of God* (London, 1963), p. 242.

²⁹ Cross, *Int*, p. 198, n. 60; *cf.* 201, n. 61.

³⁰ Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon*, p. 194; *cf.* Brockington, p. 32.

³¹ Cross, *JBL*, p. 14, n. 60; *cf.* Kellermann, p. 75. Others favouring a date of *c.* 400 for the work of the Chronicler, including Ezra and Nehemiah, are: W. Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemiah* (Tübingen, 1949), p. 25; J. M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Garden City, N.Y., 1965), p. lxx. H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 86, favours the Persian period.

³² V. Pavlovský, 'Die Chronologie der Tätigkeit Esdras', *Bib* 38 (1957), pp. 284-285.

are right the new strength which Ezra was authorized to give... was urgently needed from the point of view of the Persian government to make defections in Palestine to the Athenians less dangerous...³³ Another classical scholar, J. L. Myres, concurs: 'In particular, the very wide authority given to Ezra in 458 reflects the general uneasiness and the anxieties of the Persian government, during the revolt of Inaros in the Delta.'³⁴

At the same time, B. Reicke notes that the political situation in Palestine in 398 would have made Ezra's mission most unlikely. When Johanan, the high priest, killed his brother (Josephus, *Ant.* XI. 297-301), the Persian governor Bagoas imposed a penalty upon Jerusalem for seven years. 'This temple crisis under Bagoas can simply not be squared with Ezra's mission to restore the Temple, supported juridically and monetarily by the Persian throne (Ezr. 7: 6, 11-28).'³⁵

14. Supporters of the Reverse Order

It was in 1889 that M. Vernes first suggested the reverse order. But it was primarily the Catholic scholar, A. van Hoonacker, who gave the view currency in a series of publications from 1890 to 1924.³⁶ The ablest exposition of this point of view was published in 1948 by H. H. Rowley.³⁷ In 1948 only a minority of scholars, none of them German, favoured this view.

Originally Rowley listed 24 scholars (between 1908 and 1945) who were adherents of the reverse order, among whom were: L. W. Batten, S. Mowinckel, W. O. E. Oesterley, S. A. Cook, H. W. Robinson, N. H. Snaith, and J. Pedersen. In the 1965 reprint of his article he listed the names of 23 additional scholars who favoured this order. Since 1945 we can add: P. R. Ackroyd, D. Baldi, J. Bonsirven, R. A. Bowman, H. Cazelles, O. Eissfeldt, G. Fohrer, K. Galling, N. Gottwald, J. Gray, E. Hamrick, C. Jean, A. Kapeirud, E. G. Kraeling, P. Lemaire, M. Metzger, F. Michaeli, R. North, G. Rinaldi, and H. Schneider (supplementing Rowley's listing).

In 1970 W. F. Stinespring affirmed:

Indeed, the placing of Ezra after Nehemiah may now be spoken of as part of 'critical orthodoxy,' having been incorporated into such works as *The International Critical Commentary*, *The Interpreter's Bible*, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, and into much of the church-school literature of the leading Protestant churches in North America. The great German introductions of Eissfeldt and Sellin-Fohrer, now translated into English (1965 and 1968 respectively), have also joined the chorus of assent.³⁸

³³ F. Heichelheim, 'Ezra's Palestine and Periclean Athens', *ZRGG* 3 (1951), pp. 251-253. Cf. also M. Smith, 'Ezra', *Ex Orbe Religionum*, ed. C. J. Bleeker *et al.* (Leiden, 1972), I, pp. 141-143.

³⁴ J. L. Myres, 'Persia, Greece and Israel', *PEQ* 85 (1953), p. 13.

³⁵ B. Reicke, *The New Testament Era* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 16.

³⁶ A. van Hoonacker, 'La succession chronologique Nehemie-Esdras', *RB* 32 (1923), pp. 481-494; 33 (1924), pp. 33-64.

³⁷ H. H. Rowley, 'The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah', *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, ed. S. Löwinger and J. Somogyi (Budapest, 1948), pp. 117-149; reprinted in *The Servant of the Lord* (London, 1952; reprinted Oxford, 1965), pp. 135-168.

³⁸ W. F. Stinespring, 'Prolegomenon' to C. C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (New York, 1970 reprint), p. xiv.

15. Supporters of the Intermediate Date

Some scholars have attempted to retain the contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah, and yet place Ezra at a later date by emending the number '7' of Ezra 7: 7 to read either '27' or '37'. The former would yield a date for Ezra's arrival in 438 and the latter in 428.

The former emendation was proposed by J. Wellhausen in 1895, and the latter was suggested by J. Markwart in 1896. The first alternative has had relatively few supporters. These would include T. K. Cheyne, R. H. Kennett, H. Lusseau, O. Procksch, and in recent times F. F. Bruce.³⁹

More attractive is the reading '37', since both the Hebrew word for '30' and the word for '7' begin with the letter 'š', it has been argued that the

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former word may have dropped out by the process known as *homoiarkton*. The most influential advocate of this position was W. F. Albright, who settled on this date in 1947.⁴⁰ Prior to that time he had vacillated, favouring 398 in 1921, 432 in 1932, and 398 in 1940.

A persuasive exposition of this view was set forth in an article by John Bright, published in 1960.⁴¹ Other scholars who would support this date which would associate Ezra with Nehemiah's second term as governor include: D. N. Freedman, H. Kreissig, C. Kuhl, M. Leesberg, J. M. Myers, M. Noth, V. Pavlovský, D. F. Robinson, and W. Rudolph. Though this position avoids the objections raised against the reverse position, there is no textual support for the proposed emendation.⁴²

16. Supporters of the traditional order

The traditional order has never lacked defenders. In 1948 Rowley wrote, 'Despite this impressive support (for the reverse order), this view has never been unchallenged, and there have always been scholars of eminence—even more numerous than its supporters—who have refused to adopt it, but have adhered to the traditional view.'⁴³ In 1965 Rowley listed 26 scholars who supported the traditional order, including B. D. Eerdmans, J. de Frame, C. H. Gordon, R. Kittel, J. Morgenstern,⁴⁴ H. H. Schaefer, W. M. Scott, R. de Vaux, and E. J. Young. In 1968 U. Kellermann defended the traditional position by seeking to refute point by point the arguments for the reverse order.⁴⁵

³⁹ F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations* (Grand Rapids, 1963), p. 110.

⁴⁰ W. F. Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York, 1963), pp. 45-55, 62-65, 113. This is a revision of a text which was originally written in 1947.

⁴¹ Bright (*op. cit.*, note 13).

⁴² Kellermann, pp. 75-77.

⁴³ Rowley, *Ignace Goldziher*, p. 122. An important defence of the traditional order is J. S. Wright, *The Date of Ezra's Coming to Jerusalem* (London, 1946).

[Now online at http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_ezra_wright.html]

⁴⁴ J. Morgenstern, 'The Dates of Ezra and Nehemiah', *JSS* 7 (1962), pp. 1-11.

⁴⁵ Kellermann (*op. cit.*, note 16), *ZAW* 80 (1968), pp. 55-87.

Within the last decade other important scholars have voiced their dissatisfaction with the arguments for the reverse order and have expressed support for the traditional view. Morton Smith, for example, comments: 'The minor reasons commonly given for dating Ezra after Nehemiah are all of them trivial and have been disposed of by Kellermann.'⁴⁶ F. M. Cross also writes, 'Of the many arguments brought forward to support the position that Ezra followed Nehemiah to Jerusalem, most are without weight.'⁴⁷ S. Talmon suggests, 'Such tenuous argumentation does not warrant a reordering of the biblical presentation... Today a more optimistic appreciation of the biblical presentation seems to be gaining ground.'⁴⁸ H. Tadmor notes, 'Actually, more methodological problems are posed by assuming that Ezra came after Nehemiah than by accepting the view that he preceded Nehemiah.'⁴⁹

In addition to those listed by Rowley and Kellermann, other scholars who have assumed the traditional order include: Y. Aharoni, G. Archer, M. Avi-Yonah, A. E. Cundall, M. Dandamayev, R. Harrison, S. Herrmann, S. Horn, Y. Kaufmann, B. Kelly, K. A. Kitchen, B. Mazar, M. Meauleau, B. Reicke, M. Segal, J. Slotki, C. Tuland, J. Weinberg, L. Wood, and K. Yates.

In summary, though the reverse order of Nehemiah before Ezra which has dominated for over two decades still has many eminent supporters, there has been within the last decade a remarkable development of support among equally distinguished scholars for the traditional order of Ezra before Nehemiah.

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⁴⁶ Smith, 'Ezra', p. 143; *idem*, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York, 1971), p. 122.

⁴⁷ Cross, *JBL* 94 (1975), p. 14, n. 60.

⁴⁸ Talmon, p. 320.

⁴⁹ H. Tadmor, 'The Babylonian Exile and the Restoration', *A History of the Jewish People*, ed. H. Ben-Sasson (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), p. 174.

The sword of the Spirit: the meaning of inspiration

Donald Bloesch

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Once again the church is being compelled to re-examine its position on the authority and inspiration of the Bible. We are told in 2 Timothy 3: 16 that 'all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness'. The Greek word for 'inspired' is *theopneustos*, which means 'breathed out by God'. The writers of Scripture were not simply assisted by the Spirit in the task of sharing their spiritual insights. Instead, they were elected by God as his instruments to ensure a trustworthy witness to his revelation in the events of biblical history culminating in Jesus Christ. 2 Peter says that 'no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God' (2 Pet. 1: 21; cf. 2 Sa. 23: 2).

When it is said that 'all scripture is inspired by God', the reference is not only to the Old Testament documents but also to those of the New Testament, some of which were even then circulating in written form. This is confirmed in 1 Timothy 5: 18 where citations are drawn from New Testament scriptures. To be sure, the canon of the sacred writings had not yet been determined, but the church has wisely interpreted 2 Timothy 3: 16 as covering the whole of the canon.

The purpose of inspiration is made clear in verses 15-17 of 2 Timothy 3: to lead people to Christ and to instruct them in the way of Christ. God inspired the Scriptures in order to give sound teaching concerning the faith and to equip the people of God to bear witness to their faith (cf. Jn. 20: 31).

Because the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of the Scriptures, he has been regarded in the tradition of the church catholic as the primary author of Scripture, and the prophets and apostles the secondary authors. But the Spirit is not only a past author but a present teacher, for it is he who

opens our eyes and guides us to the truth attested in Scripture (cf. Jn. 16: 13; 1 Cor. 2: 12-16).

Under the impact of the Spirit, the word of God becomes sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing the marrow of our souls (Heb. 4: 12; cf. Is. 49: 2; Eph. 6: 17; Rev. 1: 16). Like a blade with two sharp edges, it always cuts with one side or the other, that is, in a saving or judging manner (cf. Je. 23: 29ff., Jn. 12: 47-48; 2 Cor. 2: 15f.). God's Word is also likened to a fire which devours all that stands in its path and to a hammer 'which breaks the rock in pieces' (Je. 5: 14; 23: 29). The Lord chastises and afflicts his people, however, only so that they might return to him in repentance and faith. He reproves in order to strengthen, he kills in order to make alive (cf. Is. 51: 17-23; Ho. 6: 1; Pr. 3: 11, 12; Heb. 12: 5, 6). The wrath of God is in the service of his love; his word of judgment prepares the way for his word of grace (cf. Ps. 30: 6-12; La. 3: 31, 32; Is. 54: 7-8; Rom. 5: 20, 21).

On the basis of the scriptural testimony with regard to its own inspiration, the church has been led to affirm the infallibility of Holy Scripture. By this is meant that Scripture gives a *sure* and *certain* word concerning the will and purpose of God made known in Jesus Christ. These sacred writings, it is said, 'are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 3: 15, NIV). They unfailingly lead to Christ and to the salvation that he offers. To affirm the infallibility of Scripture means to believe that Scripture does not lead astray, it does not deceive (cf. Ps. 119: 86; Pr. 8: 8). Its witness is compelling and decisive, for it proceeds from God and is mightily used by God to save those who believe (cf. Is. 55: 10-11; 1 Cor. 1: 21; Heb. 4: 12-13; 1 Pet. 1: 23).

We must not infer from this that Scripture gives exact knowledge of mathematics or biology or any other science. Neither does it present a history of Israel or a biography of Jesus that accords with the standards of historical science. What we do have in Scripture is a faithful account of God's redemptive works, an incisive portrayal of the divine plan of salvation. What we receive is true but not exhaustive

knowledge of divinity, for divinity remains enveloped in mystery even in the act of revelation. This is why the truth given in revelation concerning the being of God, the miracle of the incarnation, and the eschatological fulfilment can be only dimly perceived (*cf.* 1 Cor. 13: 12). Though it can be grasped in the decision of faith, it will always elude rational comprehension. This note appears again and again not only among the Reformers of the sixteenth century but also among the church fathers.

The present controversy

The two sides in the present controversy concerning scriptural authority are becoming increasingly polarized. On the one hand, there are those who view the Bible as only edifying religious literature and Jesus Christ as the most profound of all human prophets. Inspiration in these circles connotes nothing more than a general illumination that all spiritually sensitive people share to some degree. It is therefore not uncommon to hear it alleged that some Christian classics or even devotional masterpieces in other religions are inspired by the Spirit of God in the same sense as Scripture.

On the other hand, there are those who in their zeal to safeguard the divine authority of Scripture define inspiration in terms that approach mechanical dictation. In this view the Bible becomes a celestial tape recorder, and its true humanity is thereby denied. The inerrancy of Scripture is affirmed in the sense of mathematical or scientific precision which allows for no inconsistencies in the details of what is reported. The focus is no longer on the divine content but on the mode of expression by which Scripture comes to us. The language of the text is regarded as *flawless* as historical science understands this term.

There is an important sense in which the Scripture does not err: it does not err in what it affirms concerning the law and gospel, the two sides of the revelation of God. It does not err in what the Holy Spirit intends to teach us in and through the biblical text, and this teaching extends to the truth about man and the world as well as the truth about salvation. The Psalmist declares: 'The sum of thy word is truth' (119: 160; *cf.* Is. 45: 19; Jn. 17: 17). Paul insists that he is 'speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying' (Rom. 9: 1). In the pastoral epistles the truth handed down by the apostle is described as trustworthy (*pistos*) and deserving of full acceptance (1 Tim. 1: 15; 3: 1; 4: 9; 2 Tim. 2: 11; Tit. 3: 8). Similarly in the fourth gospel we read: 'This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these

things . . . and we know that his testimony is true' (Jn. 21: 24; *cf.* 19: 35).

Scripture does give a wholly reliable and trustworthy account of God's dealings with man in biblical history. Yet this does not mean that everything in Scripture must be taken at face value. Nor does it mean that the human authors of Scripture were taken out of their cultural and historical milieu and thereby rendered free from human limitations. They were both children of their times and prophets to their times.

Inspiration should be understood as the divine selection of the writers and their writings for the purpose of instruction in salvation and training in righteousness. It does not mean that the Holy Spirit overruled the personalities of the human authors; instead he worked in and through them. Our Reformed fathers referred to the accommodation of the Spirit to the language and concepts of that time. This means that there is something of the provisional and relative in the Bible, even though its message and teaching derive from God himself.

In this light we should understand that the Bible in and of itself is not revelation, but revelation is given in the Bible. It is not the letter that is the truth but the Spirit acting upon the letter (1 Cor. 2: 4; 2 Cor. 3: 6). The criterion for faith is the Spirit speaking in and through the text of Scripture. As Zwingli retorted when John Faber declared that there must be a judge, 'The Spirit of God out of Holy Scripture itself is the judge' (*The New Cambridge Modern History: The Reformation 1520-59*, II, p. 101).

In order to hear and know the veritable Word of God, in order to perceive the Spirit-intended meaning of the words, we must search the Scriptures. We must 'dig out' the truth that is contained in the Scriptures (Dwight L. Moody). We must seek the spiritual discernment necessary to apprehend spiritual truths (1 Cor. 2: 9-16). As the Psalmist declares: 'Open my eyes, so that I may see the wonderful truths in your law' (Ps. 119: 18 GNB; *cf.* Lk. 24: 45). The Word of God is likened to a 'rich treasure' that one must 'find' or uncover in the Scriptures (Ps. 119: 162 GNB).

The Bible is not a systematic set of rules that can be immediately perceived and then applied. It is more like a uranium mine that yields its precious metal only after a careful and painstaking search. The interpretation of Scripture is a work of faith; it is not intended for those who refuse to exert themselves and submit themselves to the guidance and direction of the Spirit. John Chrysostom observed that the meaning of the scriptural text often 'lies buried at a great depth'; indeed, only

special enlightenment from the Holy Spirit can enable one to apprehend it.

The authority of the Bible is derivative: it is anchored not in itself but in its divine Author and divine centre, Jesus Christ. It is a signpost that points to Jesus Christ, and at the same time it is a vessel that carries the truth of Jesus Christ. Luther described it as the 'carriage of the Spirit'. He also referred to Scripture as the 'swaddling clothes' in which the Christ-child is laid.

The most potent symbol for the Word of God is not the book itself but the cross of Christ shining through the pages of the open Bible. For it is Jesus Christ whom the Bible attests; it is his salvation that the Bible proclaims and conveys. According to Calvin the promises of God are 'sure and infallible' only when we 'resort always to Jesus Christ' (*Sermons on Ephesians*, Banner of Truth, 1973, p. 176).

We need to recognize again that the Bible has two sides: a divine and a human side. It is a human witness to divine revelation, for as 2 Peter says, men spoke from God (1: 21). But at the same time it is God's self-revelation through human authors; as the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, God spoke to men (Heb. 1: 2). The Bible is the Word of God indirectly—in and through the words of men.

Calvin rightly described the Bible as the 'unerring rule of faith and practice'. The certainty of its truth, he said, is derived from the interior witness of the Spirit. The majesty of its doctrine also argues for its truth, though this can be perceived only by faith.

It is a mistake to appeal to external evidences to buttress or prove the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, for the Bible authenticates itself. It carries its own credentials. This must not be taken to mean, however, that the claims of the Bible are persuasive because of their logical force or rational coherence. Instead they persuade and convict because the Spirit of God inheres within the book that he inspired. The text of Scripture is the property of its divine author who alone can regenerate and renew sinful humanity.

I do not wish to imply that external evidences in support of Scripture are of no value whatsoever. They may indeed cast new light upon the Bible and confirm its claims concerning itself, but this confirmation is given only to those who already believe. Archaeology has shown the amazing accuracy of the Bible even in many of its historical details, but this does not and cannot prove its perfect accuracy in this regard. Neither can archaeology or historical science establish the divine authority and inspiration of Scripture.

The authority of Scripture is rooted not in the

manner of its writing but in the way it is applied by the Spirit to direct us to Christ. Its divine-human origin is subordinate to its salvific role or function. The inspiration of the text of Scripture is in the service of the communication of its message. Scripture is best seen as a human medium, prepared by the Spirit, through which we come to know the benefits of Christ. It is not just a human witness to Christ but a divinely appointed means through which we receive saving knowledge of Christ. These writings were designed to make us 'wise unto salvation' (2 Tim. 3: 15 KJV).

The Bible might be likened to a drinking fountain whose water is drawn from an underground spring. The water of life is hidden, and we therefore have access to it only by means of this fountain. Unless we go to the fountain and drink from it, our spiritual thirst will not be satisfied. It may still be a beautiful structure, it may even have historical or scientific value, but it will not be the fount of salvation. It is not enough to appreciate the literary style of the Bible or even its doctrinal profundity: we must experience its life-giving power.

The salvific sword

In Ephesians 6: 17 Paul referred to the written Word of God as 'the sword of the Spirit', a metaphor popular with the Reformers. The Scripture can be spoken of in this way because it is employed by the Spirit to drive out the demons that oppress the people of God (*cf.* Rev. 12: 11). It is used by the Spirit to reform and purify the church (Acts 2: 14–18; Rev. 2: 16–17). It is used by the Spirit to regenerate and deliver lost sinners (*cf.* 2 Cor. 4: 5–6; 1 Pet. 1: 23). It is the chosen instrument by which our Lord will bring in his eschatological kingdom (Is. 55: 11).

The power of the Bible in effecting human salvation is attested by the lives of the great saints of the church, many of whom were liberated from inner confusion and emptiness simply by being confronted with the truth of the gospel in Holy Scripture. This power was already at work in the two men who accompanied the risen Christ to Emmaus, whose hearts burned within them while he opened to them the Scriptures (Lk. 24: 32). It was manifest in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch who was moved to seek for salvation by reading the book of Isaiah but who did not receive justifying faith until he heard the story of the cross from the lips of Philip (Acts 8: 26–40).

It might appear that Paul's conversion was without the mediation of the written or proclaimed word of God. Yet we must remember that Paul had been thoroughly immersed in the Hebrew Scriptures

which, as he belatedly admitted, teach that Christ would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, bringing light to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 26: 22–23). He also heard the gospel from the lips of Stephen and other victims of his harassment campaign against followers of ‘the Way’ (cf. Acts 9: 1–2; 22: 20). So when Christ revealed himself on the road to Damascus, all that was necessary for him to say was, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’ (Acts 26: 15). The seeds of Paul’s conversion were planted when he heard the good news from the mouth of Stephen, and it is not unwarranted to surmise that his burning hatred of Christianity stemmed from a desperate attempt to suppress the truth that his innermost being cried out to acknowledge. He himself later confessed that faith comes only by hearing, and hearing by the preaching of the word of the cross (Rom. 10: 17).

One of the early church fathers whose life was decisively altered by an encounter with the Scriptures was Augustine. It was he who recalled the church of his time to its biblical and apostolic foundations. Through his vigorous defense of the faith, he was able to counter various heresies of his time that sought to accommodate the faith to secular values and patterns of thought. He became a bold advocate of a monasticism based solidly on the gospel. Yet in his earlier days he was a profligate as well as an unbeliever. He refused to marry even though he had fathered an illegitimate son. Moreover, he was constantly seeking new and more adequate philosophies to explain the human predicament.

Through the fervent prayers of his mother Monica, the Spirit was nevertheless active in Augustine’s life, pursuing him even into the darkness which was of his own creation. It was during a visit to Milan that Augustine heard about Anthony, the desert hermit who had devoted himself to a life of prayer. The story of Anthony’s sacrifice pierced his soul. He then went out into the garden by his lodging and, engulfed in tears, seemed to hear a voice, ‘Take up and read’. Finding a Bible he happened to open it at Romans 13, and he gazed at the passage on which his eyes first fell: ‘Let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness . . . But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires’ (Rom. 13: 13–14 RSV). The truth that he had been yearning for suddenly struck him like a bolt of lightning (cf. Ps. 29: 7 NIV). He said in his *Confessions*: ‘No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly . . . all the gloom of doubt vanished away.’ He then resolved

to dedicate himself wholly and exclusively to the cause of the kingdom, and through the Spirit of God given to him at the time of his conversion he was enabled to break with his old way of living and take up the cross and follow Christ as a humble disciple.

Luther, too, cannot be understood apart from his conversion through a confrontation with the Scriptures. Although he had embraced the monastic life, and indeed had joined the strict order of the Augustinians in Erfurt, Germany, his heart was not at peace. His life in the monastery is generally acknowledged to have been exemplary, but he had been misled by the then current theology into thinking that his ascetic and monastic works were meritorious in the sight of God, that they were sufficient to secure him from divine condemnation.

While wrestling with Paul’s epistle to the Romans in the conventual tower, Luther was suddenly struck by the words from the prophet Habakkuk cited by Paul in Romans 1: 17: ‘He shall gain life who is justified through faith’ (NEB). It then dawned on Luther that the righteousness of God is not a prize that can be earned by works of love but a gift that enables man to do such works. Salvation is not a matter of working one’s way into heaven but of being received into the favour of God through the perfect righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith alone. One is accepted by God not because of one’s own moral worthiness but because of God’s grace revealed in Christ. Joy and peace flooded his soul as he gained the assurance that God’s love poured out on Calvary covered the multitude of his sins.

Although there is a lack of scholarly consensus concerning the exact date of Luther’s tower experience, it is generally agreed that it took him some time to work out the theological and practical implications of his ‘evangelical discovery’. It was several years later that Luther was compelled to leave the monastic order in which he had served so faithfully. He was now called by God to go forth into the world with a message that posed a threat to the principalities and powers of his time. The evangelical proclamation of salvation by grace was no longer or only imperfectly perceived in that age, and ecclesiastical leaders as well as the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V proceeded to suppress Luther’s witness, forcing him into temporary exile. Luther claimed no credit for the rediscovery of the gospel of free grace. It was not his ingenuity in scriptural exegesis but the convicting power of Scripture itself that exploded his own theories and led him to the pathway of church reform.

Similarly John Wesley, another luminary of

evangelical faith, experienced a dramatic change of heart by being confronted with the truth of God attested in the Scriptures. Although he had been baptized, confirmed and ordained to the gospel ministry, Wesley was, in his own eyes, still not a born-again Christian. He continued to harbour the illusion that religion meant keeping the law, attaining holiness by spiritual exercises. Even though he had been involved in a missionary excursion to America, Wesley was constantly bedevilled by a passion to prove himself worthy before God. Peace and joy eluded him, and his ministry was bearing little fruit. Then some of his friends invited him to a Moravian meeting on Aldersgate Street in London, and there he heard Martin Luther's Preface to the Romans being expounded. In this case it was not the reading of Scripture but hearing the message of Scripture that moved him to surrender his own claims to righteousness and give himself wholly to the Christ of New Testament Christianity. He confessed that his 'heart was strangely warmed'; for the first time the apostolic proclamation concerning God's unconditional grace found a lodging in his soul. Previous to Aldersgate, he maintained, he was 'almost a Christian', but it was there that he became inwardly convinced that Christ had died for him personally. As he noted in his *Journal*: 'An assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.' He now knew not merely the form of religion but its justifying and sanctifying power (cf. 2 Tim. 3: 5).

From Aldersgate Wesley emerged to become one of the greatest evangelists in Christian history. Through his itinerant preaching ministry the spiritually as well as economically impoverished masses in England were reached for the gospel and that country was consequently spared the kind of social upheaval that devastated France at the end of the eighteenth century.

Yet another noted convert to evangelical Christianity, was César Malan, who lived in early-nineteenth-century Switzerland. Of Huguenot ancestry he was ordained to the gospel ministry and became pastor of a congregation in Geneva. Yet, as he himself later admitted, he had no gospel to preach because he had not yet committed himself to Christ as Saviour from sin and as Lord and Master of life. Intellectually he was an ethical humanist, viewing Jesus as only a great teacher or prophet. 'During my four years of theology,' he explained, 'I never heard a single word which could lead me to a belief in Christ's divinity. They taught me only the dogmas of natural religion' (in Ernest Gordon, *A Book of Protestant Saints* Prairie Bible

Institute, 1968, p. 189). For the next several years he continued to dwell in spiritual darkness, confessing that he was 'an entire stranger to the evangelical doctrine of salvation by grace'. Then Malan began searching the Scriptures. One evening it seemed that he was directed to read Romans chapter 5, and the following day as his Latin school class was busy in study, he pored over Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. It was this passage in Ephesians 2 that brought illumination to his soul: 'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast' (verses 8–9). The veil was suddenly taken from his eyes. For the first time he perceived not just intellectually but experientially that the reason Jesus Christ came into the world was not to teach people how to be good but to save people who because of sin could no longer be good, that is, good enough to satisfy the requirements of God's holy law. He compared his conversion to the feeling of a child awakened by his mother's kiss.

Malan then destroyed all his old sermons and with them his prized collection of classical works, which he felt had led him astray. This action could be judged unduly rash, but for Malan Christ was now the overwhelming first in his life, and all potential rivals had to be banished. On Easter Sunday, 1817, he preached in the Church of the Madeleine in Geneva and took this occasion to announce his new-found faith. His parents, who were liberal humanitarians (his father was an admirer of Diderot), turned against him, and his wife was deeply grieved. When he persisted in preaching the gospel of free grace, his fellow clergymen reprimanded him and finally barred him from preaching in the pulpits of the Reformed church in Geneva. He then left the city for Ferney-Voltaire, the former home of the great antagonist of the faith; there he erected a mission chapel that attracted scores of his compatriots as well as visitors from other lands, people who were thirsting to hear the simple gospel of salvation through the atoning death of Christ on the cross. His subsequent preaching sparked a revival that was instrumental in preserving the evangelical voice in the Reformed churches of Switzerland, the land of Calvin and Zwingli.

What is important to understand is that it was not the Bible as paper and ink, not the letter as such, but the Spirit of the living God reaching out through the letter who worked the change that resulted in the salvation of these men and others. It is not moral education, even if it includes Bible study and memorizing Scripture verses, that makes

people members of the kingdom of God. Nor is it personal reformation, a road travelled by Luther and Wesley in their early years. Instead, it is supernatural regeneration brought about by the Holy Spirit but always in conjunction with the reading or hearing of the word of the gospel as given in Holy Scripture. The Bible saves and converts not even because of its unique inspiration but because it is the sword of the Spirit. As the Word of God made alive by the Spirit, it is the sword that slays the demon of pride, it is the fire that consumes the old nature.

The divine author of Scripture is an ever active divine agent who reveals the truths that he imparted in the biblical past to people of every age. This work of illumination by the Spirit in the history of the church attests and confirms the divine inspira-

tion of Scripture. Indeed, what the Spirit reveals is not a new word but the truth already proclaimed in Holy Scripture. Yet this truth would remain buried in the past unless the Spirit were active now bringing it to light in the consciousness of men and women.

The Bible is a lamp that illumines the pathway of people who dwell in spiritual darkness (Ps. 119: 105; 2 Pet. 1: 19). It is the one Word from God that gives meaning to those who live without purpose. It is the earthen vessel that contains the treasure of eternal salvation, the gospel of reconciliation and redemption through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary. It is the sacrament of the written word by which we are united to Jesus Christ through faith by the power of his Spirit.

The biblical basis of hope

D R Denton

We welcome a first contribution from Dr D. R. Denton, a young Australian scholar who did some research at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is now teaching in South Australia.

Currently 'hope' is one of the most popular words in the theological world. Everywhere the thought is in the air. Numerous books and articles have appeared on the subject. Two features are typical of this trend, however. One is the scarcity, indeed almost complete lack, of biblical studies. The biblical teaching is all but totally ignored. The other is that 'hope' is generally understood in a very broad sense, virtually equivalent to 'eschatology'.

In this article I propose to confine myself to the actual word 'hope'. I realize that the concept of hope is broader than the word itself, but to study the concept of hope would involve examining practically the whole of eschatology, which is impossible in such a short space. In addition, an examination of the term 'hope' in the context of the passages in which it occurs is essential if one is to understand the biblical teaching on hope. In fact, this is the basis for an understanding of the

total concept. In addition, I shall confine myself to the Biblical text, with emphasis on the New Testament.

Old Testament

Hope is a characteristic of man. It belongs to his very nature. 'While there is life there is hope,' wrote the Roman poets. 'He who is joined with all the living has hope' said the Preacher (Eccles. 9: 4). So it characterizes the living. While man is alive he can hope. But the question arises: Is there any real basis for hope? Can hope be certain?

The Old Testament asserts boldly and plainly that hope is rooted in God. For the Israelites hope is neither indefinite nor uncertain. It is not wishful thinking. It is sure, because of Yahweh their God. Therefore it is a confident expectation.

God is the basis of hope because of his known character, his past deeds of salvation, and his covenant with Israel. It is in his chapter on the nation's hope that Wheeler Robinson deals with the concept of covenant, opening with the statement: 'The basis of Israel's hope is the peculiar

relation which exists between itself and Yahweh.¹ The God who brought his people out of slavery binds himself to them. He is faithful, and his promises cannot fail. Because the Israelites belong to him and because he is trustworthy, they can confidently hope in him.² The covenant is seen as the ground of hope in Zechariah 9:11–12. The prophet calls God's people 'prisoners of hope' (verse 12), since they are captives, as the previous verse also indicates. Yet God will set them free because of the blood of his covenant with them (verse 11). This covenant assures them of his care and salvation. Consequently, they can expect deliverance and redemption, knowing that captivity will not remain their lot permanently.

The Old Testament further reveals that God is the ground of hope by reason of his nature and attributes. His steadfast love, or covenant-love, is especially set forth as the solid ground of hope. The Lord's steadfast love never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, and his faithfulness is great (La. 3:22–23). On account of this the writer declares, 'The Lord is my portion, . . . therefore I will hope in him' (verse 24). Even in the midst of the misery and discouragement which dominate Lamentations there is room for hope. But it comes when the author turns his attention from the destruction of the city and land to his God, reminding himself of his character. The words which introduce this great affirmation are instructive:

But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope (verse 21).

The source of hope is the character of God.³

The author of Psalm 130 writes in similar vein. He waits for the Lord and hopes in his word,⁴ knowing that there is forgiveness with him (verses

4–5). Then he urges Israel to hope in the Lord, stating his reason:

For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plenteous redemption (verse 7).

Israel can confidently hope in Yahweh. He is entirely dependable, as he is characterized by steadfast love and his gift of redemption.

The abundant redemption which distinguishes the God of Israel is before the psalmist's eyes in Psalm 65:5 also. 'The hope of all the ends of the earth' is the God of salvation, who delivers by mighty and dread deeds. This recalls the deliverance from Egypt, the saving act *par excellence*. Sasse remarks that hope, like faith, cannot exist without the recognition of historical facts.⁵ The exodus was the outstanding act in Israel's history to which the nation ever looked back, and which convinced it that Yahweh was One in whom it could confidently place its hope.⁶

God is therefore the basis of hope in the Old Testament. His reliability and consistent character are alluded to under the metaphor of a rock. This ascription is brought into close connection with hope on several occasions. According to Psalm 62:5–6 the writer's hope is from God, who alone is his rock, his salvation and his fortress. The same language is found in Psalm 71:3. From his birth the psalmist has leaned on the Lord, learning to rely upon him, so that, now an old man, he can declare with assurance, 'Thou, O Lord, art my hope' (verse 5).

Knowing the character of God and his faithfulness to the covenant, and having experienced his saving power once in an outstanding way at the exodus, the Israelites had solid grounds for basing their hope on him.⁷ Conversely, hope was also anchored in him because of their confidence in his capacity to do again what he had performed in the past.⁸

New Testament

In the New Testament the term 'hope' is found above all in the Pauline corpus. With less frequency it occurs in Acts, Hebrews, and 1 Peter, but elsewhere it is either entirely absent or almost so.

¹ H. W. Robinson, *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (London, 1959), p. 186. Cf. C. F. D. Moule, *The Meaning of Hope* (FBBS 5; Philadelphia, 1963), p. 24.

² P. S. Minear, 'Hope', *IDB* 2 (1962) p. 640, suggests that actually 'hope links together the two parties of the covenant'. While this is no doubt true, the two parties are linked by much more besides.

³ This passage is an excellent example of the tension between hope and present reality which typifies so much of the biblical picture of hope and which is depicted strongly in the Old Testament in the word 'wait' (especially *qāwāh*).

⁴ 'Hope in' and 'wait for' are synonymous, as the parallelism shows. Cf., for the Old Testament vocabulary of hope, W. Zimmerli, *Man and His Hope in the Old Testament* (SBT 2/20; London, 1971) 7; C. Westermann, 'Das Hoffen im Alten Testament', *Forschung am Alten Testament* (Munich, 1964), pp. 221–226, 232–235; E. Hoffmann, 'Hoffnung', *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament* (2 vols.; Wuppertal, 1965), I, p. 722. To Zimmerli's evidence should be added F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), pp. 314, 404, 875, 960.

⁵ H. Sasse, 'Some Thoughts on Christian Hope', *RTR* 26 (1967), p. 48. In his treatment of hope in the Old Testament he stresses that hope is based on the sacred history through which God illuminated the promise (*ibid.*, p. 44).

⁶ Cf. Moule, *loc. cit.*

⁷ W. L. Knox, *St Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 24–25 considers that the essential difference between the hope of Israel and its neighbours lay in the different conceptions of the nature of God.

⁸ Cf. H. Bardtke, 'Hoffnung', *RGK* 3 (1959), pp. 415–416.

The approach will be to see first where the New Testament writers take over the Old Testament basis, and then to investigate developments which are peculiar to the New Testament.

a. God

We have seen that in the Old Testament the basis of hope is God himself—God who is utterly dependable and trustworthy. The New Testament repeats this truth.

In Romans 15: 9–12 Paul quotes from the Old Testament to indicate the place which Gentiles were to have as part of God's people. His final quotation is from Isaiah 11: 10 where the LXX closes with the statement: 'in him shall the Gentiles hope' (verse 12). The word 'hope' is taken up by the apostle in the next verse in a prayer that 'the God of hope' will fill the readers with joy and peace. Here is a new designation for God. He is the ground of hope, the One on whom hope ultimately depends. He is its sure foundation. This gives it certainty. The nature of God assures us that hope will be fulfilled. Barrett effectively brings out the connection with the previous verse, translating and commenting: 'May the God who is thus (that is, in the light of the passages just quoted) the ground of hope . . .'.⁹ Similarly, *ho Theos tēs elpidos* points to God as the source of hope.¹⁰ He is the author of hope; it is he who gives it. Consequently Paul can expect the Roman Christians to abound in hope more and more as a result of the activity of his Spirit in their midst (verse 13b).¹¹

The Old Testament is again reflected, but this time not in a quotation, in 1 Timothy 6: 17. Timothy is urged to charge the wealthy not 'to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God, who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy'. One recalls the teaching of the Old Testament: men are not to rely on wealth (Pr. 11: 28). Wealth is a foundation of sand which will not support genuine hope. God is the only solid foundation. This is the common experience of believers: 'we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe' (1 Tim. 4: 10).

Ultimately God is the ground of hope in 2 Corinthians 1: 10 also. Paul's expectation of God's

deliverance in the future is dependent on his past experience of such aid. In Asia he had faced such unbearable affliction that he despaired of life itself (verse 9). However, God rescued him from that deadly peril. This divine deliverance now inspires him with assurance for future service. It could be said then that his hope is based on previous experience. But that would be an inadequate explanation. It is the Deliverer who is the source of Paul's confidence, the God he serves, namely the one who can raise the dead.

This aspect has its place in Hebrews too. 'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,' the author exhorts his readers, adding, by way of assurance, 'for he who promised is faithful' (10: 23). The content of this exhortation is one that recurs in the epistle (3: 6, 14; 4: 14; 6: 11) and the call to endure dominates the hortatory sections. Given the situation of the readers, the need for this is obvious. Our text sums up the writer's message, for not only does it summarize his urgent demand, but also he turns his readers' attention to the source of their strength. God's faithfulness should encourage perseverance in their confession of the things hoped for.

The Johannine writings have but a single reference to hope with any theological significance.¹² It is 1 John 3: 3, which is relevant at this point.¹³ The RSV reads: 'And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.'¹⁴ 'Thus' looks back to the verse before, which also explains the thought of purity, for John has just declared that when Christ appears 'we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is'. That hope of a future conformity to Christ's likeness redounds on our present life.

The importance of this passage for our topic centres on the phrase 'hopes in him'. The Greek text runs: *pas ho echōn tēn elpida tautēn ep'autō* . . . Given that the preposition *epi*, followed as it is by the dative case, has its primary significance of '(hope) resting on (him)',¹⁵ the verse is very much

¹² The only other verses (2 John 12; 3 John 14) merely record a hope to see the readers soon.

¹³ This is in the belief that 'him' means the Father rather than the Son. Cf. the introductory verses and see A. Plummer, *The Epistles of S John (CBSC)* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 122. If the allusion is to the Son, my basic argument is not altered, but the verse would be more accurately discussed under c. below.

¹⁴ *Contra* NEB: 'everyone who has this hope before him . . . where 'him' is apparently 'himself'.

¹⁵ As B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St John* (London, 1883), p. 98; I. H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John (NICNT)* (Grand Rapids, 1978), p. 173; Plummer, *loc. cit.* See the explanation of F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1961), p. 123.

⁹ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London, 1962), p. 272.

¹⁰ Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 37; Minear, *op. cit.*, p. 641.

¹¹ V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, 1968), p. 132 thinks that in this passage 'Paul specifically identifies the Spirit as the ground of hope'. Rather, the Spirit is the agent who conveys the hope from God to men.

to the point.¹⁶ The object toward which our hope is directed is the return of Christ and the believer's consequent Christlikeness. How can we be so confident of the reality of this? Because our hope is resting on God. That assures us of the certainty of these still future events.

Finally, in our consideration of hope based on God, two verses from Acts are pertinent.¹⁷ Neither is explicit. Both are concerned with the hope of resurrection for which Paul claims to be on trial. But it is implicit on each occasion that this hope is grounded in God. 'I stand here on trial for hope in the promise¹⁸ made by God to our fathers' (26: 6). The content of this divinely given expectation is the apostle's concern, but the qualifying phrase 'made by God' expresses the grounds of assurance. Such a promise cannot fail. The defence before Felix is similar. Paul admits to 'a hope in God'¹⁹ . . . that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust' (24: 15). But this is based upon God's written Word recorded in the law and prophets (verse 14). Thus his hope is again founded on God, and the veracity of his Word.

Common to the New Testament understanding of hope, therefore, is the belief that it is rooted and anchored in God—his faithfulness, his previous deliverance, and his word. Hence the confidence and assurance which the concept embodies in its biblical sense.

b. The promises of God

Closely related is a second basis of hope. Since hope relies on God and looks to the future, it has a natural affinity with the promises of God. It depends on them. What God promises is certain, yet is still to come.

Abraham discovered this—a point that Paul seizes upon and uses with considerable force (Rom. 4: 13–25). The promise was made to Abraham that he would be father of a great people. To this he responded in faith, as the apostle emphasizes, but with this is linked hope: 'in hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations' (verse 18). Abraham hoped against

hope,²⁰ because God, who is totally reliable, had given a specific promise. 'Though the circumstances were such that hope seemed utterly impossible, he nevertheless held to his hope; and he could do this because it was only on God's promise that he based it.'²¹ Since that basis was certain and secure, hope founded on it was sure also, irrespective of, indeed in defiance of, human calculations.

The divine promise to Abraham is the starting-point again in Hebrews 6: 13–20. He is used as an illustration to believers of a later age, to whom also promises have been given. This is the author's way of urging his readers to realise the full assurance of their hope until the end (verse 11), which is his aim. God's promise was made doubly sure by the addition of an oath. On account of these two, God's promise and God's oath, we therefore have 'strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us' (verse 18). God's promise is the foundation of hope then.

But, to this, further assurance is added. First, the simile of the anchor is used to express the certainty of hope. Hope is like an anchor of the soul—to keep us steadfast.²² Nor is this all, for now the author takes a new turn by indicating that this hope 'enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (verses 19b–20). The Saviour is already there, where at present we can only enter in hope. Thus a new dimension is added to hope, a specifically New Testament element, centred on Jesus. And we, like the recipients of this epistle, have even stronger grounds for hope than Abraham had. Jesus, our forerunner, is in the presence of the Father as high priest for ever. 'His presence there is a powerful corroboration of our hope.'²³

The most succinct record of this aspect of hope is found in Tit. 1: 2: 'in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised ages ago'.²⁴ Eternal

²⁰ See the discussion of this phrase in C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh, 1975-78), I, pp. 245-246.

²¹ A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (London, 1952), p. 80.

²² One cannot help but contrast with this the lines of Pindar (01. 12. 1): 'To and fro toss the hopes of man, cleaving the waste foam-drift of the perfidious sea.'

²³ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; London, 1964), p. 131.

²⁴ J. N. D. Kelly (*A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, Black's New Testament Commentaries* (London, 1963), p. 227 translates *pro chronōn aiōniōn*, 'from all eternity', which is preferable in view of the presence and meaning of the same phrase in 2 Timothy 1: 9. This translation has the effect of putting God's promise into the indefinite past, before the foundation of the world. Likewise H. J. A. Bouman, 'The Christian Hope', *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 (1955), p. 245.

¹⁶ Sometimes 'him' is regarded as the object of hope, e.g. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (London, 1970), p. 88. This could be the case if the dative after *epi* is considered an example of the fluidity of usage of the *koinē* period. In support of the meaning 'resting on' are: a. grammatically, it is more strictly correct, and b. the object of the hope is found in verse 2, whereas verse 3 provides its basis.

¹⁷ 'Hope' occurs ten times in Acts, but only these two touch on its basis. Mostly the writer uses it for the object toward which hope is directed.

¹⁸ *Ep'elpidi tēs . . . epaggelias*—objective genitive, as W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge and Chicago, 1957), p. 252.

¹⁹ *Eis ton Theon*, i.e. directed toward God.

life is depicted as a future possession, currently an object of hope. How can we know we shall enter into this inheritance and that it is not a hollow mockery?²⁵ What assurance is there of this hope? God promised it from all eternity. And he does not lie. Therefore this hope is a confident expectation. What more solid basis can there be for hope than the dependable promise of God who cannot lie?²⁶

c. God's saving work in Christ

In the New Testament, as in the Old, God is the ground of hope. Likewise, just as the psalmist sees the salvation of God as a further basis, so do several of the epistles. There is this difference: God's salvation is now seen in a new light on account of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This new event in salvation history affords an additional foundation for hope. 'Because of the new situation the hope of the New Testament is reshaped as regards both content and basis.'²⁷ Therefore, more precisely, hope is grounded in God's saving work in Christ,²⁸ in the atoning death and resurrection of him who took human form. In particular it is 'St Paul who develops the positive Christian idea of hope as that centres in and derives from God's redemptive acts in Christ.'²⁹ He emphasizes this uniquely important event, drawing out its meaning and expounding its consequences. Christ's death is the foundation of the new exodus and it establishes the new covenant. It is therefore appropriate that it is the basis of Christian hope, just as the Israelites' hope was based on the God of the covenant and the exodus. In the New Testament, also, hope is firmly anchored in history.

Before examining the passages where the New Testament brings hope into connection with the resurrection or specific aspects of the atonement, we shall observe a more general announcement of its relation to Christ.

Christ himself is the ground of hope. The first epistle to Timothy opens with the words: 'Paul, an

apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Saviour and of Jesus Christ our hope.' While this appellation doubtless looks to the future, when at Christ's return the divine saving work will be brought to a head, at the same time it grounds hope in him.³⁰ He made hope possible and actual. The Christian's hope, like that of the Israelite, is based on God. But, in addition, it is rooted in him who came from God to make salvation a reality. Hope is not determined by man's own being, as in Greek thought.³¹ Nor is it a product of his imagination. It is not based on man at all, whether his past achievements or his potential for the future, but on Jesus Christ. Just as his second coming is the central object of hope, so his first coming is the motive of Christian hope.³² He is its author, its foundation, and its guarantee.

In particular, it is on his resurrection and on his atoning death that it is based, and to these we now turn in more detail. Here is the unique contribution of the New Testament to our subject.

d. Hope based on the atonement

This truth seems to be peculiarly Pauline, which fits the vital role that the atonement plays in the apostle's teaching, with its profundity and originality. Several facets of Jesus' atoning death are depicted as basic to hope in the epistles: justification, reconciliation, and redemption. Each of these will be investigated in turn.

(i) *Justification*. Romans is the stronghold of the Pauline teaching on justification. In addition however, this is the book where the word 'hope' appears most often in the whole New Testament.³³ Moreover, though some of these occurrences are in the practical exhortations in the last five chapters of the epistle, two-thirds are in chapters 1-8, where Paul clearly sets forth what the gospel is.³⁴ These references to hope follow his exposition of the atoning significance of Christ's death. They flow from that teaching, thereby enabling us to see how hope is grounded in the atonement.

After relentlessly pressing home his argument that all, Jews and Gentiles alike, have sinned and are under the just condemnation of God (1: 18—

²⁵ Like hope in Greek literature, concerning which S. H. Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius* (London, 1893) writes: 'It is . . . an illusion born of an uncertain future. It is a mocking goddess who tempts man to forget the limits of the possible.'

²⁶ 'God's personal pledge is the most certain foundation of our hope' according to C. Spicq, *Saint Paul: les Epîtres pastorales* (2 vols.; Paris, 1969), II, p. 593.

²⁷ Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 724 (ET: *NIDNTT*, II, p. 242).

²⁸ Cf. A. Barr, '“Hope” (*ELPIS*, *ELPIZO*) in the New Testament', *SJT* 3 (1950), p. 72; T. S. Liefeld, 'The Christian Hope in the New Testament', *The Lutheran Quarterly* 6 (1954), p. 35; W. Grossouw, 'L'espérance dans le Nouveau Testament', *RB* 61 (1954), p. 526.

²⁹ Liefeld, *op. cit.*, p. 34; cf. R. Bultmann, '*elpis*', *TDNT* 2 (1964), p. 532.

³⁰ Jesus is depicted as both ground and object of hope. The former alone interests me in this article.

³¹ Bultmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 518, 521. A good man will follow after good hope (Arist. *De Virtutibus et Vitiis* 8. 1251B, pp. 33-34), whereas the wicked live with bad hopes (Pl. *Resp.* 1. 331A). A man's hopes are his own projections of the future.

³² Spicq, *op. cit.*, 1. 285.

³³ A total of 17 times out of 84. The noun alone occurs 13 times.

³⁴ In fact, to be more precise, from 4: 18 to the end of chapter 8.

3: 20), Paul proclaims justification by faith (3: 21—4: 25) on the basis of Christ's saving work (3: 24; 4: 24f.). This is elucidated in detail. Then, after laying this foundation, the apostle states several of the effects or fruits of justification in 5: 1–5. First, we have peace with God (verse 1). As a further boon we have the hope of sharing God's glory in the future, which is cause for rejoicing (verse 2).³⁵ In fact, apart from the reference to Abraham's hope in chapter 4, this is the first occurrence of the word in the epistle, and certainly the first time the Christian's expectation is referred to. The logic of Paul's argument demonstrates that hope is an outcome of justification. That peace with God is an effect of justification is commonly proclaimed, but Paul equally declares that hope, accompanied by joy, is a direct result of it.

His argument then proceeds from justification through sanctification (chapters 6–7) and the life of the Spirit (8: 1–17) to future glory (8: 18–30). Thus he shows the progress of the Christian life and the major truths which depend upon justification. In his treatment of the glory to come the concept of hope is introduced both in relation to the believer (verse 23–25) and the whole creation (verse 19, 20). Creation, along with the children of God, is keenly awaiting the future, when redemption will be completed. Thus the hope of a glorious consummation stems directly from the atonement. Moreover, the whole of chapter 8 (in which 'hope' is more prominent than any other chapter of the epistle)³⁶ develops from the opening words, which declare that the person in Christ is justified and will never face God's sentence of condemnation. In this chapter 'the gift of home is inseparable from the act by which God frees his people from condemnation (8: 1), from the law of sin and death (verse 2), from life tyrannized by the flesh (verse 12), and from fear (verse 15)'.³⁷

Further evidence to support my contention that hope is sometimes based on justification is forthcoming from Titus. God saved us, writes Paul, 'so that, justified by his grace, we might become heirs in hope of eternal life' (3: 7).³⁸ This clause displays

³⁵ The intervening clause 'through whom . . . we stand' is subordinate to the main line of his thought and is an expansion of 'through our Lord Jesus Christ'. Cf. Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p. 259, and J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, 1968), p. 161.

³⁶ The synonymous *apekdechomai* and *apokaradokia* are also employed four times in this chapter.

³⁷ P. S. Minear, *Christian Hope and the Second Coming* (Philadelphia, 1954), p. 45.

³⁸ As NEB, Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 253; contra RSV: 'so that we might be justified'. The Greek word so translated is the aorist participle *dikaiōthentes*. This is best understood as an alternative way of expressing the thought 'he saved us'.

the purpose of our salvation (verse 5). We were saved and justified so as to gain the hope of everlasting life.³⁹ The description of eternal life as a future reality does not negate or exclude its present possession, but the apostle's interest here is on its full realization at the time of consummation. Thus it is described as our hope, and it will remain an object of hope until that time. But those who enjoy this confident expectation are those who have been justified by grace. Only this experience gives grounds for such an expectation.

(ii) *Reconciliation*. In the epistle to the Colossians Paul gives a magnificent description of the person and work of Christ. This is placed right at the beginning as the basis for the apostle's argument against the 'philosophy' which was current at Colosse. Christ is set forth as the sole mediator between God and man. The reconciliation he thus achieved has cosmic proportions (verse 20). It has also reached the Colossians. Whereas once they were estranged and hostile toward God, now Christ has reconciled them by his death (verse 22). But from here the flow of Paul's thought carries him on to the future as he declares the purpose of their reconciliation—to be presented blameless and holy before God. At this juncture the concept of hope is introduced, for it is necessary that the Colossians continue steadfast in the faith, 'not shifting from the hope of the gospel' (verse 23). This is the hope which the gospel holds out and has produced in them, a hope which arises from the gospel.⁴⁰ The message of reconciliation which they have accepted brings with it this Christian virtue.⁴¹ The apostle therefore sets this teaching on hope in the context of reconciliation. It springs from this soil, and without it hope is without foundation.

(iii) *Redemption*. The future aspect of hope is clearly to the fore in the words 'awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' (Tit. 2: 13). The explanatory phrase after 'hope' proclaims its

³⁹ It is not easy to decide whether 'eternal life' is to be taken with 'heirs' or 'hope'. In support of the latter is the earlier use of 'hope of eternal life' in Titus 1: 2, and the fact that it is not Paul's habit to follow *klēronomos* with a genitive (only once out of six occurrences of the word, viz. Rom. 4: 13). So also RSV; Minear, *op. cit.*, p. 92; D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (TNTC; London, 1957), p. 207. Contra NEB; Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 253; Spicq, *op. cit.*, II, p. 657.

⁴⁰ Subjective genitive; cf. A. Pott, *Das Hoffen im Neuen Testament* (Leipzig, 1915), p. 75; J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids and London, n.d.), p. 163. Arndt and Gingrich (*op. cit.*, p. 252) hold that the genitive gives the basis for the hope.

⁴¹ Indeed the very expression 'hope of the gospel' focuses attention on the cross, for the gospel is the good news of what God has done in Christ.

content, for the clause is appositional.⁴² Our expectation consists in the manifestation of Christ's glory. At his return he will irradiate the divine splendour—a truly joyous and blessed prospect. We are therefore urged, while living an upright life in the present age (verse 12), to look forward to his coming.

This glorious epiphany of Jesus Christ will mean the consummation of the ministry he came to perform at his first appearing, when he 'gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own' (verse 14). And it is precisely on these grounds that his return is called our blessed hope and that we await it so eagerly and confidently. Our hope of his return is based on the deliverance he has achieved. He whom we await with such a sense of expectation is the one who, in the past, released us from our sins at such cost. So our redemption and hope belong together, the latter dependent on the former.

e. Christ's resurrection

The ostensible basis for Christian hope in the New Testament is the resurrection of Christ.⁴³ The clearest example of this is 1 Peter 1:3, where the author blesses God that 'we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'. 'Born anew' signifies the decisive new stage in life, as we enter into the life of Christ, the life of the new age. This new life contains future elements and in the context it is the eschatological goal of the rebirth which has priority. The end in view is hope.⁴⁴

This rebirth has taken place because of Jesus' resurrection,⁴⁵ which has demonstrated the reality and nature of life after death. His resurrection has inaugurated the new age, opening up a new order of life. It is this that we have entered through regeneration. But this new life is accompanied by a living, vibrant hope, further defined as an inheritance in verse 4. This, too, stems from the resurrection of Jesus. Thus the living Lord gives a living hope.⁴⁶

Paul would concur with this, for while he does

not depict the dependence of hope on the resurrection of Christ in such concise terms, he does express the truth in two passages.⁴⁷

One is 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. The apostle has cause to address himself to a problem which is confronting the Thessalonians: would their fellow Christians who died before the parousia have a part in it? He begins his comforting reply by urging the believers not to grieve as do pagans who have no hope (verse 13), and who can therefore be expected to be distressed when their friends die. He speedily adds the positive grounds for the Christians' hope in contrast to the hopelessness of unbelievers. Believing that Jesus died and rose again, we are thus confident that those who have fallen asleep through Jesus, God will bring with him (verse 14).⁴⁸ The death and resurrection of Jesus form the basis of assurance concerning the future. The dead are with Christ and will return with him at the parousia. There need be no anxiety concerning them. The Christian's hope for the future life is traceable to 'the victory over death wrought in the death-resurrection of Jesus Christ.'⁴⁹ Nevertheless, in view of the context which focuses on life, resurrection, and the second coming, the emphasis tends to be on Jesus' resurrection.⁵⁰

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul is again expounding the resurrection. At Corinth there were those who denied that the dead would be raised, but this was intolerable to the apostle. If true, it would mean that Christ himself had not been raised (verse 13), and hence no salvation was possible. Faith is then vain (verse 14), our sins remain unforgiven (verse 13), and Christians who have previously died have perished (verse 18). 'If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied' (verse 19).

By thus laying bare the consequences of such a denial, Paul proves that the belief that was being aired was impossible for a Christian. Indeed, to claim the name of Christ and at the same time to entertain the possibility of no resurrection was the

⁴² E. K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London, 1954), p. 108.

⁴³ G. B. Caird, 'The Christological Basis of Christian Hope', *The Christian Hope* (Theological Collection 13; London, 1970), p. 9. Similarly Liefeld, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴⁴ In fact, the new birth has a threefold purpose: *eis elpida* (verse 3), *eis kléronomian* (verse 4), *eis sōtērian* (verse 5).

⁴⁵ As J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London, 1969), p. 48, recognizes, this final phrase is attached first to 'living hope' but also to the whole clause.

⁴⁶ Cf. 1 Peter 1:21 where hope is brought into connection with the life-giving God.

⁴⁷ Liefeld (*op. cit.*, p. 34) holds that it is 'above all, the resurrection' in which Paul centres the Christian idea of hope, but this is inaccurate, for the resurrection does not hold the place of prime importance in Paul's concept.

⁴⁸ Linking *dia tou Iēsou* with *koimēthentas*, against the rsv. So, most commentaries, e.g., E. Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London, 1972), p. 189; L. Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; London, 1959), p. 140.

⁴⁹ Minear, 'Hope', *IDB II*, p. 642. Similarly G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, 1961), p. 176.

⁵⁰ Compare Morris' comment on this verse: 'The resurrection is the guarantee of the Christian hope' (*op. cit.*, p. 139).

utmost folly, and made a farce of Christianity.⁵¹ Those who promoted such a view exhibited a shallow understanding, and revealed that they had not followed their position through to its logical conclusion. Truly, the Christian has set his hope on Christ, but if there really is no future life with him the situation is tragic indeed. 'In that case, Christians would be toiling and suffering here under a great delusion, a hope that has no foundation and will never be fulfilled—and such a glorious hope!'⁵²

But this is not true. It is based on a false premise. We shall be raised in the future (verses 21, 23); therefore the denial of a future eschatology is defective. And this coming resurrection is certain because Jesus has risen from the dead (verse 20a). Therefore Christian hope is securely founded. The certainty of the believer's resurrection is enhanced by the further statement that the risen Christ is 'the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep' (verse 20b). 'First fruits' is derived from the idea of the first fruits of the harvest (e.g., Ex. 34: 22, 26). This was the first part of the crop and the assurance that the rest of the harvest would follow. Just as the first fruits are the promise of the full harvest, so Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of the resurrection of believers.⁵³ Moreover, as the beginning of the harvest, the first fruits were offered to God, representing the whole crop. The hallowing and acceptance of the first fruits is the hallowing and acceptance of the crop. The unity between Christ and believers is similar and thus our future resurrection is guaranteed.⁵⁴ Here is additional support for our hope.

The solidarity of Christ and believers is reiterated, in different language, in the following two verses. As death came by man, so the resurrection of the dead came by man (verse 21). 'For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (verse 22). To be 'in Christ' is to belong to him and the

community of which he is head. Hand in hand with this go the benefits achieved by his act of obedience. As union with Adam brings death to humanity, so union with the last Adam will bring life to the new humanity.⁵⁵ The context, the parallelism with the previous verse, and the future tense (*zōopoīthēsontai*) combine to confirm that the verb refers to bodily resurrection. All, therefore, who are in Christ can be sure of attaining the resurrection.

Thus it is evident that these verses expand the claim that Christ is the first fruits of the dead, and consequently add further weight to our hope of resurrection. Truly it is a sure hope, for it is guaranteed by Christ's own resurrection.

The resurrection of the Lord is therefore a solid basis for hope. To fall asleep in him is not to perish; death is not the end. That we shall one day be raised from the dead is certain, for our Lord has preceded us. As Moltmann asserts, 'the Christian hope for the future comes of observing a specific unique event—that of the resurrection . . . of Jesus Christ.'⁵⁶

Conclusion

Hope does not spring from a person's mind; it is not snatched out of mid-air. It results from the promises of God. It is grounded in God. These Old Testament truths are repeated in the New Testament. In fact, in both Acts and Hebrews these are the chief emphases, as in the Old Testament. These two books are very much like the Old Testament in their orientation as regards hope.⁵⁷ On the other hand, with Paul in particular a new factor has to be taken into account. For in Christ the supreme revelation of God has occurred, especially in his death and resurrection. Hence it is on the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus that Paul founds hope. Aspects of his teaching about hope follow upon, and develop out of, the doctrines of justification, redemption and reconciliation. His understanding of hope is thus of a piece with his overall theological presentation.

Likewise, on occasion, hope is rooted in the resurrection of the Saviour. Death, Satan, and the evils of this age have been dealt with and overcome. Truly, 'the kingdom of evil has come—and has met

⁵¹ 'What else would this be than perfect nonsense, the most terrible and double self-deception?' K. Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (London, 1933, p. 170).

⁵² A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1950), p. 351.

⁵³ John Knox, *Christ and the Hope of Glory* (Nashville, 1960), p. 45 denies that we can argue: 'We know from God's raising of Jesus that he will raise us.' But this is precisely what Paul does, both here and elsewhere. Knox further claims that 'rarely, if ever, does the New Testament make use of an argument of this kind'. This is refuted by an array of passages listed by G. Dellling ('The Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus for Faith in Jesus Christ,' *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. C. F. D. Moule; *SBT* 2/8; London, 1968, p. 95) to show that for Paul 'the raising of Christians follows necessarily from the raising of Christ'.

⁵⁴ E. Best, *One Body in Christ* (London, 1955), p. 38; R. B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, 1978), pp. 33-41; Dellling, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁵⁵ Concerning the meaning of 'in Christ' and these implications see F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter, 1977), p. 138; G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1975), p. 482; H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1975), pp. 60-61.

⁵⁶ J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London, 1969), p. 194.

⁵⁷ As for Acts this comes out also in hope's object, where stress is laid on the hope of Israel, e.g. 28: 20.

its match'.⁵⁸ But Jesus' resurrection has also opened up the new age and so hope looks forward to its blessings. Peter shares this outlook with Paul.

While hope is eager anticipation, it is therefore securely anchored and firmly grounded in the

⁵⁸ Moule, *The Meaning of Hope*, p. 30.

saving deeds of the Son of God. This is the foundation of the hope to which the believer has been called. He surely is in a position to fulfil Peter's admonition: 'Be always ready with your defence whenever you are called to account for the hope that is in you' (1 Pet. 3: 15 NEB).
