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Editorial: The Relevance of Theological Education

Most theological students have doubts at some time about the usefulness of their theological training. Some of these doubts are justified, since most theological courses leave plenty of room for improvement. But some of our doubts reflect a lack of understanding of the purpose and function of theological training.

Some helpful observations on this point are made in an unpublished article (cited here by kind permission of the author) on 'An Approach to Theological Education' by Professor David Scholer, formerly of Gordon-Conwell Seminary and now of the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in the USA. Among the questions he helps to answer are: (1) Would it not be better to be out in the world doing useful work than to spend three or four valuable years in a theological institution cut off from the world? Professor Scholer believes that practical involvement and training are essential ingredients in theological training (and a lack of such Christian involvement is a sure recipe for boredom and dryness in theological studies). But 'in order to be the kind of person who is a problem solver and a person changer in our world, one needs to prepare. It is my contention that the only way to be an effective leader (in the church) over a long period of time is to have a qualified withdrawal for study and reflection, and that such a withdrawal is neither immoral nor a neglect of Christian responsibility. In fact, it is a fulfilment of it, if one wishes to be a Christian leader. We can think of certain illustrations of this in the Christian tradition: Jesus, of course, would be one of the first to come to our minds; he did not set out to change the world the day he reached manhood. Others would also come to mind: Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, Billy Graham and Martin Luther King.'

Professor Scholer suggests that the period of theological training is—or should be—a valuable time of working at one's own convictions. He cites the expression 'God has no grandchildren', and makes the point that anyone who is to minister to others with integrity and authority should have worked out his or her own understanding of basic issues such as why the Bible is an authority, why we should be concerned about social problems, and so on. The minister should not just repeat what he or she has been told by teachers without thinking it through.

(2) A second question that bothers many people concerns the curriculum: much of what we study seems unlikely to be of any use in the pulpit or the real world; so what is the point?

On this it has to be admitted that many theological courses are unbalanced and impractical. But Professor Scholer again has helpful things to say. He argues that the distinctive contribution that the theologically trained member of the church should bring

to the church is ‘expertise in the meaning of the very foundation of the life of Christ’s body, namely the Scriptures and their history within the body of Christ’. This means that the study of the Bible and of church history and theology should form the core of theological training, though he hastens to add that such study is not an end in itself, but is *for* the body of Christ and must therefore be coupled with training in communication and practical theology.

On the study of history in particular, we may not see much point in writing essays on topics such as ‘gnosticism’. But Professor Scholer writes: ‘A knowledge of history can aid us to understand the past, the whys and wherefores of what has happened when other people like ourselves, actual persons who lived with actual problems, faced difficulties. If we can learn how they struggled and how they solved or tried to solve their problems, other things being equal, we ought to be more prepared to face the problems of our future. There is a certain kind of very terrible pride that is exhibited when one disdains history; it assumes that all the wisdom of God and the ages can be immediately comprehensible to one person alone—that nobody else ever had an insight. Experience may be the best teacher, but certainly not my experience alone.’ More than that Professor Scholer argues that grappling with the ideas and problems of the past should help to shape us as people and make us more effective in serving others.

He denies that the accumulation of academic knowledge is necessarily useless, as some suppose. The Christian minister is rightly expected to know the Christian tradition and to answer people’s questions about it, and, although some of the things we study may seem unlikely ever to be of use in preaching and teaching, in fact, if we are to communicate effectively, we need a much wider understanding of our subject than will appear in our sermons (like the space scientist explaining his business to an unscientific audience). For example, to answer a simple question about a new translation of a Bible verse, we may well need at least some grasp of textual criticism.

Not that information is the only or the most important thing we learn in our theological training. Professor Scholer refers to the saying ‘Give me a fish and I eat for a day; teach me to fish, and I eat for a lifetime.’ The most important thing in our theological training is to ‘learn to fish’, *i.e.* to have a methodology of approach for, and to form the attitudes and perspectives that will help us deal with, the situations we face in a life-time’s ministry.

But still it is possible to complain that theological courses do not do enough in training students for practical ministry. The answer to that is certainly that good courses in practical theology should be included in any course of training for the ministry. But, on the other hand, it is worth realizing that much of the practical training *must* come (as with a doctor or lawyer) on the job after graduation. It is unrealistic to expect to learn in college all that you can and should learn after leaving college by working in a church situation, preferably under the guidance of a more senior minister.

(3) A third question about theological courses concerns their effect on one’s spiritual life: it has been said that theological seminaries are often spiritual cemeteries. Part of the blame for this lies with theological teachers who are theologically, spiritually and morally confused themselves and who pass their confusion on to their students. But, while Professor Scholer agrees that theological teachers and administrators should do more by example and action to foster Christian community and personal spiritual growth, he argues that Christian community does not just happen; it requires a deliberate effort by

everyone in the community not only to achieve good marks, but also to develop good Christian relationships. And so far as personal faith is concerned, we should indeed beware of false teaching that may erode our faith, if we are not critical of it; but we should on the other hand expect a good theological training to challenge things that we have accepted, perhaps unthinkingly, in the past and to refine our Christian understanding. 'When we do grapple with our personal faith there can come struggle and doubt, shock and dismay. We are tempted to say, as a very dear friend of mine said to me, "I am so glad that I never went to seminary so that my faith is undisturbed." Undoubtedly a vigorous and vital simplistic faith based on poor or inaccurate biblical, historical and theological grounds is preferable to informed biblical, historical and theological perceptions which, however, lack any vital personal faith. *But* such an alternative and dichotomy is *hardly* open to those in the community of theological education. We must have a personal faith with integrity, integrity in matters biblical, historical and theological.'

The challenge to all of us who study theology is not to remain unchanged in our studies (though to remain faithful), but to sift the good and the bad and to work on the academic and spiritual sides of things. 'Quality theological education means that both the integrity of the academic classroom *and* the involvement of the personal dimension are needed to make us the men and women of Christ, who are capable persons, intellectually and spiritually, to lead and serve in and for the body of Christ'

Editorial notes

In their planning of the journal the editors and committee of *Themelios* seek to include articles that address specific issues and problems faced by theological students in their courses. We hope in the coming issues to have a number of survey articles, in which authors will give us a guided-tour of particular key subjects. Professor Stanford Reid contributes the first of these surveys in this issue. If student readers wish to suggest subjects that are important in their courses and with which they would value help in *Themelios*, their suggestions will be welcomed. It is, of course impossible to cater for the needs of all theological students everywhere; but we hope to do all we can to assist our readers in understanding, defending and proclaiming the Christian faith.

The Old Testament and Christian faith: Jesus and the Old Testament in Matthew 1-5 Part 2

John Goldingay

The author here continues his study of Matthew chapters 1-5 begun in the previous issue.

3. Matthew 3:13-17 The Old Testament provides the images, ideas, and words with which to understand Christ

The account of John the Baptist's work closes with Jesus coming for baptism (3:13-17). At the moment when God the Holy Spirit comes to alight upon God the Son for his ministry, God the Father speaks from heaven: 'This is my son, my beloved, the one in whom I delight.' The words are not made up for the occasion: they are taken from the Old Testament.

Phrases from two or three Old Testament passages are combined here. First, 'This is my son' recalls Psalm 2:7. Psalm 2 is a king's testimony to the Lord's word to him. The king has no fear that he will be unable to maintain control of subject nations because the Lord has made him sovereign over them; he recalls the Lord's words of commission and assurance, 'You are my son, today I have begotten you.' After the exile, when Israel had no kings, such a psalm will have become expressive of Israel's hope that one day she will again have a king for whom God will fulfil this commitment; when God the Father takes up these words, he thereby declares that Jesus is the anointed one ('Messiah') there spoken of (v. 2).

'My beloved, in whom I delight' recalls Isaiah 42:1. Isaiah 42:1-9 describes the role that the Lord's servant is expected to fulfil. The role is in some respects quite similar to the king's calling, but the portrait of the servant in Isaiah 40-55 makes it clear that this role is not fulfilled by what we normally see as the exercise of power, but by accepting affliction and paying a huge personal price for the restoration of relationships between God and man. It is this calling that God the Father places before Jesus.

These two passages account satisfactorily for the words that appear in Matthew 3:17. But the middle phrase 'my son, my beloved' also recalls Genesis 22:2. In Genesis 22 God bids Abraham, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love' and offer him as a burnt offering to the Lord. In the end this sacrifice is not exacted, but Abraham shows himself willing to make it. His action (and Isaac's implicit willingness to be sacrificed) made a deep impression on Israel, and the passage was a much pondered one

among Jews of Jesus' day. It lies behind Paul's talk of God not sparing his only son in Romans 8:32. Given its importance in Jesus' day, it probably also lies behind God the Father's words in Matthew 3:17: Jesus is the only Son whom he loves but whom he is willing to sacrifice for the sake of the world, and Jesus is called to imitate Isaac's availability.

In Jesus' life and ministry, the occasion of his baptism and of the Spirit's coming on him is of key importance, and in the gospel tradition the account of this event has a key place. In the words he hears from heaven he receives fundamental guidelines for the way he is to understand himself. He has the authority of the Davidic king, given a special relationship of sonship to the God of heaven. At the same time he has the calling of the servant with its different form of power, exercised despite or through affliction. Indeed, if that point is not explicit enough, he is the beloved Son whom the Father is willing to sacrifice for the world's sake. Here, then, Jesus is given his fundamental theological orientation for his ministry, the key motifs that embody central aspects to his calling. They come from the Old Testament Scriptures.

This passage is the only one in Matthew 1-5 which explicitly utilizes the Old Testament to make a theological statement in this way. Indeed, theology as such is not an overt concern of Scripture. By its very nature the utilization of the Old Testament to make strictly theological statements is generally rather in the background of the New Testament. But it does pervade this background, for the vast bulk of the way the New Testament pictures God and man and the relationship between them assumes the way these realities are described in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the New Testament's theological dictionary or its language world. What the word 'God' meant was determined *de facto* by what it meant in the Jewish scriptures.

This point can be illustrated from the present context in Matthew. John the Baptist urges repentance on the grounds that the rule of heaven is at hand, exhorts people to flee from the coming wrath, warns them that trees that do not produce fruit are to be felled, and describes one who is coming after him harvesting wheat and burning chaff (3:1-12). All these motifs and themes come from the Old

Testament. It is on the basis of people's knowledge of these scriptures that John makes his appeal to them. (It is extraordinary how many attempts to understand 'the kingdom of God' start from the New Testament! Further, the 'enigma' of the sense in which the rule of God 'is at hand' or 'has come' may be less puzzling when looked at in the light of Old Testament speech since Am. 8:2, if not Gn. 6:13.)

The principle that the Old Testament provides the theological framework for understanding Christian faith can easily be illustrated from elsewhere in the New Testament. It is very clear when Paul, for instance, discusses fundamental questions in Romans. After stating his revolutionary gospel in 3:21-26 (itself thought out in fundamentally biblical terms), he has to face overtly the question whether this gospel is acceptable — that is, whether it is biblical enough. He approaches this question in chapter 4 by considering the key case of Abraham and maintaining that Abraham's relationship with God had a similar basis to the one he speaks of — it too involved a righteousness based on trust. Old Testament theology thus supports and illumines the nature of faith in Christ. Romans 3 alludes also to the question what effect this understanding of God's ways has on the position of the Jews, and this question is taken up systematically in chapters 9-11. Here the theological argument is conducted entirely in terms of the exposition of Scripture.

As in sections one and two above, there are two further points to be made. The first is that if the New Testament views the Old as its major resource for the theological perspective or context for understanding the Christ event, it directs us to a systematic study of Old Testament concepts, motifs, and images. If Jesus is the Messiah, the only Son whom the Father loves, the suffering Servant, we need to investigate what these motifs mean in their Old Testament context. If the Old Testament provides the language world in whose terms the Christ event finds its meaning, we need to learn to think and speak in the terms of that language world. If it is the God of Old Testament Israel whom Jesus calls Father (and whose fatherhood he then shares with us), we need to discover who this Father is. This takes us into a study of Old Testament symbol and imagery, and also into a study of 'Old Testament theology', which is the current version of the kind of systematic study of the Old Testament to which the New Testament implicitly directs us.

Admittedly Jesus and other New Testament writers understood and handled concepts which go back to the Old Testament not in their 'neat' Old Testament form but with the connotations that subsequent exegetical and theological tradition had

given them. The word 'messiah', which in the Old Testament had referred to Israel's present anointed king (or to other anointed agents of Yahweh such as priests) now naturally referred to the future anointed king for whom Israel hoped. The son of man, who in Daniel 7 is simply a figure in a vision, representing Israel, has become another symbolic redeemer figure. The New Testament thus does not take up Old Testament theological motifs in their Old Testament significance, but refracted through their usage in Jewish tradition.

This makes a practical difference to the New Testament's theological use of the Old, though hardly a difference of principle. Indeed, the New Testament is in no different position in relation to the Old than subsequent centuries (including our own) are in relation to the Bible as a whole. In both cases, it is the texts' own way of looking at reality to which we commit ourselves, even if at points we unconsciously allow our understanding of it to be influenced by subsequent semantic or theological developments.

The New Testament, then, invites us to interpret the Christ event in the light of the Old Testament's over-all theological perspective, in the terms of its language world. The converse point is that we also have to understand Old Testament theology and images in the light of the Christ event. No-one had ever before brought together the figures of the powerful king, the beloved son, and the afflicted servant. They are highly diverse figures and it would have been difficult to see how one ought to go about relating them. They are only brought together in the light of the Christ event, which enables one to look back at Old Testament events or themes and see inter-relationships which were imperceptible before, because their principle of relationship, the one to whom they referred in 'many and various ways', was not yet present. The occasion of Jesus' baptism is a highly creative theological moment.

Again, if one looks once more at John the Baptist's ministry as a whole, by no means every aspect of its teaching derives from the Old Testament. Baptism with water and baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire had no precise Old Testament antecedent. The Christ event brought new religious practices and new religious language as well as new collocations of old texts.

It is the three great moments of this Christ event which generate the insights that not only supplement but re-focus and re-define the nature of biblical faith. The first is the incarnation; as we noted in section 2 above, 'God with us' now means something more radical than was the case in Old Testament times (though something quite consistent with the view of God and man stated in the Old Testament). The

second is the cross, which brings to clearest external expression that unprecedented paradoxical collocation of kingly glory, fatherly sacrifice, and personal suffering first stated at Jesus' baptism. The third is the resurrection, which makes the hope of man's resurrection central rather than marginal to biblical faith and promises a resolution of the enigma and incompleteness of human life recognized by the Old Testament and instanced by Matthew's story of the death of Bethlehem's children and the prominence even in Israel's history of the likes of Herod and Archelaus.

When later parts of the New Testament describe the events, persons, and institutions of the Old Testament as types or symbols or foreshadowings of the realities of the Christian gospel, they are themselves going about this task of understanding Old Testament realities in the light of the Christ event. The exodus and conquest, or the person of Moses or Aaron, or Israelite rites of sacrifice were perfectly meaningful in their Old Testament context. But in retrospect Hebrews can see them as standing for something (release and rest, leadership and priesthood, means of gaining access to God's presence) which is now a reality in a fuller sense in Christ. The Old Testament realities provide one with the images and concepts to understand the Christ event, and the Christ event provides one with the deepest insight on the nature of salvation, in whose context Old Testament institutions need to be understood.

4. Matthew 4:1-11 The Old Testament tells you the kind of life God expects his people to live

Immediately after his baptism Jesus is led off into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, who offers him three suggestions of greater or lesser plausibility: to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread, to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple secure in the promise from Psalm 91 that God would keep him safe, and to secure the kingdoms of the world and their glory by submitting to the devil. Jesus refuses each of these suggestions; what is relevant to our present concern is the basis on which he does so. Each time Jesus responds, 'It is written . . .', and quotes from Deuteronomy. Man is not dependent merely on bread for life, but on God's Word, and Jesus must rely on that rather than unilaterally use the powers available to him as Son of God for his own benefit. He is not to put the Lord his God to the test to see whether he will fulfil his promises of protection, but rather to trust him to do so when the moment requires it. He is to worship and serve the Lord alone; it cannot be right to ignore this fundamental principle even to gain the world-

wide authority and glory which do ultimately belong to him.

The quotations come from Deuteronomy 5-11 (8:3; 6:16; 6:13), the section of Deuteronomy which describes the basic attitudes God expects of his people as they keep their side of the covenant relationship. Jesus presupposes that his life should be shaped by these imperatives expressed in the law given to Israel. Perhaps there is an implication that here in the wilderness the 'one true Israelite' takes seriously that set of principles given in the wilderness to Israel as a whole but never properly observed by her.

One is struck by the way that Jesus is able to draw from the stock of knowledge of the Torah that he had acquired as a Jew at each point a passage which goes to the root of the wrong attitude to God which the devil's suggestions involve. Part of the story's challenge to us, then, is that we should know the Scriptures (including the Old Testament) well enough to be able to evaluate suggestions put to us either by evidently demonic agencies or by well-disguised ones. Often such advice may have quite a degree of plausibility on its side. Is it not natural, for instance, to utilize your gifts in order to meet your personal needs? No compromise need be involved there; one has to look after one's own needs if one is to be able then to minister to others. Perceiving that plausible advice is actually misguided requires a profound and wide grasp of Scripture and the insight to perceive its application to us.

If we are concerned with Scripture's application to our behaviour, the areas of the Old Testament which will especially involve us are books in the Torah such as Deuteronomy, stories written to offer examples of how Israel should or should not behave (e.g. in Numbers), the exhortations of the prophets which often crystallize the moral attitudes to be embodied in actual behaviour, and the wisdom books (especially Proverbs) which establish the links between areas that we often keep separate such as religion and ethics on one side, shrewdness and success on the other.

We need an over-all knowledge of this material because often a particular insight taken out of the context of the rest of Scripture's teaching on that topic will be misleading. Proverbs, for instance, collects a range of material on areas of life such as money or sex, and many an individual proverb (commending or downgrading riches, reminding men of their weaknesses or women of theirs) looks very odd out of the context of this range of materials which over-all recognizes the complexity of the factors we have to take into account in coming to decisions about attitudes and behaviour.

The middle of Jesus' three temptations in Matthew illustrates this point in a way that is particularly significant for our present purpose, for it involves an appeal to the Old Testament on the part of the devil as well as on the part of Jesus. The devil can quote Scripture, too. So what is the difference between the use and abuse of Scripture?

It may be worth noting that the devil's application of Psalm 91 was entirely Christ-centred. That principle did not prevent his abusing Scripture. Perhaps he needed to be more *God*-centred, for Jesus responds to the devil by quoting a fundamental principle of our relationship with God: we are not to put him to the test. (It is, indeed, attitudes to God that are the concern of each of the passages he quotes — submission to God's Word, trust in God's promise, and worship of God's name.) Jesus thus sets the clear, *direct* demand of a fundamental passage in Deuteronomy against the devil's *application* of another passage to a particular set of circumstances. The guideline for distinguishing between the use and abuse of Scripture offered here is thus, test alleged application of Scripture by the direct teaching of Scripture elsewhere. The need for a wide knowledge of the over-all teaching of Scripture is underlined by the nature of the devil's misuse of it.

But how was it that the devil could produce an application of a scriptural text that is (at least at first sight) relatively plausible? Can misuse of Scripture only be detected by looking at it in the light of other Scripture? It is significant that in this particular case, at least, misuse of Scripture involved taking verses out of their original context. Psalm 91 throughout promises God's protection to 'the one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty'. In origin it may have been a psalm of assurance for any believer, though perhaps more likely it is a royal psalm, promising God's protection to the king in particular. If it was a royal psalm, and was as such understood messianically by the time of Jesus, this would give special point to the devil's quoting it: he is inviting Jesus to prove that what the psalm says about the (coming) king is true about him. But it is here that the devil's hermeneutics go wrong. The psalm speaks of God protecting his servant in whatever danger or attack comes to him. It says nothing about his courting danger or his taking risks that he could avoid. The devil is able to abuse the text in the course of his application of it because he has abused it in the course of his exegesis. He has taken particular phrases and promises out of context.

As well as ignoring the teaching of other parts of Scripture, then, the devil ignored the context of the words he quoted. This second error points to

another priority for our own study of Scripture, a skill in exegesis that is able to handle particular sections of Scripture in a way that is faithful to their particular witness. Many of us are attached to forms of devotional use of Scripture such as the collection of texts in *Daily Light* which work by drawing our attention to verses isolated from their context which express helpful devotional truths. Such collections can be helpful, but they risk imitating the devil's hermeneutic. The story of the man seeking God's guidance by opening Scripture at random, who found first Matthew 27:5 ('Judas went and hanged himself'), then — seeking something more congenial — Luke 10:37 ('Go and do thou likewise') contains a warning about a devotional use of Scripture which risks being abuse like the devil's.

5. Matthew 5:1-12 The Old Testament describes the kind of life with God that the believer can live

'Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. He opened his mouth and taught them saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . ." For many readers the 'Beatitudes' or Blessings with which the Sermon on the Mount opens constitute a high point in the New Testament Scriptures. Here is a deep and moving account of what it means to live with God. The Christian understandably assumes that they are wholly the creation of Jesus. In fact, the form and content of these Blessings derive substantially from the Old Testament. The declaration of blessing on people of a certain style of attitude and life recalls especially the opening psalm in the Psalter (also Ps. 128). The Sermon on the Mount follows the Psalter in beginning with a blessing on those who are open to walking in God's way. The poor in spirit to whom the kingdom belongs are those to whom Isaiah 61 long before declared good news (*cf.* Mt. 4:23) of freedom, vindication, and restoration. That chapter in Isaiah was an important one for Jesus. He quotes it in his sermon at Nazareth in a passage which Luke includes at an equivalent place in his gospel to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew (Lk. 4:16-21), and he echoes it in describing his ministry to John the Baptist (Mt. 11:2-6).

Succeeding verses in Matthew 5 recall the Old Testament more directly. 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted?' 'The Lord has anointed me . . . to comfort all who mourn' (Is. 61:1-2). 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth?' 'The meek shall possess the land' (Ps. 37:11 — earth or land is the same word in Hebrew and in Greek). 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied?' 'Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. . . . Why do you

spend . . . your labour for that which does not satisfy . . .’ (Is. 55:1-2; righteousness, in the sense of the Lord re-establishing his people’s rights by acting to deliver them from the Babylonians, is the gift the Lord is offering here). ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy?’ ‘With the merciful you will show yourself merciful’ (Ps. 18:25, following RV). ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God?’ ‘Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh? . . . He who has clean hands and a pure heart . . .’ (Ps. 24:3-4).

The depth of Jesus’ insights on what it means to live with God is in large part due to the extent of his soaking in the Old Testament. Psalms and Isaiah, the books most clearly reflected in these Blessings, are the books most often and most widely quoted in the New Testament. Psalms is, of course, the Old Testament book that most directly concerns itself with our life with God, our spirituality, our life of praise, prayer and personal commitment, and Jesus’ own example elsewhere in the gospels directs us to Psalms as our resource for our praise and prayer. For Jesus, it was the interweaving of petition and praise in a lament such as Psalm 22 that provided the means of expression for his own anguish at the prospect of betrayal and abandonment (see especially Mt. 27:46). But precisely in such a psalm Jesus found the psalmist’s characteristic insistence on looking beyond his anguish, as well as on looking that anguish in the face. Claus Westermann exaggerated only slightly (Ps. 88 seems to be an exception) when he declared that in the Psalms ‘there is no petition . . . that did not move at least one step . . . on the road to praise’, as ‘there is also no praise that was fully separated from the experience of God’s wonderful intervention in time of need’.¹ Certainly Psalm 22 holds together an openness to God over one’s feelings and needs with a striving nevertheless to maintain faith and praise towards the God who has cared for me in the past and is still ‘my God’ even though he seems to have abandoned me, and with an anticipation of renewed praise for his turning to me again at my moment of urgent need. The psalm’s successful battle to look beyond affliction as well as looking it in the face is reflected in the reference to it in Hebrews 2:12. The anticipatory praise of Psalm 22:22-31 was found on the lips of Jesus, as well as the present lament of the opening part of the psalm.

The resources of the psalms for our life with God are easily ignored by believers who perhaps find it difficult to get beyond the cultural conditioning of the psalms’ preoccupation with bulls of Bashan and Moabite washpots. The effort to do so is worthwhile,

for in the psalms we are given Scripture’s own collection of things that God is happy to have said to him; as Athanasius put it, most of Scripture speaks to us, but the psalms speak for us.

Once again, however, to say that the Sermon on the Mount implies that the Old Testament tells you the kind of life with God that a believer can live is to state a half-truth. It is also the case that the arrival of Jesus introduces an element of revolutionary newness into the biblical understanding of life with God.

This appears in the Blessings themselves. Most of their raw material comes from the Old Testament Scriptures. But out of this raw material Jesus creates something quite fresh and new, and greater than the parts it incorporates. What he does theologically (or what he hears theologically) in bringing together the figures of the anointed king, the beloved son, and the suffering servant, here he does devotionally in creating a new and profound whole from elements of largely Old Testament origin. The Blessings are not merely an anthology of half-familiar aphorisms but a profoundly ordered totality, a rounded whole which offers the listener a quite new over-all portrait of that life with God which was already the Old Testament’s concern.

It is probably fair to claim, however, that Jesus’ crucial contribution to the shaping of our life with God is not his teaching at all but his life — and especially his death, resurrection, and giving of the Holy Spirit to his people. In so far as the New Testament brings insight that goes beyond that of the Old, it is generally (perhaps invariably) insight that can emerge now and now only, through the events of Jesus’ incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and bestowing of the Spirit. The reason why new things can be said is not that the evolution of human thinking or the progress of divine revelation has developed to such a point that new statements can now be added to old less complete truths, but that new events make new statements possible and necessary. Jesus could not speak of the Spirit before the event of the giving of the Spirit (Jn. 7:39); nor could he speak of taking up the cross or enjoying resurrection life until crucifixion and resurrection had taken place. But when those events have happened, the dynamics of life with God can be thought through with new depth in the light of them (as happens, for instance, in Romans 3-8). It is not necessarily that life with God is different at every point (people were only put right with God through Christ and by faith under the old covenant); rather it is that the way life with God works can now be conceptualized in a fresh way in the light of realities (cross, empty tomb, giving of the Spirit) which are

¹ *The Praise of God in the Psalms* (ET Richmond: Knox, 1965/ London: Epworth, 1966), p. 154.

actual events that can be pointed to and explicated.

It is particularly instructive to set the 'vindictory' psalms and the Christ event alongside each other. The Christian believer may be most immediately aware of the difference between prayers for vengeance on those who have attacked us (e.g. Ps. 137:7-9; 139:19-22) and any prayers we are told Jesus ever prayed for his enemies. Whatever the reasons for this, they do not include the possibility that the psalmists were rather insensitive, unspiritual, or immoral men (the rest of Pss. 137 and 139 show that), nor the possibility that in their day the truth of God's love for nations other than Israel was unknown (various passages at least as old as these psalms indicate that it was), nor the possibility that Old Testament ethics allowed people to do what they liked to their enemies (a passage such as Ex. 23:4-5 indicates that you have to love your neighbour even when he is your enemy). Theologically, perhaps prayer for one's enemies like that of Jesus on the cross is strictly possible only now, because it is the cross that makes forgiveness available to people; the psalms' prayers for judgment on the wicked are prayers for God's justice to be at work in this world, and it is the cross that is God's 'Yes' to their prayer for wickedness to be punished.

That insight might suggest that the psalms' prayers for God's judgment are, then, valid before Christ, but inappropriate after Christ. In fact, however, one should be wary of drawing too sharply the contrast between the attitude of these psalms and that of the New Testament. In these five chapters of Matthew we have already read John the Baptist's warnings to people he addressed as a viper's brood who are about to be overtaken by the wrath of God, as trees that have failed to fruit and will be felled and burned (3:7-10). The Sermon on the Mount makes clear that John's understanding of what Jesus' coming will bring about for the impenitent is accepted by Jesus himself (7:19). Those whose righteousness is only up to that of the scribes and Pharisees (!) will be excluded from the kingdom; anger, insults and contempt will mean fiery judgment; adultery, lust, and divorce will mean going to hell (5:20-32). The Day of the Lord will be the occasion of Jesus' repudiation of many who thought they belonged to him (7:21-23). Indeed (a saying from beyond the Sermon adds) it will see the sons of the kingdom cast into outer darkness where men will cry and groan in anguish (8:12). Nor is prayer for judgment like that of the psalms absent from the New Testament: the Lord promises that such prayer for vindication will be heard (Lk. 18:1-8) and reassures the martyrs that the moment of vengeance will come (Rev. 6:9-11). At this point, too, it transpires that the Testaments

dovetail and complement each other.

6. Matthew 5:17-48 The Old Testament provides the foundation for the moral teaching of Christ

Christ comes not to annul the Torah and the Prophets, but to fulfil them (5:17). What is this 'fulfilling'?

We would expect the word to have the same meaning with regard to both the Torah and the Prophets, and one suggested understanding of this kind assumes that the reference to the Torah is to passages within the Torah which could be interpreted eschatologically (e.g. Gn. 3:15; 49:9-10; Nu. 24:17; Dt. 18:15-19). But Matthew refers to none of these passages (though Nu. 24:17 presumably lies behind Mt. 2:2) and his many quotations from the Torah, including the ones that dominate this chapter, relate to its teaching on behaviour.

More likely the 'fulfilling' of Torah and prophets involves confirming them (God really made these promises and warnings, God really gave these laws), embodying them (Jesus' own life puts into practice what the Torah demands and makes actual what the prophecies picture), and broadening them (you will begin at the Torah, but then go beyond its demands if you wish to understand the full depth of God's expectations of his creatures; you will begin with these prophecies, but then go beyond what they envisage if you wish to understand the full depth of God's purpose of salvation). At least, this seems to be what Jesus actually does with both Torah and prophecy.

Subsequent events and teaching will show that 'not an iota' (the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet), 'not a dot' (the smallest part of a letter — cf. our 'dotting the i's and crossing the t's') (5:18) does not mean that Jesus is committed to observing the law at every point. Sometimes 'profaning' the sabbath is appropriate, given precedent in the Old Testament in the life of David and in the regulations for the priests, given the presence of something greater than the temple, given the priority of other principles from Scripture, and given the Son of man's precedence over the sabbath (12:1-8). Sometimes scriptural laws can be abrogated (rather than extended, as the Pharisees and scribes wished): far from worrying about traditional laws concerning ritual uncleanness, Jesus abandons a basic principle of scriptural law concerning such questions, asserting that the deeds a man does, not the food he eats, are what defile him (15:1-20).

In line with these characteristics of gospel material elsewhere, Matthew 5:21-48 approaches the Torah with a yes and a no. Its ban on murder and adultery is affirmed and extended, but thus its acceptance of divorce is revoked; the same penalty applies to the

inner attitudes that lie behind the acts of murder and adultery and the apparently lesser deeds that lie behind them. Its insistence on only true oaths and only equivalent vengeance is taken further: now no oaths and no vengeance at all. The law on oaths and vengeance is thus extended by being abrogated. Its exhortation to love one's neighbour is extended to include one's enemies: there is, of course, no Old Testament exhortation to hate one's enemies (here Jesus purges the law of post-biblical additional material) and there are some Old Testament pointers towards the opposite attitude, but 'love your enemies' has not been said in so many words in Old Testament Scripture. So Jesus affirms and develops one strand of Old Testament attitudes even as he puts a question-mark by another.

What, then, is the relationship between Jesus' challenges and those that appear in the Old Testament itself? Two common views seem to me to be mistaken. One is that Jesus is working out the implications of the Old Testament laws: the ban on murder in the decalogue, for instance, implies a ban on wrong attitudes to others. I cannot see that this is so. The ban on murder intended to ban murder. Other passages of the Old Testament may imply that hostile attitudes to others are wrong; but one cannot read this concern into the overt statements of the decalogue. The Sermon on the Mount draws attention not so much to the deeper meaning of the laws, but to the deeper demands of the same One who enjoined these laws.

An opposite view emphasizes rather than minimizes the gap between the Old Testament law and the Sermon on the Mount. Under the influence of the evolutionary thinking which pervades Western culture, the relationship between Old and New Testament morality has commonly been understood in developmental terms. The ethics of the Old Testament is, then, inevitably primitive compared with that of the New, but the fully mature form of Jesus' ethics could only emerge when man had passed through more primitive stages of thinking. Old Testament ethics can then be affirmed as a necessary stage in this development, but treated as out-dated because it belongs to an outgrown stage in this development. Such an approach to Old Testament morality (and theology) appears in a baptized form as the theory of progressive revelation.

In my view, the model of evolutionary development is fundamentally misleading when applied to the Bible (and most other areas of the Humanities, as far as I can tell). Three alternative models are much more helpful. One is that of foundation and superstructure. The external commands of the decalogue provide the necessary

basis for more demanding requirements which can be built on them. A second model is that of boundaries and what fills them. The negative commands of the decalogue mark the limits of acceptable behaviour — beyond this, one is in unequivocally foreign territory. But they are only boundary-markers; when they are established, one can begin to 'possess the land' by filling in the positive content of behavioural style and attitude that is appropriate to this country.

Given such models, it is easier to see the complementary nature of the decalogue's negative, external commands and those of the Sermon on the Mount, and the continuing significance of the former in relation to the latter. The building always needs the lower courses of bricks as well as the superstructure; the land need frontiers as well as policies for internal development. Jesus is not interested in internal attitudes *rather than* external actions (it is he who tells an adulteress not to sin again: see Jn. 8:11), but in both. Paul is not interested in the law of Christ *rather than* the decalogue (he supports his teaching by quoting from the latter in Eph. 6:1-3, and repeats one of its prohibitions in Eph. 4:28), but in both.

Jesus' own teaching suggests yet a third model for understanding differences in level among scriptural commands. His comments concerning divorce in the Sermon on the Mount are expanded elsewhere (19:2-9), and this further treatment of the topic offers us a helpful clue to perceiving the significance of much Old Testament law. The Pharisees ask his opinion on divorce, and he refers them to Genesis 1-2, whose account of the origin of marriage (he infers) indicates that divorce cannot really be recognized. What then of the Deuteronomic permission of divorce (Dt. 24:1-4), they ask? That was given, Jesus replies, 'for your hardness of heart'; divorce and re-marriage are really only a form of legalized adultery (except in the case of *porneia*, he adds: the word means 'fornication', but its precise significance here is the subject of debate). But because of human sin marriages will break down, so the law contains a regulation that applies to this circumstance.

Within the Torah, then, one can find both material that expresses the ultimate will of God and material which takes a realistic approach to the fact of human sin and contents itself with the attempt to control the extent to which God's ultimate will is bound to be ignored, and to minimize the ill effects which issue from its being ignored. Marriage breakdown is hardly reconcilable with Genesis 1-2; but it is better to acknowledge the fact of marriage breakdown and seek to lessen the further ills to which it can lead (especially for a woman) than to refuse to recognize such realities.

The 'low standard' of some Old Testament law is explained by the fact that it is law designed for sinners. Such law contrasts not only with the exalted standard of the Sermon on the Mount. It contrasts also with the exalted standard of the creation story and of the challenges of the prophets. Indeed, Jesus' appeal to Genesis 1-2 reminds us that the Old Testament's significance for our ethical questions emerges not exclusively (perhaps not even primarily) from the explicit commands which appear in the laws (and in the prophets and wisdom books), but also from the perspective on human life which appears both in the story of creation (man as made in God's image) and in the story of redemption (man as freed from bondage), from the values which are asserted especially in the prophets and the wisdom books (values such as justice, faithfulness, and compassion), and from the concerns regarding human life which run through the whole Old Testament — concerns with areas such as marriage and sex, politics and land, work and pleasure, family and community.

The presence of this element of condescension in Old Testament law, and the background of Old Testament ethics in the fact of creation as well as in the fact of redemption, point to the possibility of applying God's standards to our own real world. They show how in Israel God 'compromised' in his relationship with fallen humanity, rather than either insisting on a standard it would never reach, or totally abandoning it because it would not reach this standard. It thus offers us a paradigm for our own application of God's ultimate standards to the situations of fallen humanity that we encounter. Indeed, the fact that in Israelite law God's standards are applied to fallen humanity suggests one aspect of the answer to the question whether *Israelite*, covenantal law can apply outside the covenant people. In principle this law can be generally applicable, because it was law given to an ordinary human people, even though they were a people invited into a special relationship with God. It can also be generally applicable because it is fundamentally creation law as well as redemption law; its background lies in the nature of humanity as humanity and in humanity's relationship with its Creator. For that reason, too, it can apply outside Israel, as well as inside Israel. In principle, again, similar considerations suggest that it is quite justified

to apply the attitudes to social justice which appear in the prophets to the ordinary nation today, and quite justified to apply to it promises about the blessing that can come when a people returns to the ways of God (2 Ch. 7:14); indeed the book of Jonah pictures a prophet himself doing this.

Perhaps, however, the element of condescension in Old Testament law is also present in New Testament teaching. Paul, after all, makes observations about slaves and free men that reassert their oneness before God at creation and place a time-bomb under the institution of slavery. But Paul himself nevertheless accepts that institution and bids slaves obey their masters. Indeed, perhaps this element of compromise is present even in Matthew 19. Here, according to Matthew, Jesus' ban on divorce is qualified by his making an exception in the case of fornication; no such qualification appears in Mark's account of this incident. Does the Matthaean version merely make explicit what the Markan one took for granted? Or is Jesus, in Matthew's account, also condescending to the realities of human sin, failure, and suffering in the lives of his followers?

The principle of condescension may also explain the Old Testament's enthusiasm over ritual regulations which Jesus turns away from in a chapter such as Matthew 15. Both the rites of sacrifice and the place of sacrifice (the temple) first appear in Scripture as human ideas which are accepted by God (with overt misgivings, in the latter case), rather than as originally divine intentions (Gn. 4:3-4; 2 Sa. 7). Perhaps regulations concerning cleanness and uncleanness have a similar status: not *ultimately* good ideas, but helpful to people in certain cultures, and capable of being harnessed so as to embody real truth.

In the Bible's teaching on moral questions, then, the Scriptures written before Christ and the new insights of the Christ event complement each other. The Christian church's calling is to let its understanding of history, of prophecy, of theology, of spirituality, and of ethics be shaped by the joint witness of Old and New Testaments. By interpreting Christ in the light of the Old Testament, the New invites us to take up the Old Testament's own concerns in all their width of interest. By interpreting the Old Testament in the light of Christ, the New invites us to look at all those concerns in the light of his coming.

The 'Majority Text Debate': New Form of an Old Issue

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Earlier this century, Leon Vaganay expressed a widely-held view when he wrote that the *Textus Receptus* (TR) is 'dead at last and, let us hope, forever'.¹ In recent years, however, an increasing number of books and pamphlets have appeared which argue for a return to the Byzantine or Majority text, of which the TR is the chief printed representative, on the grounds that it more accurately represents the original text of the New Testament than does any modern critical edition. The movement back to the TR is usually linked as well to a defence of the King James Version (AV) as the most accurate available translation of the TR.

Not surprisingly, this call to abandon the critical Greek texts which lie behind all recent English translations of the New Testament in favour of the Majority text has not gone without notice. Thus there has occurred a revival of sorts of the old 'TR debate' which was originally sparked in 1881 by the publication of Westcott and Hort's *The New Testament in the Original Greek*² and whose best-known participant was the doughty J. W. Burgon. In what follows an effort will be made to survey the contours of this new debate about an old question, focusing on the key issues and their significance.

In brief, the proponents of the Majority text argue that Westcott and Hort's text-critical theories and methods were wrong, and that their false views have misled other textual critics for a century. The 'Neutral' text preferred by them, far from being a very pure representative of a very ancient text, is actually a late corrupt form of text influenced by heretical doctrines and poor scholarship. The way to correct this 100-year-old error is to return to the Majority text. Not only does a huge preponderance of extant manuscripts support this text-type but, it is claimed, the Majority text is closer to the original and is doctrinally superior.

While the basic position of the Majority text advocates is similar, the arguments brought to bear in support of that position vary considerably, and it is necessary to distinguish two groups. There are elements of continuity between them, but the differences are sufficiently great so as to require separate treatment.

Prominent among the first group, which defends the TR, are Terence Brown, David Otis Fuller, J. J. Ray, and E. F. Hills. In contrast to Burgon, their champion, who was a scholar and

¹ Leon Vaganay, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London, 1937), p. 173.

² B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge, 1881).

indefatigable textual critic whose writings were based on tiresome work on original manuscripts, most of these men betray little if any first-hand acquaintance with either the materials of textual criticism or any of the scholarly literature of the last fifty years.³ Their writings largely consist of reprints of or extracts from earlier writers, especially Burgon, who are quoted as if every line they ever wrote were true. Their attacks on the theories of Westcott and Hort consist primarily of *ad hominem* accusations (they are variously called papists, Arians, Origenists, rationalists, and naturalists)⁴ and leading questions left unanswered. The points adduced in favour of the TR are theological rather than historical and are related to an extreme form of the doctrine of divine preservation. Fuller, for example, claims that those 'who believe in the Verbal, Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures... of necessity must believe in the Providential Preservation of the Scriptures through the centuries';⁵ further, says Hills, the 'consistently orthodox Christian' must believe 'that it was through the usage of the Church that Christ has fulfilled His promise always to preserve the true New Testament text, and that therefore the Byzantine Text found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament

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manuscripts is the true text'.⁶

In other words, the Greek Orthodox church is identified as the 'channel through which the Scriptures were preserved.'⁷ No arguments or historical evidence are offered in support of this view; it is simply asserted that this is how it happened. Moreover, to believe otherwise, it is implied, is tantamount to holding to a low view of Scripture.⁸

It is not to be inferred that these men are idiots or scoundrels; their motives appear to be sincere. Unfortunately, as one writer has observed, an understandable but wrongly-directed zeal for the KJV and the Greek text it represents has made them careless with regard to facts,⁹ and ignorance has too frequently resulted in the substitution of invective and special pleading for reasoned argument.

³ A notable exception is E. F. Hills, who wrote a Harvard dissertation on the Caesarean text and published related articles in reputable scholarly journals. Ironically, however, Hills represents a most extreme form of TR advocacy. Unlike most TR defenders, Hills argues for the very wording of the TR, including the places where it follows the Vulgate against all known Greek manuscripts. In his opinion, it was part of God's providence that these Vulgate readings should enter the TR, there to be available to the translators of the KJV! See *The King James Version Defended. A Space-Age Defense of the Historic Christian Faith* (Des Moines, Iowa: Christian Research Press, 1973), pp. 111, 188, 194-197.

⁴ The humanist Erasmus, however, at times is nearly canonized.

⁵ D. O. Fuller (ed.), *True or False?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International, 1973), p. 5.

⁶ E. F. Hills, 'The Magnificent Burgon', in D. O. Fuller (ed.), *Which Bible?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International, 1971), p. 67.

⁷ There is an anti-Catholic bias to this point as well; cf. Hills, 'Burgon', p. 66.

⁸ One wonders how such noted conservatives as B. B. Warfield or J. Gresham Machen, who utilized a critical text, would have responded to this charge.

⁹ D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), p. 43.

The most direct response to these particular arguments is found in a slim volume by D. A. Carson.¹⁰ It is difficult not to think that it is a very devastating rebuttal. Besides pointing out quite carefully the logical contradictions and theological *non sequiturs* in their reasoning, he speaks quite clearly to the theological concerns of the TR advocates as he notes the ways they have mis- or over-interpreted Scripture in support of their views. By the time Carson finishes his discussion, the lack of real substance in the arguments of Fuller or Hill, *e.g.*, is fairly apparent.

When one turns, however, to the works of the second group, which supports not the TR but the Majority text (of which the TR is only a corrupt late representative), and whose leading figures include Zane Hodges, Wilbur Pickering, and Jakob van Bruggen,¹¹ one encounters a much more sophisticated and creditable-appearing line of approach. The *ad hominem* arguments have largely (though not entirely) disappeared and *a priori* theological statements no longer form the primary basis of their arguments.¹² Instead one finds a determined effort to point out problems in the views of Westcott and Hort (especially in Pickering), and an attempt to set the preference for the Majority text on some kind of historically-grounded basis. These writers, moreover, in sharp contrast to the first group, have read and make liberal use of much of the recent literature on textual criticism.

The efforts of this group to rehabilitate the Majority text have not gone unnoticed. Carson's book devotes an appendix to a critique of Pickering, and both Gordon Fee and Richard A. Taylor have written critical reviews of it.¹³ Pickering's response to the latter was later published along with a rejoinder by Taylor.¹⁴ Also, a general article on the 'TR revival' by Fee was followed by a response from Hodges, which in turn was accompanied by a rejoinder and surrejoinder by each.¹⁵ Thus there has been direct interaction between the proponents of the opposing views, and this primarily constitutes the 'Majority text debate' today.

More precisely, it is a debate over text and method. For Hodges *et al.* are contending not just for a different form of text, but for a completely different method of doing textual criticism. That is, they reject both the current critical texts and the approaches used in arriving at those texts. Herein

¹⁰ See n. 9 above.

¹¹ Zane C. Hodges, 'The Greek Text of the King James Version', *Bib Sac* 125 (1968), pp. 334-345; *idem*, 'Rationalism and Contemporary New Testament Criticism', *Bib Sac* 128 (1971), pp. 27-35; *idem*, 'A Defense of the Majority Text', printed syllabus notes, Dallas Theological Seminary, n.d.; Wilbur Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1977); Jakob van Bruggen, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament* (trans. C. Kleijn; Winnipeg: Premier, 1976).

¹² One still finds, nonetheless, statements such as this by Hodges ('Rationalism', pp. 29-30): 'the logic of faith demands that documents so unique cannot have had a history wholly like that of secular writings'.

¹³ Carson, *KJV Debate*, pp. 105-123; G. D. Fee, 'A Critique of W. N. Pickering's *The Identity of the New Testament Text*. A Review Article', *WestTheolJour* 41(1979), pp. 397-423; Richard A. Taylor, 'Queen Anne Resurrected? A Review Article', *JETS* 20 (1977), pp. 377-381.

¹⁴ W. N. Pickering, "'Queen Anne...'" and All That: A Response', *JETS* 21 (1978), pp. 165-167; Taylor, "'Queen Anne'" Revisited: A Rejoinder', *JETS* 21 (1978), pp. 169-171.

¹⁵ G. D. Fee, 'Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the Textus Receptus', *JETS* 21 (1978), pp. 19-33; Zane Hodges, 'Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: A Response', *JETS* 21 (1978), pp. 143-155; Fee, 'Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: A Rejoinder', *JETS* 21 (1978), pp. 157-160; Hodges, 'Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: A Surrejoinder', *JETS* 21 (1978), pp. 161-164.

lies the real significance of the movement, for if they are right, the consequences of their approach would entail no less radical a shift today than that which occurred in 1881, when Westcott and Hort succeeded in overthrowing the long-dominant TR. Nor is the debate without pragmatic considerations, since the Majority text arguments appear to be having some impact on Bible translators and translations in the Third World.¹⁶

In what follows no attempt will be made to summarize the views of each participant in the

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debate, since this has largely been done in the literature just mentioned. Rather, the focus will be on the key issues raised by the Majority text proponents, and how well these have fared under the criticism they have received.

One may begin with the fact that some 80% to 90% of known manuscripts represent the Majority text-type. Hort, nevertheless, and most critics since, have rejected this majority in favour of the so-called Alexandrian text-type. Hort had two reasons for doing this, one theoretical and one historical. Theoretically, in accord with the genealogical principle, numbers mean nothing. As Colwell observed,

Suppose that there are only ten copies of a document and that nine are all copied from one; then the majority can be safely rejected. Or suppose that the nine are copied from a lost manuscript and that this lost manuscript and the other one were both copied from the original; then the vote of the majority would not outweigh that of the minority ... a majority of manuscripts is not necessarily to be preferred as correct.¹⁷

It was by means of this *a priori* possibility that Westcott and Hort rejected the argument based on the numerical superiority of the Byzantine text.

Historically, Hort considered the Majority text to be a late recension characterized by inferior secondary readings.¹⁸ He considered it to be late because it was found in none of the earliest manuscripts nor was it used by any ante-Nicene Father, and viewed its readings as secondary because when tested by the canons of internal evidence, such as harmonization *or brevior lectio potior* (preferring the shorter reading), they repeatedly proved to be inferior to those of other text-types. As, for its recensional character, he suggested that it was due to the editorial activity of Lucian of Antioch in the early fourth century.

¹⁶ Cf. Eugene A. Nida, 'The New Testament Greek Text in the Third World', in E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee (eds.), *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in honour of Bruce M. Metzger* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. 375-380.

¹⁷ E. C. Colwell, 'Genealogical Method: Its Achievements and Its Limitations', *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), p. 65.

¹⁸ B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* [ii,] Introduction [and] Appendix (Cambridge, 1881), pp. 93-117, 132-139.

While most scholars continue to view the Majority text as late and secondary, Hort's explanation of its origin is widely rejected. There is no direct evidence that Lucian ever worked on the New Testament text, nor can the Majority text any longer be traced back to a single event. In fact, 'neither the origin of the Byzantine text viewed as entirety nor the origin of its various sub-forms in the course of history is known'.¹⁹ Thus most textual critics are in the position of rejecting a key part of Hort's argument while continuing to accept his results.

It is here that the Majority text advocates raise their challenge. Hodges regards as unscientific any claim of progress towards recovery of the original which leaves 80% of the witnesses wrapped in obscurity. The key question in his opinion is how does one explain the relative uniformity of the overwhelming mass of manuscript witnesses. In place of the agnosticism of most critics, Hodges and his allies offer a reconstruction of the text that not only accounts for the origin and uniformity of the 80%, but of the (on their view) deviant 20% as well: the Byzantine text is original, and the other textual traditions represent expected deviations from it. Only this view, Hodges feels, adequately accounts for all the data.²⁰

Like Hort's, their argument has two poles, one theoretical and one historical, of which the former is the key to their whole position. Hort, in discussing the genealogical principle, had observed that 'A theoretical presumption indeed remains that a majority of extant documents is more likely to represent a majority of ancestral documents at each stage of transmission than *vice versa*'.²¹ Hodges then develops the point:

under the normal circumstances the older a text is than its rivals, the greater are its chances to survive in a plurality or a majority of the texts extant at any subsequent period. But the oldest text of all is the autograph. Thus it ought to be taken for granted that, barring some radical dislocation in the history of transmission, a majority of texts will be far more likely to represent correctly the character of the original than a small minority of texts. This is especially true when the ratio is an overwhelming 8:2. Under any reasonably normal transmissional conditions, it would be for all practical purposes quite impossible for a later text-form to secure so one-sided a preponderance of extant witnesses.²²

This argument is supported by a lengthy statistical analysis worked out by Hodges' brother, an Army statistician; Hodges concludes his brother's analysis by charging that the acceptance of modern critical texts 'constitutes nothing less than a wholesale rejection of probabilities on a sweeping scale!'²³

While the statistical argument is central, the need to answer Hort's other two points is not overlooked. The absence of any early manuscript or patristic witnesses to the Majority text is

¹⁹ J. N. Birdsall, 'The New Testament Text' in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 1 (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), p. 320.

²⁰ Hodges, 'Defense', p. 9.

²¹ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, p. 45. Hort's next sentence, however, should be noted: 'But the presumption is too minute to weigh against the smallest tangible evidence of other kinds.'

²² Hodges, 'Defense', p. 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

countered in a number of ways. Both Hodges and van Bruggen note that all really early mss are from just one location,

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Egypt, and that there is no evidence preserved from any early Antiochian Father—thus with regard to Patristic evidence there is a gap just where one would expect to find the Byzantine text.²⁴ But this only meets an argument from silence with the same, and this line of reasoning cannot bear the weight placed upon it.²⁵ Thus Pickering's approach becomes the critical one. He asserts two points: many Majority readings are early, and early Fathers do support the Majority text. For this second point he relies entirely on the labours of Miller and Burgon, who collected a huge file of patristic citations of the New Testament.²⁶

Since consideration of Hort's third point, the supposed inferiority of Majority readings, will take us into the crucial area of methodology, it may be well to pause at this point to evaluate the case for the Majority text made thus far. What is one to make of the contention that the 8:2 MS ratio of extant MSS in favour of the Majority text swings probability overwhelmingly in favour of it being original, and that the Majority text is found in early witnesses and Fathers?

The latter point, it appears, simply will not stand. With regard to the Fathers, Fee, who is among the most active and significant researchers in the area of patristic citations, has demonstrated quite clearly that Pickering is simply wrong; his list of nearly thirty Fathers who allegedly 'recognize' Majority readings has no basis in fact. No early Father witnesses to the Majority text; the only one prior to Chrysostom known to have used it was the heretical Asterius the Sophist (d. 341). Pickering's claim to the contrary overlooks completely the researches of the last eight decades. Further, in citing Burgon and Miller he is only repeating their errors. Miller, *e.g.*, claimed that seven Fathers supported the Majority reading in Matthew 9:13; Fee's check, however, showed that only one of the seven actually did so.²⁷ In sum, Pickering's whole point is without foundation.

Pickering and the others are correct, on the other hand, in saying that Majority readings are early, but they still fail to make their point, since they have confused readings with text-type. Many Majority readings are ancient readings; this has been known, though inadequately recognized, at least since the discovery of p 45 and p 46 over forty years ago.²⁸ But while individual readings are early, the Majority text as an identifiable grouping of readings is not. That is, one must distinguish between the earliest appearance of scattered readings and the earliest appearance of an identifiable pattern of readings. The distinctive grouping of variants that identifies a text as 'Alexandrian' can be found in the second century, as can that which marks the so-called 'Western' text-type. But while Majority readings can also be found in the second century, the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15; van Bruggen, *Ancient Text*, pp. 22-23, 25-26. For a discussion of their remarks about the destruction of manuscripts after copying, see Carson, *Plea*, pp. 47-48.

²⁵ Cf. Carson, *Plea*, p. 47, n. 5.

²⁶ Pickering, *Identity*, pp. 62-77.

²⁷ Fee, 'Critique', pp. 415-423.

²⁸ Cf. G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles* (London: British Academy, 1953), pp. 55-56, 150-151.

Majority text cannot; the characteristically Byzantine pattern of variants occurs only at a later time.

As for Hodges' statistical argument, it rests on a single crucial assumption: that the transmission process has been 'reasonably normal', as Hodges puts it; 'barring some radical dislocation', the point is valid. Thus the key question now becomes, has there been any 'radical dislocation' in the history of transmission? That is, has the transmission of the New Testament occurred in a relatively normal fashion, in which case the autographs are represented by the Majority, or are there reasons to think that the process has been disrupted in such a way as to account for the numerical preponderance of a secondary text form?

A quick historical overview suggests that the transmission process has been affected to such an extent that belief in a 'normal' process becomes difficult. The following points may be noticed:²⁹

1. The destruction of manuscripts in pre-Constantinian persecutions. Diocletian's first Edict,³⁰ e.g., included specific orders commanding the burning of copies of Scripture and other church books, which resulted in the loss of untold numbers of biblical manuscripts.³¹ The only library which appears to have escaped Diocletian's systematic destruction, the 30,000 volume collection in Caesarea utilized by Origen, Pamphilus, Eusebius, and Jerome, was later destroyed by Moslems in AD 638—a loss of inestimable value.

2. The spread of Islam. The Muslim conquests of the seventh century included three of the five ancient patriarchates, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch; the Christian populations of North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia either disappeared or were greatly reduced, with corresponding effects on the transmission of Scripture in those areas.³²

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3. The reduction in the geographic range of Greek. At one time the *lingua franca* of the Empire, by the sixth century Greek was scarcely understood beyond the borders of the Byzantine empire.³³ It was virtually an unknown language in Europe from the time of Gregory the Great to the Renaissance.³⁴ This does not mean that there was no interest in the propagation of Scripture; the existence of over 8,000 manuscripts of the Vulgate, or of several thousand in Armenian,³⁵ for

²⁹ On points (1) and (2) below, see Bart D. Ehrman, 'New Testament Textual Criticism: Quest for Methodology' (M.Div. thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981), pp 87-91; on (3), cf. Fee, 'Modern Textual Criticism', p. 30, and Carson, *Plea*, pp. 49-50.

³⁰ For the text of the Edict see G. E. M. De Ste. Croix, 'Aspects of the "Great" Persecution', *HarvTheolRev* 47 (1954), p. 75.

³¹ See W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (London: OUP, 1965; New York: New York University Press, 1967), pp. 372-377.

³² For Hodges' attempted reply, see 'A Response', p. 150.

³³ Which included, it must be remembered, Sicily, parts of southern Italy, and Venice. Cf. D. J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice. Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning From Byzantium to Western Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1962).

³⁴ B. Bischof, 'The Study of Foreign Languages in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 36 (1961), pp. 209-224.

³⁵ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

example, is proof to the contrary. It does mean, however, that Greek manuscripts were copied only in a limited geographic area. So while it is true that about 90% of extant manuscripts are of Byzantine character, it is also true that about 90% were written after the restriction of Greek to basically the confines of Byzantium.³⁶

In light of these points, the central assumption upon which the statistical argument is based—that the transmission process was normal—appears to be invalid; the arbitrary character of these historical contingencies rules out any appeal to probability. Moreover, these observations are adequate to explain the numerical superiority of the Majority text: it was the dominant form in the only area where Greek was known during the late Middle Ages, when most extant manuscripts were written.

Final proof that the manuscripts known today do not accurately represent the state of affairs in earlier centuries comes from patristic references to variants once widely known but found today in only a few or even no witnesses. The 'longer ending' of Mark, 16:9-20, today is found in a large majority of Greek manuscripts; yet according to Jerome, it 'is met with in only a few copies of the Gospel—almost all the codices of Greece being without this passage'.³⁷ Similarly, at Matthew 5:22 he notes that 'most of the ancient copies' do not contain the qualification 'without cause' (*eikē*), which, however, is found in the great majority today.³⁸ In the other direction, in the tenth century Arethas of Caesarea reports that in Romans 3:9 the reading of the oldest and most accurate manuscripts is *katechomen perisson*, a variant not found in any extant manuscript.³⁹ In Hebrews 2:9, the variant *chōris theou*, which occurs in numerous early Fathers both eastern and western, indicating that it once was quite widely known, is today found in only three manuscripts.⁴⁰ In other words, variants once apparently in the minority are today dominant, and *vice versa*; some once dominant have even disappeared. This fact alone rules out any attempt to settle textual questions by statistical means.⁴¹

So far, the analysis has focused on theoretical and historical issues. There remains to be examined the methodological side of the matter: how does one do textual criticism? On what basis does one decide between competing variants? To this the discussion now turns.

The central element in the procedures used by Westcott and Hort in establishing their text was internal evidence of documents.⁴² Their high appraisal of the 'Neutral' tradition in preference to 'Western' or Byzantine readings rests essentially on internal evidence of readings, and it is upon this basis that most contemporary critics, even while rejecting their historical constructions, continue to follow them in viewing the Majority text as secondary.

³⁶ Carson, *Plea*, p. 50.

³⁷ Bruce M. Metzger, 'St Jerome's explicit references to variant readings in manuscripts of the New Testament', in E. Best and R. McL. Wilson (eds.), *Text and Interpretation* [Matthew Black Festschrift] (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), p. 182.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

³⁹ Birdsall, 'The New Testament Text', p. 321.

⁴⁰ Zuntz, *Text*, pp. 34-35.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴² Colwell, 'Genealogical Method', p. 66.

Majority text advocates, however, object quite strenuously to the use of the canons of internal evidence. These canons, they argue, are only very broad generalizations about scribal tendencies which are sometimes wrong and in any case frequently cancel each other out, leaving the critic free to manipulate the text according to his own subjective bias.⁴³ 'The result is only opinion; it is not objectively verifiable.'⁴⁴ Thus they call for a total rejection of all use of internal evidence.

There is some truth in this point, which echoes the views of many recent critics such as Colwell, K. W. Clark, E. J. Epp, and Fee.⁴⁵ Some of the canons are only generalizations which do need to be refined in light of new data; e.g., the papyri indicate that the maxim *lectio brevior potioris* not really applicable to manuscripts from the first three centuries.⁴⁶ That the

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canons are sometimes wrong, however, is hardly grounds for their total rejection; rather, it points out the need to use them with discrimination. Moreover, more than a few of them are 'objectively verifiable'.⁴⁷ In any case, for precisely these reasons scarcely any contemporary critics rely solely on internal evidence in evaluating variants.⁴⁸ Instead, depending on the facts in any given case, they apply a *combination* of internal and external considerations, evaluating the character of the variants in light of the documentary evidence and vice versa in order to obtain a balanced view of the matter and as a check on purely subjective tendencies.⁴⁹

In place of this use of both internal and external evidence, or 'reasoned eclecticism', Pickering and van Bruggen call for the adoption of a strictly numerical approach: that reading supported by a majority of Greek manuscripts is to be accepted as original.⁵⁰ Pickering attempts to set forth a system of 'weighing and counting' manuscripts, based on a restatement of Burgon's seven 'notes of truth', but this is misleading, since he explicitly rejects the use of internal criteria. Thus the only way to 'weigh' a manuscript is in comparison with the original, which is determined by counting—a circular procedure. Fee's evaluation of Pickering's seven criteria as only seven different ways of counting seems correct.⁵¹

⁴³ Hodges, 'Defense', pp. 16-17; 'Greek Text', pp. 342-344; 'Rationalism', pp. 30-34; van Bruggen, *Ancient Text*, pp. 30-35, 38.

⁴⁴ Pickering, *Identity*, p. 88.

⁴⁵ See especially G. D. Fee, 'Rigorous or Reasoned Eclecticism: Which?' in J. K. Elliot (ed.) *Studies in New Testament Language and Text* [Kilpatrick festschrift] (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 174-197; E. J. Epp, 'The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or Symptom?', *HarvTheolRev* 69 (1976), pp. 211-257.

⁴⁶ J. R. Royse, 'Scribal Habits in the Transmission of New Testament Texts', in W. D. O'Flaherty (ed.), *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (Berkeley, CA: GTU, 1979), pp. 143-150.

⁴⁷ Fee, 'Modern Textual Criticism', pp. 31-33.

⁴⁸ Basically only G. D. Kilpatrick and J. K. Elliot rely completely on internal criteria. Pickering's entire treatment of 'eclecticism' (*Identity*, pp. 21-30) is confused, as Fee ('Critique', pp. 400-404) has pointed out.

⁴⁹ The best introductory treatment of this approach is still that of Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: University Press, ² 1968), pp. 207-246.

⁵⁰ Pickering, *Identity*, p. 138; van Bruggen, *Ancient Text*, p. 38.

⁵¹ "Fee, 'Critique', p. 423.

Fee further points out that the proposal only to count manuscripts 'simply eliminates textual criticism altogether'⁵²—a point explicitly acknowledged by van Bruggen:

we do not exclude in advance every thought of an emendation of the Byzantine text. But that emendation may only take place if it can be demonstrated clearly to everyone that the Church had lost a good reading or exchanged it for a bad reading, and why. In principle such an argumentation on the ground of external evidence must remain possible, but in practice it is almost impossible in the present situation because we only have little and fragmentary textual and historical material from the first centuries.⁵³

But this then means that one must accept a text with errors in it, since van Bruggen earlier acknowledged the presence of secondary readings in the Majority text.⁵⁴ Thus a method is urged for adoption which both guarantees the presence of corruption in the resulting text and disavows any attempt to remove it.

Hodges here differs sharply from the others since he clearly has no desire to abandon textual criticism and is currently engaged in editing a new edition of the Majority text.⁵⁵ A preliminary fascicle containing the text of the Apocalypse has already appeared.⁵⁶ The text has been constructed on the basis of a genealogical approach, variants being considered in light of a stemma of manuscripts that Hodges has constructed. It is interesting to notice that one so committed in principle to the concept of a majority text occasionally accepts as original the reading of a minority of manuscripts on the basis of genealogical considerations.⁵⁷ Since, however, he acknowledges the impossibility of reconstructing a stemma of manuscripts for the other books of the New Testament, and does not discuss in the fascicle how he proposes to edit them, further comments on his method must await the publication of the full volume.

Hodges deserves much credit for his efforts to publish a critical edition of the Majority text, which will differ considerably from the TR,⁵⁸ and should prove useful to all textual critics. One may hope that its appearance will lead to a more accurate assessment of the Byzantine text-type, whose dominance seems to be later and history more complex than many now realize.⁵⁹

But while the appearance of a new Majority text will be welcome, one doubts that many will feel compelled to lay aside their critical texts in its favour. The case for the Majority text, particularly with regard to Patristic references and statistics, simply is not congruent with the known evidence.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Van Bruggen, *Ancient Text*, p. 38.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁵ To be published by Thomas Nelson and Sons.

⁵⁶ Zane Hodges and A. L. Farstad (eds.), *The Apocalypse According to the Majority Text* (Nashville: Nelson, 1982).

⁵⁷ Hodges, *Apocalypse*, xviii.

⁵⁸ Estimates of the differences range from one to several thousand.

⁵⁹ E. C. Colwell, 'The Complex Character of the Late Byzantine Text of the Gospels', *JBL* 54 (1935), pp. 211-221; J. N. Birdsall, 'The Text of the Gospels in Photius: II', *JTS* n. s. 7 (1956), p. 198.

At the same time, it must be stated that the Majority text advocates have highlighted some of the real questions and issues facing contemporary New Testament textual criticism. Their criticisms serve as a salutary reminder of the provisional character of current critical texts. The fact that the UBS³ and Nestle-Aland²⁶ editions are identical does not mean that the 'original Greek' has been perfectly recovered! To treat what is printed in these editions as if it were the original is to commit the ironic

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mistake of substituting a 'new TR' for an old one.⁶⁰ In other words, much work towards the recovery of the original text yet remains to be done. Certainly a great deal of progress has been made in the century since the original 'TR debate', but this should not mislead anyone as to the scope of the tasks still to be accomplished. If the present TR debate should stimulate people to work in this area, it will have served a useful purpose.⁶¹

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⁶⁰ Indeed, there is some concern that the now-identical UBS³/NA²⁶ text may be in the process of becoming a new 'TR'; cf. H.W. Bartsch, 'Ein neuer Textus Receptus für das griechische Neue Testament?', *NTS* 27 (1981), pp. 585-592, and the reply by K. Aland under the same title in *NTS* 28 (1982), pp. 145-153.

⁶¹ Since writing this article, the author has received a copy of the complete *Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, ed. Hodges and Farstad (Nelson, 1982). Unfortunately there is here no further elucidation of Hodges' text critical method, inasmuch as the Introduction to the complete volume is identical to that of the preliminary fascicle. Hodges does express a clear commitment to the genealogical approach, claiming that it is the only logical method, but his stemmatic reconstructions seem to rest on the problematic assumption that the Majority text must be closer to the original. Thus apparently he still has not recognized the force of the point (discussed above) made by Hort and Colwell. It is difficult, however, to know if this is really the case, because he leaves so much unsaid in his preface.

Jean Calvin: the father of capitalism?

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That Calvin was the originator and founder of capitalism is very frequently taken for granted. One only has to teach a course at university level on the history of the sixteenth century or on economic history to discover very quickly that many students take this as axiomatic. But it is not only in the circles of *academe* that this holds true. There is constant reference today in learned journals and in the media to 'the Puritan (or Protestant) work ethic', and when one seeks to trace the origin of this sociological and ethical phenomenon, it always goes back to land squarely on the shoulders of the Genevan Reformer. As Aldous Huxley has put it: 'The Reformers read their Old Testament and, trying to imitate the Jews, became those detestable Puritans to whom we owe, not merely Grundyism and Podsnappery, but also (as Weber and Tawney have shown) all that was and still is vilest, cruellest, most antihuman in the modern capitalist system.'¹ But it is obvious that Aldous Huxley has placed his faith in the two writers to whom he refers, without going back to see if they are correct. In a small way this essay will try to clarify the issue.

The basis of the view of Calvin's relation to capitalism is to be found in the essay of Max Weber on *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* ('Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des

Kapitalismus') in 1904-5 and reprinted in his major work on the sociology of religion in 1920.² Weber's fundamental presupposition for his work is that religion, whatever its character, is the source of a culture's economic and social ethos. In this he was opposed to the current Marxist thinking which made economic thinking and action the basis for religion and other theoretical thought. However, many Marxists have adopted part of Weber's thesis as a means of discrediting both religion and capitalism.

Weber commences his work by quoting the eighteenth-century American leader, Benjamin Franklin, who made the gaining of profit by hard work, careful investment and full employment of time an individual's principal objective in life. He then goes on to point out that Franklin's father was a strict Calvinist and deduces from this that Franklin, who was a Deist, had adopted his father's philosophy of life. This, he says, goes back to Luther's and Calvin's doctrine of 'calling' or vocation, a doctrine quite different from that of the Middle Ages, for while the mediaeval thinkers applied calling or vocation to those entering the priesthood and the religious life, the Reformers applied it to all human living and activity. God calls each individual to a certain occupation in life, whether to that of a craftsman, a farmer, a merchant or a preacher.

² *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tübingen, 1920-1), 3 vols. This has been translated and published in English in volumes dealing with separate topics. For our purposes the important one is the volume on *The Protestant Ethic*, translated by Talcott Parsons with an introduction by R. H. Tawney and published by Allen and Unwin (London, 1930), and many times since.

¹ Quoted in H. M. Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 208.

Pointing out that Luther did not carry his view of calling through to its logical conclusion, Weber holds that the person who did this was Jean Calvin. It was Calvin's doctrine of election and predestination which helped to develop this idea. Weber maintains that the doctrine of election is central to and fundamental for Calvin's whole theology, and because of this, he opened the door to a basic individualism. Since man was not dependent upon the church, a priesthood or any other aid to salvation, but solely on the sovereign electing will of God, he stood as an individual before God. He could, therefore, think of himself only as an individual, which in turn meant that all his actions would be individual. Furthermore, as an individual he must work out his election, *i.e.* his salvation, in and through his calling. By this means he would glorify God, but equally important he would gain a sense of his election and calling.

This, according to Weber, formed the basis for the Puritan ethos as held by the Puritans in England, New England and Holland in the seventeenth century. It was for this reason that the Puritans were very self-disciplined. Urged on by their pastors to 'make their calling and election sure' according to 2 Peter 1:10, they were to be 'not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord' (Rom. 12:11 AV). The result was that the Puritans were hard working, rational in their approach to their calling, without taking any time off for leisure or personal enjoyment. The result in Weber's words was a 'worldly asceticism'. They were definitely in the world but not of it. They now brought the monastic ideal of separation from the world in its laxity and indiscipline, into the world and applied it to their own everyday life and work.

Such an ascetic approach to their economic activity of course meant that they accumulated money. The question then was how they were to use these returns from their labour. As Calvin had taught that it was not wrong to receive a moderate rate of interest (5%) on loans which were used for business, money could be lent to others, although Weber does not make much of this. Instead Weber insists that the money could not be spent for personal enjoyment or luxurious living, but must be employed productively in business to increase one's income and so one's capital. On the other hand, he believes that the Puritans held that they should keep wages as low as possible in order to gain a better profit, and that the poor were poor because of their wasteful habits and laziness, so that charity for the poor was not to be dispensed with any freedom or generosity. Out of this attitude and perspective on life capitalism developed in the Industrial Revolution and has come

down to our own time, although now the religious aspects of the ethos have disappeared and it is simply a mad rush for money.

Two men have been important in the popularizing and spreading of the Weber thesis. One is the German theologian Ernst Troeltsch who, in his *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (Tübingen, 1912) (*The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches and Groups*, 2, ET O. G. Wyon, London, 1931), agreed with the basic thesis, but made a certain number of modifications. As Weber himself pointed out Troeltsch was interested in the theology or teachings while he (Weber) was interested in their effects. Troeltsch insisted that Calvin believed that poverty rather than wealth fostered piety. Moreover he pointed out that the Calvinists were usually not allowed any part in government with the result that they had to turn to commerce or industry. At the same time he also held that the capitalism which arose from the Calvinist-Puritan ethic was only one of a number of capitalistic models. He did, however, accept the view that Calvin laid the groundwork for contemporary capitalism with his concept of Protestant/Christian asceticism.³

The second person to become the advocate of the Weberian thesis was the English historian R. H. Tawney, whose *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1926) has wielded a strong influence on the thinking of the English-speaking historians of early modern Europe. Again, like Troeltsch, while accepting Weber's basic views Tawney introduces some modifications. He commences by discussing the mediaeval theory that while labour was all right for a Christian, commerce was dangerous morally. He then shows how business and capitalism were expanding during the fifteenth century. He followed this by a more thorough, although not thorough enough, consideration of Calvin's views which leads him on to a somewhat similar position as Weber on the matter of Puritanism. He does point out, however, that the period from the Reformation down to the opening of the eighteenth century was a period which, while seeing a great extension of business and commerce, also saw a growing separation between religion and business practice. Therefore, it would seem that the later seventeenth-century capitalists were men who were more influenced in their operations by business expediency than by religious or ethical principles. One point which he emphasizes in all of this is the fact that Calvin, he believes, opened up the way for the taking of interest which in turn led to the development of finance capitalism in a way that could not have happened during the Middle

³ *The Social Teaching*, 2, pp. 641ff., 812ff.

Ages. And as Troeltsch also admits, he indicates that Calvin's views could as easily be interpreted as a blueprint for socialism as for capitalism, had not other factors entered the picture.⁴

As one may imagine the Weber thesis has raised various questions and has caused widespread discussion. Many sociologists and a large body of historians have accepted the thesis, or its modifications particularly those of Tawney, as being the proper and true explanation of the rise of capitalism. This has been particularly true of those who liked neither Calvinism nor capitalism and who, therefore, were prepared to accept the views expressed by Aldous Huxley. On the other hand, there have been those who, while admitting that Calvinism had some influence on social and economic thinking, even terming it a 'turning-point' in the history of civilization, have rejected Weber's projection of his views into the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century development of predatory capitalism. More recently, however, others have appeared on the scene who have simply said that no relation existed between religion and the rise of capitalism. They have held that no matter what the preachers said the business man with his entrepreneurial drive simply went his own way without regard to Christian ethical principles.

The list of those who have written on the topic of Weber's thesis is long, as the number of articles in professional journals and monographs dealing with the subject indicate. J. T. McNeill's article 'Thirty Years of Calvin Study', in *Church History*, XVII (1948), pp. 207-240 and B. N. Nelson, *The Idea of Usury* (Princeton, 1969) give a formidable bibliography of the material published to 1969. And there has also been a continual flow of works on the subject since these two lists appeared. Consequently it is no easy task to present a discussion of the available material. One can touch only a few of the titles.

As an aid to the study of the question a number of collections of articles and excerpts have appeared over the years. Two volumes have been edited by R. W. Green and are very useful. One is *Protestantism and Capitalism* (1959) in the Heath Problems in European Civilization series. The other is *Protestantism, Capitalism and Social Science: The Weber Thesis Controversy* published in revised form in 1973 and contains a number of items not in the earlier volume. Both have useful bibliographies and present the various views which have been expressed on the topic. A third volume is that edited by S. N. Eisenstadt: *Protestant Ethics and Modernization* (New

York, 1968) which seeks to give a comparative view of the various approaches. Finally S. A. Burrell's *The Role of Religion in Modern European History* (New York, 1964) has four good essays dealing with the subject.

Turning to the individual works, we find that since the appearance of his essays on the Protestant Ethic, Weber has had his advocates and disciples, although like Troeltsch most make a few modifications of Weber's position. Werner Sombart in his *The Quintessence of Capitalism* (New York, 1915) in general holds the same position as does F. M. Hnik in his essay 'The Theological Consequences of the Theological Systems of John Calvin', in *The Philanthropic Motive in Christianity* (Oxford, 1938). More recently A. Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Sociology Theory* (London, 1971), R. E. Rogers, *Max Weber's Ideal Type Theory* (New York, 1969) and R. Bendix, *Max Weber: an Intellectual Portrait* (Los Angeles, 1977) have set forth much the same point of view. Probably one of the most recent works on the subject has been that of Gordon Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1707* (Oxford, 1980) who has sought to differentiate between Weber's view of the relationship of Calvinism to the capitalistic ethos, 'the spirit of capitalism' and the actual development of capitalism in Scotland. Most recently of all the same author has produced *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism: Max Weber and the Protestant Ethical Thesis* (London, 1982).

In the opposing camp, the forces are very divided in terms of their presuppositions. One group which has disagreed with the Weber thesis is made up to a large extent of historians of a Marxist approach who, accepting a theory of economic determinism, have said that the Reformation was due to economic causes, and not the other way round. Maurice Dobbs, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London, 1946), and P. C. Gordon Walker, 'Capitalism and the Reformation', *Economic History Review*, VIII (1937), are two examples. But there are others who while apparently adopting a materialistic position do not necessarily go along entirely with Marxism. Christopher Hill, in *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964) and in 'Protestantism and Capitalism', in F. J. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England in Honour of R. H. Tawney* (Cambridge, 1961) points out the weaknesses of Weber's thesis. Henri See's *Modern Capitalism* (New York, 1968), H. M. Robertson's *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism* (Cambridge, 1933) and K. Samuelsson's *Religion and Economic Action* (New

⁴ Cf. particularly his introduction to Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* . . . edited by Parsons.

York, 1961) are also good examples of this type of interpretation of the rise of capitalism. They lay their stress upon the economic stimuli to the economic and social developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

When one turns from those who stress the importance of economic forces to those who go back to see if Weber's thesis has any real foundation in Calvinism, one finds that here also is very considerable criticism of Weber's ideas. Probably the most extensive and thorough criticism is that in André Bieler's *La Pensée Economique et Sociale de Calvin* (Geneva, 1959), a work of 550 pages in which he deals in detail with Calvin's views and shows how far Weber is off the track. A somewhat similar view is taken by Amintore Fanfani in his *Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism* (London, 1935) in which he goes even farther, pointing out that many of the ideas put forward by Weber were current and accepted in pre-Reformation Europe. Capitalism was common in the days when Roman Catholicism was still the dominant religious creed. My own work *Skipper from Leith: The History of Robert Barton of Over Barnton* (Philadelphia, 1962) shows this quite clearly, although some historians, such as Marshall, take exception to my conclusions. Albert Hyma's *Renaissance to Reformation* (Grand Rapids, 1955), Henri Hauser's *Les Débuts de capitalisme* (Paris, 1927) and André E. Sayous' 'Calvinisme et Capitalisme: l'expérience Genevoise', *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, VII (1935) all set forth the same position, but usually with different nuances. Probably one of the most effective critiques is that of Winthrop Hudson, 'The Weber Thesis Examined' in *Church History XXX* (1961), and reprinted in shortened form in *The Role of Religion in Modern European History*. [One other work of value is G. Harkness, *John Calvin, the man and his ethics* (New York, 1958).] The list could become much larger as Nelson's bibliography clearly shows, but limitations of space make it impossible to add much more.

One should perhaps conclude any bibliographical study of the Weber controversy by going back to what has been said about Weber himself, and his own personal involvement in these ideas. A work which is of the greatest importance in this is Weber's biography written by his widow, Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: a Biography* (ET H. Zohn, New York, 1975). Besides this work two others discuss in considerable depth some of Weber's psychological problems. One is by H. S. Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: the Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930* (New York, 1958) and the other by A. Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation*

of Max Weber (New York, 1970). They should also be considered in attempting to gain a basic understanding of Weber and his thesis.

As one looks at this welter of material pro and con, or sometimes non-committal one way or the other, one is almost overwhelmed. Who is right? Was the 'spirit of capitalism' the result of the Reformation, or more particularly of Calvinism, or do economic causes and developments alone account for the economic changes, and the thought behind them? In concluding we might consider just a few matters in the hope of gaining something of an answer.

One thing which Weber sought to do was to go behind the class-type actions to find out what lay behind them. So it is quite proper if we do the same to Weber, himself. In this connection the last three works mentioned are of great importance. As L. A. Coser in writing the preface to Mitzman's book points out, the latter has pointed 'to his [Weber's] dual identification with the hardness of his free-thinking and authoritarian father and the soft though stern religiosity of his pious mother'.⁵ This is an important statement as his father was a very successful capitalist, but one against whom Weber seems to have rebelled. At the same time, he seems generally to have taken the mother's side in family altercations. One cannot but feel, however, that Weber was also opposed to his mother's religious beliefs which came out of her Calvinist-Huguenot background. Might it not be, therefore, that perhaps sub-consciously or perhaps even consciously, his thesis which links Calvinism and capitalism, and rejects them both, set forth his 'declaration of independence'? Added to this, his strong German nationalism might well have stimulated his desire to show how truly miserable was the British nation of shop-keepers, Germany's principal rival for world power.

A further question to raise concerning Weber is the problem of his methodology. Following the current technique of sociological investigation, he formed or created models or 'ideal types' of both Puritans and capitalists which he then proceeded to fit into the context which he had created for them. As R. E. Rogers explains, the ideal type is 'a utopia', i.e. nowhere. It is a one-sided identification of one or more points of view and a synthesis of various other phenomena. He calls it 'a generalized model within which particular cases may be classified'. It is a rational, abstract type but does not describe a concrete course of action or phenomenon.⁶ While this may be an interesting procedure to be followed

⁵ A. Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, p. vii.

⁶ R. E. Rogers, *Max Weber's Ideal Type Theory*, pp. 88ff.

by a sociologist, it is hardly a way of getting at the truth, for, as Christopher Hill points out in his *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, Puritans were anything but all of one type.⁷ The term covered an amazing variety of ideologies, theologies and practices. One might add that various factors exercised an influence on Puritanism throughout the century and a half following Calvin's death. The ideal type, therefore, seems hardly a sound tool by which to arrive at the truth of an historical phenomenon.

Coherent with his ideal type methodology, while he admitted that there were other forces operative in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries which brought about the economic and social changes, he stresses the religious, Calvinistic-Puritan ethos as the determinative influence. While this would fit in with his ideal type concept, as a good many historians have shown, this results in a lop-sided approach which does not really present the truth. Furthermore, it is quite clear that by the end of the seventeenth century, Puritanism had changed radically from what it was in the days of Browne, Barrow, Travers and Cartwright. For one thing Cartesianism had begun to have its influence in English thought. In 1649 what appears to have been the first English translation of Des Cartes' *Discours de la Methode* (1637) and *Meditations* (1641) was available, to be followed later by others done by John Davies and William Molyneux.⁸ The extent of his influence may be seen in the fact that the epistemology of Locke was clearly influenced by Cartesian methods.⁹ Might not a good many of the Puritans have come under the same influence? Another factor in the change in Puritan thinking would simply be the expanding opportunities to make money as new trade routes opened up, so that by 1650 Africa, America and the Orient had all become markets for English wares, particularly textiles. And the inflation of the period from 1550 on would be a constant stimulus to further expansion. At the same time, some of Calvin's ideas and teachings such as that of 'calling' could be neatly changed to fit a new situation which Calvin would never have countenanced.

⁷ C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, chapter 1.

⁸ *A Discourse of a Method for the well-guiding of reason and the discovery of truth in the sciences* (London: printed by Thomas Newcombe for John Holden, 1649); *Reflections on M. Des Cartes Discourse on Method. Written by a private pen in French and translated out of the original manuscript by J.D. [John Davies]* (London: Thomas Newcombe, 1655); *Six Metaphysical Meditations wherein it is proved that there is a God. . . . Hereunto are added the objections made against the Meditations By Thomas Hobbes. . . . With the author's answers. All faithfully translated into English, with a short account of Des Cartes life.* By William Molyneux (printed by B.G. for Benjamin Tooke, London, 1680).

⁹ Cf. P. A. Schouls, 'Descartes and Locke: Case Studies in imposition of method', *Philosophia Reformata*, 46 (1981), pp. 37ff.

This all brings us back to the question of whether this Puritan commercial activity was in reality very different from that of the pre-Reformation capitalists. While Weber and all his disciples must admit that there was mediaeval capitalism, they like to make a distinction by saying that the Calvinist ethos with its stress on predestination and calling provided a new approach which was more rational and at the same time a stimulant to capital accumulation. Yet as one looks at the Medici, the Frescobaldi, the Fuggers, Jacques Coeur, Robert Barton and other pre-Reformation tycoons, one has to admit that they seemed very rational in their approach to business nor do they seem to have required any religious stimulus to accumulate capital. Furthermore, they devised quite easily means of taking interest on their money, even though the church officially did not approve.¹⁰ They could always cover their enterprises with a cloak of sanctity, something not unknown even in biblical times.

But where does Calvin stand in all of this? It is interesting to note that Weber does not really make a thorough study of Calvin. He is not interested in his doctrines so much as what he feels were their consequences. As a result he makes a good many theological mistakes, not the least of which is his contention that the doctrine of predestination is central to Calvin's whole system. As Hill points out this is a grave error, for the doctrine of justification by faith is much more at the heart of Calvinism. And when one is justified through faith in Christ as his mediator, he then surrenders his life to the Lord to serve him in this life, doing all things to his glory: *soli Deo gloria*.¹¹ If this should result in one becoming wealthy, he should take this as the gift of God, but if he does not become wealthy it is no warning that he is not in grace, for God gives his gifts as he wills. Christians are to use them as they are bestowed, but prosperity is no sign of election or of sanctification.

In fact, Calvin is constantly warning against the seduction of riches. His comments on Ezekiel 18:7-9 make this very clear, although he is by no means anti-business. His constant contention is that those who become rich have a responsibility for the poor. So often those who dislike Calvin contend that he taught that if one were poor it was because of laziness which is sin. But this is far from the truth. Calvin held that

¹⁰ Cf. J. W. Thompson, *The Economic History of Europe in the later Middle Ages* (New York, 1965), pp. 60ff.; H. Pirenne, *The Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* (New York, 1937), pp. 125ff. Even the papacy itself was involved in transactions which resulted in the taking of interest. Cf. A. I. Cameron, *The Apostolic Camera and Scottish Benefices 1418-88* (London, 1934), pp. xxxiff. and W. E. Lunt, *Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages*, 1 (New York, 1934), pp. 334ff.

¹¹ C. Hill, 'Protestantism and Capitalism', p. 36.

people might be impoverished for various reasons and those who had more were under obligation to help. The plan which he worked out in Geneva for a diaconate to take care of the poor and the sick makes this very clear. And as A. G. Dickens points out his example was followed generously by the Puritan element in England. This meant also that Calvin insisted that employees must be given proper and adequate wages.¹² To contend as some do that Puritans, basing their views on Calvin, felt they should keep wages as low as possible is simply not according to the historical facts.

Some may, of course, say that while this is all true, yet Weber's contention that it has been the predominantly Protestant countries which have developed economically and have produced the capitalistic systems. He claims that this was because the Roman Catholic church had no idea of calling in the Protestant sense, nor did it stress the importance of working and saving as did the Calvinists. It seems clear, however, from what Fanfani and H. M. Robertson have shown to be the Roman Catholic position on these matters, that even elements such as the Jesuits and their enemies the Jansenists both advocated very much the same ideas as the Puritans. One can add to this the fact that the Anglicans were just as insistent upon the so-called 'Puritan ethic', if not more so than the Puritans themselves.¹³ Roman Catholic, Anglican and Puritan preachers alike all called for the faithful to fulfill their callings by constant activity in them, while at the same time warning about the danger of trusting in riches to enable them to enter the kingdom of heaven.

What then has made the difference between the Protestant and Roman Catholic countries? It would seem, for one thing that the move towards a more developed capitalistic economy had already begun in western Europe before the Reformation, a trend which was helped by the fact that countries bordering on the Atlantic Ocean were under no threat from the Turks or Moors who were constantly menacing eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries. Added to this, since the sea was the easiest road to travel, the countries with access to it were in the best

position for economic development. Antwerp was probably the best example of this phenomenon. But there were other cities which developed in a similar manner: Bordeaux, Nantes, Dieppe, Rouen, Southampton, London, Middleburg, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Rotterdam.¹⁴

With the opening up of the new world, these cities began sending their ships overseas for trading purposes, but in so doing their need was then greatly increased for capital. Out of this came the regulated and the joint-stock companies such as the Levant, the Muscovy, the British East India and the Dutch East India companies. But if they were to have sufficient goods to trade, production at home had to increase, and with the general unwillingness of the labouring class to become more productive a certain type of discipline had to be introduced, and in this endeavour Calvinism with its idea of diligence in one's calling to the glory of God was indeed a definite help.¹⁵ It is not surprising then that preachers such as Richard Baxter had considerable to say on the matter of diligence, while at the same time warning against the dangers of riches.

The economic expansion which had begun by 1500 and which had accelerated in western Europe down into the eighteenth century, then began to develop even more rapidly with the invention of the steam engine, new methods of spinning and weaving and various other technological advances. But this all required more capital and skilled labour. The outcome was what we know as the Industrial Revolution, which laid the basis for the contemporary economic development and its concurrent problems.

As one looks at Weber's thesis, therefore, one cannot but feel that he has succumbed to the disease which often overtakes those who wish to find one explanation for a very complex development. It is impossible to say that there was one single dominant cause which brought about the rise of capitalism. Calvinism undoubtedly played a part. In some ways it provided a sense of freedom from the old, often-disregarded Roman Catholic strictures on such things as the taking of usury. Moreover, with its stress on one's direct responsibility to Christ as King, it tended to give its adherents a greater sense of freedom and independence from the control of the institutional church. They could act according to their consciences. At the same time it emphasized that the Christian must be honest and fair in all his

¹²P. S. Gerbrandy, *Calvinisme en Maatschappelijke Orde* (Publicaties van de Reunisten Organisatie van A.D.D.D.), no. 9, p. 11 makes the comment that Calvin's exegesis of Ezekiel 18:7-9 goes back to Augustine on the subject of taking interest, bypassing Aquinas, but that he 'is remarkably Thomas's brother when it comes to economic insights and their ethical evaluation' [my translation]. Cf. also J.-M. Lechner, *Le Christianisme Social de Jean Calvin* (Geneva, 1953) and A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1965), pp. 316f.

¹³C. J. Somerville, 'The Anti-Puritan Work Ethic', *The Journal of British Studies*, XX (1981), pp. 70ff.; H. M. Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 88ff., 133ff.

¹⁴C. Day, *The History of Commerce* (New York, 1907), p. 152ff.; Tawney, *Religion*, pp. 73ff.; G. R. Elton (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History*, 2 (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 50ff.; H. A. Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, 1977), *passim*.

¹⁵Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, chapter 4.

economic activities. These teachings all had their influence undoubtedly, but there were also other influences, some of which were in direct conflict with Calvinism, which brought about the rise of capitalism.

In examining this whole matter of the development of modern capitalism it is necessary that one should have a much wider perspective than that allowed by Weber's ideal type. Every aspect must be considered and evaluated. It is necessary to

look at both human need and human greed, which are sometimes not that easy to distinguish, for often what one may consider to be a need is simply the result of greed whether of comfort, power, prestige or some other desired end. At the same time we must constantly remind ourselves that the sovereign God rules and overrules all things so that even the wrath of man shall praise him, and the rest of man's wrath and sin he will restrain (Ps. 76:10).

Recent Old Testament study: an evangelical assessment

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The last few years have seen a flowering of fresh and original approaches to the Old Testament. Not all the new ideas are compatible with an evangelical view of Scripture, but they are keeping biblical scholars on their toes and making some of them at least more open-minded. The 'assured results of modern scholarship' are not quite so sure as they once seemed. This article seeks to pinpoint some of the areas of current debate and suggest an evangelical approach to them.

The most sacred cow of Old Testament critical scholarship is undoubtedly the documentary hypothesis of the pentateuch, according to which the pentateuch was composed many centuries after its professed author Moses out of four main sources J, E, D, and P. Yet since 1975 there have been a number of influential liberal scholars arguing that in various respects the hypothesis is inadequate and ought to be abandoned or at least completely revamped. Jewish scholars, such as M. Haran, A. Hurvitz, J. Milgrom and M. Weinfeld, have argued in a number of detailed studies that P is not a late source, but roughly contemporary with the early source J.

J. van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (1975), and R. Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch* (1977), have challenged the traditional source division at many points. While not abandoning source analysis entirely they have rejected some of the standard criteria, such as the use of divine names, apparent doublets and so on. More interesting still is the massive *Biblischer Kommentar on Genesis* by C. Westermann (completed 1982) which dispenses entirely with the E source, usually supposed to constitute a third of the Genesis narratives.

This antipathy to source division is one aspect of a much broader movement in contemporary Old Testament studies towards appreciating biblical narrative and its devices. The biblical story-tellers are now recognized as masters of their craft and many studies are being published to elucidate their techniques and motives. Thus many of the devices, such as repetition and vocabulary variation, which once used to be regarded as marks of multiple authorship are now recognized as integral to Hebrew narrative style. Two general works on this are by Jewish scholars, which no Christian reader of the Old Testament can fail to profit from, are J. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (1978) and R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981).

Several studies focusing on particular biblical stories have appeared recently. They include: G. W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story*

(1976); D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (1978); J. L. Crenshaw, *Samson: A Secret Betrayed, A Vow Ignored* (1978); C. Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!* (1978); D. M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (1978); *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (1980). Because these works concentrate on interpreting the stories as they stand instead of trying to unravel the hypothetical earlier sources and possible later editorial additions, they contain a great deal that is of immediate value to any serious expositor of these narratives.

Unfortunately there is a tendency among some who extol the art of the biblical writers to minimise the historicity of the material. Alter for example sees much of the Old Testament as historical fiction. While van Seters in *Abraham and Tradition* and T. L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (1974) have assaulted one of the more positive 'assured results' of modern study, namely the historical authenticity of the Genesis narratives. Thompson and van Seters argue that many of the supposed parallels to Genesis are phoney, and that in fact many features of the narratives find closer parallels in the first millennium BC than in the second millennium in which the stories are professedly set.

Traditionally Christians and Jews have asserted that the historicity of the main biblical stories does matter. De Vaux (*The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 1972, p. 59) wrote, 'Once we admit . . . that the historical confession of Israel's faith does not have its roots in history, then we empty our faith of its content.' In *Essays in the Patriarchal Narratives* (1980, eds. A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman) a group of evangelical scholars take up the gauntlet thrown down by van Seters, Thompson and Westermann. J. Goldingay argues that the historicity of the patriarchal narratives does matter theologically. A. R. Millard points out that orientalist tend to adopt a more positive attitude to their sources than Old Testament scholars do to theirs. J. J. Bimson shows that the sites visited by the patriarchs according to Genesis coincide with archaeological evidence for their occupation in the early second millennium. M. J. Selman, while admitting the invalidity of some supposed parallels between patriarchal social customs and early oriental ones, still maintains there are thirteen valid parallels. D. J. Wiseman shows the implausibility of setting Abraham in the first millennium. I try to show that the picture of patriarchal religion presented in Genesis must antedate Moses. Finally D. W. Baker tackles some of the arguments for the source analysis of the Pentateuch.

Another burgeoning field in Old Testament study is that of sociological analysis. R. R. Wilson has produced two valuable studies that make good use of sociological insights, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (1977) and *Prophecy and Society*

in *Ancient Israel* (1980). N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Israel* (1979) is a massive attempt to elucidate the religion and society of early Israel. If his over-all thesis that early Israel was born out of urban revolution is far-fetched, his detailed analysis of Israelite society is full of useful insights.

Hebrew poetry was another area in which most scholars thought some conclusions were assured. Although opinions were divided about the essence of Hebrew metre, generations have grown up on R. Lowth's classification of poetic lines into synonymous, antithetic and synthetic parallelism. It was argued that the presence of parallelism was a sure sign that one was dealing with poetry. But J. L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* (1981) challenges this fundamental assumption pointing out that parallelism is also found in Hebrew prose. He calls therefore for a more careful definition of the distinctions between prose and poetry. A fresh definition is just what is offered by M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (1980), while T. Collins, *Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry* (1978) offers a careful analysis of the syntax characteristic of the poetry in the prophets. Each of these three studies proceeds along quite different lines, illustrating just how open this area of biblical studies is at the moment.

Two works by evangelical scholars deserve special mention. F. I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (1974) applies modern linguistics to the analysis of the syntax of Hebrew prose. Anyone who learns Hebrew or uses the AV gets the impression

that Hebrew is quite inflexible in its use of verbs and conjunctions: every clause seems to begin with 'and'. Andersen shows that in fact the syntactical system is much more sophisticated, and can convey fine shades of meaning.

J. J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* (1978) has attracted much attention for his very effective challenge to the received view that the Israelite conquest of Canaan took place in the thirteenth century BC. Reviewers have been more hesitant about agreeing with Bimson that the conquest occurred in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless this yet another area where 'assured results' no longer seem so certain.

Meanwhile Old Testament commentaries continue to appear steadily. The Anchor and New Century series offer detailed exegesis whose critical stance varies from volume to volume. The Tyndale and New International (NICOT) series offer a consciously conservative approach to dating and historicity, but again interpretation varies from writer to writer. Yet another commentary series made its debut in late 1982, the Word Biblical Commentary. P. C. Craigie and L. C. Allen, who gave the NICOT series a splendid start with their commentaries on *Deuteronomy* (1976) and *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (1976) will again be first off the mark with Word commentaries on the *Psalms*. This series promises to offer a thorough discussion of the critical and exegetical issues combined with an open-minded conservative theology, which should make them as valuable to the preacher as to the scholar.

From partnership to marriage:

Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR)

Chris Sugden and David Bosch

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During the past two decades evangelicals around the world have gradually been reawakened to the importance of social involvement as part and parcel of the Christian gospel — a position, in fact, which characterized evangelicalism of a century or more ago, but which was subsequently lost, partly owing to the rise of the Social Gospel movement in the liberal theological circles.

The reawakening of an evangelical concern for social responsibility was greatly stimulated by the International Congress on World Evangelization which met in Lausanne in July 1974. The *Lausanne Covenant* expressed the conviction that evangelism and social concern were equal but separate partners that together made up the mission of the church. In this partnership evangelism was granted primacy.

The relationship remained ambiguous, however. Evangelicals experienced difficulty in relating and integrating practically evangelism and social concern. Some argued that evangelism without a commitment to social concern would produce churches which were blind to social injustice and would therefore, in effect, be a travesty of true evangelism. Others argued that a commitment to social involvement as equal to evangelism would produce churches that were mostly social service agencies and thus distract from people's most desperate need, namely to obtain the eternal salvation of their souls.

To sort out these questions, the two major world evangelical bodies, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) and the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) called a week-long consultation which met at the Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 19 to 26 June, 1982. Forty participants from twenty-six countries plus nine consultants attended this Consultation on the Relationship

between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR).

Papers and responses that had been circulated in advance were discussed in small groups and plenary sessions. These were:

1. *Evangelism and Social Responsibility in the Perspective of Church History*

Presenter: Bong Rin Ro (Korea); respondent: David Wells (USA).

2. *Perspectives on Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Contemporary Theology*

Presenter: Tokunboh Adeyemo (Nigeria); respondent: David Bosch (South Africa)

3. *How broad is 'Salvation' in Scripture?*

Presenter: Ron Sider (USA); respondent, Ludvig Munthe (Norway)

4. *The Kingdom in Relation to the Church and the world*

Presenter: Arthur Johnston (USA); respondent: René Padilla (Argentina)

5. *History and Eschatology: Evangelical Views*

Presenter: Peter Kusmič (Yugoslavia); respondent: Emilio Nuñez (Guatemala)

6. *History and Eschatology: Non-Evangelical and non-Christian Views*

Presenter: Peter Beyerhaus (Germany); respondent: Gordon Moyes (Australia)

7. *The Mission of the Church — a Biblical Study*

Presenters: Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (India); respondent: Harold Lindsell (USA)

8. *The Mission of the Church in Relation to Evangelism and Social Responsibility*

Presenter: Chongnamh Cho (Korea); respondent: Tite Tienou (Upper Volta).

Other participants included John Stott, Gottfried Osei-Mensah, Leighton Ford, Harvie Conn, Bruce Nicholls and Peter Wagner. Six of the participants were from Europe, eight from

Australasia, eight from Africa, six from Latin America, and twelve from North America.

Case studies on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility were presented from situations as far removed from one another as the Philippines, India, Uganda, and Mississippi.

The discussions were frank and incisive. The differences between participants were, in some respects, far-reaching, particularly in the area of eschatology. Misunderstandings and even suspicions were present, especially during the first few days. In the course of the week, however, participants were able to open up to one another and to accept each others' bona fides. In this atmosphere of growing trust the consultation in its final days produced a statement of some 40 pages in which the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility was clarified.

The final document does not present a monolithic position. In fact, more than once it explicitly acknowledges that agreement on crucial points could not be reached. The agreement that was reached was, however, substantial and certainly more than a mere papering over of differences.

CRESR moved beyond the 'separate but equal' concept of Lausanne. The relationship between evangelism and social involvement, it was stated, was more than one of mere partnership. A more appropriate metaphor would be that of marriage, in which husband and wife not only belong to, and depend on, each other, but where one should also be able to see something of the one in the other. This means that there is an evangelistic dimension in all truly Christian social action even when explicit evangelism does not take place; likewise, there is a social dimension in all authentic evangelism, even where explicit social action does not occur. Supporters of one viewpoint in the debate conceded that evangelism is of prime importance in the sense that Christian social concern requires that there be Christians to be socially active, and that the supreme and ultimate need of people is Jesus Christ as Saviour. But that does not mean that Christians must always evangelize before they become socially involved, nor that 'salvation' simply means going to heaven. Others conceded that involvement in Christian

social action stems from the gospel of Christ and is not to be understood as a jettisoning of conversion or the turning of churches into mere social action agencies.

The consultation suggested that between the option of Christians being involved in society as individuals acting on their own and often with little effect, and the option of church bodies as a whole taking action which could lead to politics from the pulpit, there is a third option in which local churches should give more attention to encouraging groups of Christians to take up tasks of evangelism and social justice across a whole range of issues from abortion to the arms race.

An important advance was the agreement that many distinctions used in Western society to divide individuals from society and personal from social ethics were invalid. Several examples were given to show that issues of personal ethics frequently have a decisive influence on society, as do issues of social ethics on the individual. If this is so, it is clear that Christians have to move beyond verbal evangelism and, in fact, beyond relief work and works of mercy. It should indeed become impossible to treat as optional active involvement in issues of political and economic activity or of social justice.

The consultation also recognized the influence of different cultures and social contexts on the ways in which the Christian gospel was shaped and shared, and took faltering steps to correct one another's blind spots with insights from other parts of the world. It is hard for anyone to accept that such blind spots do indeed exist.

CRESR may prove to be, if not a watershed, then at least an important milestone in the development of the evangelical understanding of evangelism and social concern. The CRESR statement will be published shortly in brochure form. Negotiations are also under way to publish the papers presented at the Consultation.

A 64 page report of CRESR under the title 'Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment' is now available from LCWE at Whitefield House, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT, cost £1.