

Themelios

An International Journal for Pastors and Students of
Theological and Religious Studies

Volume 32

Issue 3

April 2007



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Editorial: What is Mindless Christianity?

One of the great joys for me as a young Christian, converted from a non-Christian background, was the discovery that I did not have to check my brain at the church door, so to speak. Reading the works of men such as Martyn Lloyd Jones, J. I. Packer, and D. A. Carson, I very soon discovered that there were indeed Christians out there who thought deeply about Scripture, about what it means, and about how it should be applied to the world around.

It was not long after I discovered these writers that I came across the term 'Christian world and life view'. This phrase is now so commonplace in Christian circles as to be a veritable cliché of the calibre of 'beginning the healing process', 'defining moment', and 'let's touch base'. What it refers to, of course, is a desire to see Christianity applied in all areas of life. Most frequently, it is used with reference to Christian approaches to cultural pursuits, whether artistic, political, literary or whatever; and, as such, it is certainly a useful term and a laudable ambition. If the Bible speaks to us as flesh and blood humans, then it surely speaks to all areas of our flesh and blood existence.

Well, not quite. It is arguable, for example, that the Bible does not speak directly in to all areas of life. Food, for example. There is no biblical view on cooking, as far as I can tell. Then, it is always a little perplexing as to how the discussion of 'world and life view' often tends to focus on what might be called intellectual, if not very middle class, concerns. There are not many books published on the Christian worldview approach to, say, street sweeping or karaoke or bingo calling. Nevertheless, many of us have benefited greatly from those Christian scholars in the areas of literature and the arts who have sought to bring their Christian faith to bear upon how they pursue their disciplines.

Joking aside, then, the quest for the Christian mind is not a bad thing. Indeed, the discovery that Christians can use their brains and be faithful is surely a source of joy to many of us. Yet it is unfortunate that we often tend to neglect the one passage in Scripture which explicitly describes the Christian mind: Philippians 2:5–11:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father [English Standard Version].

In this passage, the essence of the Christian mind is not cast in epistemological categories. In other words, the Christian mind is not ultimately about the question of how we know things. Nor is the Christian mind about knowing the latest material on the most recent Christian fad or talking-point. The Christian mind here has little to do with those

things we find most interesting and exciting in the world around us; and there is nothing here about ‘relevance’; in the way that most of us might conceive of that term. Rather, the accent here is on humility. It is not exciting; it is not glamorous; it is not something we naturally desire for ourselves; and yet here it is.—The Christian mind is above all the humble mind.

The imperative nature of the passage is underlined by the interconnection of the biblical story with the claims of systematic theology. Knowing that the pre-incarnate Christ was God, that this was the context for him to assume human flesh, to come down to earth, to live a life of absolute obedience to his Father’s will, and to do so even up to and including his terrible death on the cross. That is what makes this passage so striking and so demanding for us as Christians. If the one who is God can stoop to such depths, and thereby come to true glory, how much more should we, poor, sinful creatures that we are, be willing to be humbled in the course of our Christian lives.

Yet, so often much of the Christian life is devoted to other things. We have a tendency to fill our lives with matters which, while good in themselves, can distract us from pursuing the demands of a passage like Philippians 2. In our churches we have various programmes to keep running: youth groups, singles’ clubs, old peoples’ lunches, young marrieds’ outings etc. Then, for those who love theology, it is very easy to find ourselves totally absorbed in the intricacies of various theological debates or movements. This is good: all these people need to be reached with the gospel and nurtured in the faith. Orthodoxy and right belief are critical to the health and well-being of the church. Yet such outreach, nurture and health also depends in large part upon cultivating the mind of Christ.

How do we do this? First, it is surely vital that we develop a clear understanding of who God is and who Christ is. Without this, we can scarcely understand what Paul is saying in Philippians 2. That can only be done through regular exposure to the Word of God, and transformation by the Word of God. That is the thrust of the teaching about the happy man in Psalm 1. Of course, we should do this privately every day. The discipline of daily personal Bible reading is important to our spiritual lives; but it is even more important that we sit regularly under the careful and sound preaching of the Word. Only as God’s words come to us as spoken by other people can we have a reasonable degree of certainty that our exposure to God’s Word is not simply being filtered through our own prejudices and preferences. When I am in church and the minister chooses a passage of scripture to read, and then expounds and applies it, I can be fairly sure he will do both a more brutally effective job of tearing down my pride and a more gentle job of building me up in grace than I am generally capable of doing for myself.

Second, we need to look at ourselves long and hard. I have just spent a few sad moments looking at the web page of a very popular leader in the Emergent Church movement. His web page begins with a list of the great things other people have said about him: One of the church’s most important and provocative thinkers ... One of the 50 Most Influential Christians in America ... No church leader understands better how to navigate the seas of the 21st century ... A writer of vast imagination, poise and charm.’ There was a time when I would have mocked such silly self-promotion. Now, I simply feel sad about something which is so bad that it cannot be parodied. What is so depressing about this is how absolutely antithetical to the mind and spirit of Christ it is. It is, in effect, anti-Christian. Now, all publishers in the business of selling books will put

blurbs of praise on the covers of their products. But it is a foolish man who believes them; and an even more foolish man who then parades them on his own web page as a means of attracting others. And foolishness is the essence of pride: when we begin to think we are something special and lose sight of the fact that we are what we are, neither more nor less, only through grace. And that grace has been obtained by the one described in Philippians 2 whose attitude we are commanded unconditionally to cultivate within ourselves.

Yet the task which Philippians 2 lays at our door is not that of seeing and mocking the absurd pretensions and pride of others, whether Emergent or orthodox. It is to cultivate the mind of Christ within ourselves, and there is surely enough prideful junk there to keep us occupied. If the attitude of this Emergent web page is of a piece with the spirit of the age, it is in a very real sense the attitude of all of us who stand as fallen in Adam. Not only are we prone to forget who we are before God; left to ourselves we positively suppress this knowledge because it hurts us to remember that not only are we not gods but, left to ourselves, we are in active rebellion against the one true God.

Soaking our minds in the Word of God; applying our theological convictions first to ourselves and only then to others; remembering the greatness and holiness of God; reminding ourselves consistently of the grace of God shown towards us in Christ—none of these things is glamorous, trendy, dramatic, or particularly spectacular in the bright-lights big-city celebrity culture which so dominates the world in which we live today. But it is absolutely essential to the development of the Christian mind; and that mind, according to the New Testament, is a non-negotiable of Christian existence.

The prophetic Christian, indeed, the prophetic church, is the one which challenges the dominant culture at its deepest roots; and that means that, when all is said and done, the ability to apply Christianity to friends or Shakespeare, the environment or world capitalism, is not really of the essence of the prophetic Christian mind. Only the truly humble Christian and the truly humble church can claim that mantle and speak with true prophetic insight into the world as it is.

Response to Professor Greg Beale

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I am pleased to be able to respond, albeit briefly, to Professor Beale's recent review in *Themelios*. He raises a number of thoughtful points, and they deserve fuller interaction than I am able to give in the limited space allotted, and so I must remain content to attempt to distil what I perceive to be his main objections and address them as best I can.

It seems clear to me from reading both of Prof. Beale's reviews (here and in *JETS*) that his disagreements with me are not merely academic, but touch on issues that are important to him for the very faith we both share. He suggests as much by concluding his *Themelios* review with comments as to the 'pessimistic pedagogical and homiletical' conclusions of my approach to apostolic hermeneutics. While I do not share this assessment, I recognize the importance of such an exchange. Despite our very real academic differences, what unites us both is an earnest engagement of Scripture as evangelicals, and an articulation of the fruit of that engagement to those in our hearing, ultimately in an effort to exalt Scripture and the One who inspired it. I do not think we differ so much on basic theological principles, namely the inspiration and authority of Scripture, but in how the rubber of those principles meets the sometimes bumpy road of historical analysis and the realities of our canon.

At any rate, as Beale has mentioned in both his reviews, my book and the articles to which he refers have, if anything, driven him to look more closely at his own position. I echo that sentiment, which I hope to demonstrate in my response below.

Need to acknowledge different points of view

On one level, I certainly understand Beale's recurring plea that I acknowledge views of scholars that differ from my own. But although this is a normal academic expectation, I still do not agree that the nature of this type of book requires, or even would benefit from, the kind of exposition for which he asks. I understand that he and others might feel slighted, even implicated, and so might even feel a touch of irritation. I wish this

were not the case, and perhaps a timely word or two at various junctures of the book might have helped obviate that impression. Nevertheless, I have often heard it said that books written by academics are not read enough by people who could benefit most from them. Perhaps the reason for this is that we insist on involving our readers in matters that are of little to no interest to them (and if they are interested, they can be pointed in the right direction, as I try to do in the annotated bibliographies in my book). What is more, it is not at all the case that, unless I address differences of opinion, my readers are 'left to trust Enns' [sic] word for it.' For one thing, this charge could be levelled against nearly any book that deals with knotty matters and is aimed at a more popular audience. Also, even if I addressed the matters he wished I had, lay readers would *still* largely need to take my word for why I consider certain opinions off base. Such engagement would have shifted the focus of my book away from its apologetic purpose and accessible style.

I, however, am no pied piper. I find it refreshing that some very sympathetic lay readers, while being very supportive on the whole of the approach I take in my book, have expressed areas of disagreement. Their questions have helped me refine how I package some of the issues addressed in the book. This type of dialogue is precisely what I was hoping for when I set out to write the book. Lay readers may not be as easily swayed as we academics sometimes think, and I am glad about this. Indeed, many readers in my target audience have already been involved in struggles that make them very knowledgeable (if even on a less academic level) of certain matters concerning Scripture. As I mentioned in my *JETS* response, I say again, in all sincerity, that he is more than free to write a popular level book of a very different nature, but I remain unconvinced that my rhetorical strategy represents a failure on my part.

Hermeneutical diversity in Second Temple Judaism

Beale is certainly correct, and I am fully aware, that Second Temple Judaism was not a hermeneutical monolith. But whatever diversity is there cannot be used to minimize the midrashic (see below) dimension of Second Temple Judaism that is far, far more pervasive than any concern to be 'sensitive' to the Old Testament context. To be sure, the rules of Hillel, to choose one of Beale's examples, are not simply to be equated with, say, Qumran *pesher*. But neither were these rules intended to inch

ancient readers closer to a plain, contextual, semi-grammatical-historical sense of Scripture ('compatible with a contextual interpretation of the Old Testament' as Beale puts it). Rather, these rules operated under the assumption that, since God is the real author of Scripture; all of Scripture is 'simultaneous' and so a proper study of Scripture will allow the different parts of Scripture to 'speak' to each other, thus revealing God's will. These rules guided Jews in extracting safe and useful teaching from the Bible for the life of the people gathered around the primacy of divine Torah. A reading of the Mishnah and Talmud, moreover, further indicates that these rules did not encourage strict attention to contextual matters, and in fact resulted in conflicting and contradictory interpretations. In these cases, the 'correct' conclusion was not determined by which reading was more 'compatible with contextual interpretation of the Old Testament'. It came about by the needs of the interpretive community gathered around Torah and by its tradition. Furthermore, however one understands rabbinic interpretation, it is still not representative of the broad range of ancient texts we have. These would have to include at least the pseudepigrapha, apocrypha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, all of which must be taken into account in order to yield a 'broad but accurate sketch'¹ of Second Temple hermeneutics.

A term that for me and others adequately describes the general hermeneutical tenor of Second Temple hermeneutics is midrash. There are certainly well known differences of opinion of how this word should be used. Some (e.g., G. Porton) argue that the term should be restricted to actual rabbinic midrashic texts, while others (e.g., R. Bloch) prefer a broader definition, that is, a description of hermeneutical posture. Both points have their internal logic, but I am of the latter opinion. What unites such otherwise diverse texts as *Jubilees*, the pesher on Habakkuk, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* is a hermeneutical posture that seeks: (1) to mine Scripture for hidden, richer meanings in order to hear God speak once again in a community's present circumstances, and (2) to preserve these interpretive traditions for successive generations. When understood this way (and I am hardly a single voice crying in the wilderness), Second

1 *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 131. I would add the Targums to this list, particularly Neofiti and *Ps-Jonathan*. Even though the printed forms known to us are centuries later, they are widely considered to preserve some interpretive traditions that are pre-Christian.

Temple biblical interpretation can generally be labelled 'midrashic' or as I call it in the book 'odd' (an attempt to avoid jargon), that is, not operating from the interpretive standards we take for granted when we open our Bibles and read.

The question of 'consistency' with the Old Testament

When it comes to explaining the manner in which the Old Testament sense is related to the New Testament's use of it, Beale employs language that in my view does not shed light on Second Temple interpretive practices or on apostolic hermeneutics. To begin with, to insist on using words like 'twist', to 'distort' to describe non-contextual exegesis of the Second Temple period erects, at the outset, a hermeneutical wall of hostility between the New Testament and its environment. Our first aim is to understand their hermeneutical methods as historical phenomena rather than pass judgement on the basis of our own hermeneutical conventions. The fact remains, however, which Beale also recognizes, that apostolic exegesis really does do some things that cannot be explained by grammatical-historical standards. As a result they might be left open to a similar charge of twisting and distorting. This seems to lead Beale to a two-pronged defence: (1) although it has its moments, Second Temple hermeneutics is overall not nearly as 'odd' as some people think, and (2) that despite some similarities, the New Testament is on the whole more contextually bound to the Old Testament than its neighbouring texts.

I disagree on the first point (as noted above). As for the second point, Beale's own descriptions of New Testament hermeneutics belie a palpable tension between acknowledging the similarities between the New Testament and its environment and wishing to maintain some distance between them. So, we read that the New Testament authors are 'not inconsistent' with the Old Testament context, or their interpretations do 'not contravene' that context, or 'reveal a contextual awareness' or are 'sensitive' to the Old Testament context, while also being willing to 'creatively develop' that Old Testament passage. This language seems unnecessarily defensive, even protectionist. I am not sure how this contributes to our understanding of the nature of Second Temple hermeneutics and the place of the New Testament in it. Descriptions such as 'consistent with', 'sensitive to', and even 'context' must be understood first and foremost within the conventions of *ancient* interpreters. As

biblical scholars, this historical question is the first order of business.² Beale's terms suggest an uncritical adoption of etic hermeneutical categories. So we are presented with a picture of apostolic hermeneutics where it is assumed that the New Testament writers share his concerns with matters of contextual exegesis.

There is no question that apostolic hermeneutics is a complex matter. I try to boil it down in my book; Beale tries to do so in his own way. However, in my estimation, what controlled the New Testament writers seems to have been something other than 'be careful not to contravene' the Old Testament. Rather, what supported apostolic hermeneutics was how is their Scripture now to be understood in light of the climactic revelatory event, the person and work of Christ. For us today, the hermeneutical lesson to be learned is surely more than observing how the New Testament authors are 'not inconsistent' with the Old Testament and make sure we follow. I look forward to the Baker volume he mentions (in n. 4) and how certain thorny issues will be handled there. However, I do not think we will come to a clearer understanding of apostolic hermeneutics as a historical phenomenon by adducing Beale's categories, at least not without further clarification.

Biblical Theology

This point follows upon the previous one. For Beale, biblical theology (in the Vosian trajectory, as he specifies) does not yield 'odd' uses of the Old Testament, that is, it does not proceed in disregard to the Old Testament context. Rather, although biblical theology is 'not a technical *grammatical-historical* [approach]' it nevertheless 'takes in wider biblical contexts than merely the one being quoted, yet it is not inconsistent with the quoted text.' I am not sure how well this defines biblical theology, but on one very

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- 2 Beale may disagree, but this point made repeatedly by R. Longenecker, and perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the concluding chapter of *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*: 'It has become all too common today to hear assertions of a theological nature as to what God must have done or claims of a historical nature as to what must have been the case during the apostolic period of the Church – and to find that such statements are based principally on deductions from what has previously been accepted and/or supported by current analogies alone. The temptation is always with us to mistake hypothesis for evidence or to judge theological and historical formulations by their coherence and widespread acceptance, rather than first of all by their correspondence and exegetical data' (*Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* [2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 185).

important level, I agree with him here. I would not simply equate biblical theology with Second Temple practices. Moreover, I would consider biblical theology a distinct hermeneutical contribution prompted by the gospel message preached by Jesus and apostles.

But, the more fundamental point is that, as Beale also avers, biblical theology is not grammatical-historical exegesis. True, it 'takes in wider biblical contexts' but that offers no protection, for the *very act* of taking in wider contexts is precisely the problem to be discussed, and it demands that we assess *how* those wider contexts are 'taken in' to the apostles' exegetical programme. For example, the well known cases of Matthew's use of Hosea 11:2 in Matthew 2:15 and Paul's seed/seeds exegesis in Galatians 3:16, 29 are two instances of New Testament authors 'widening' the Old Testament passage they employ. How do they accomplish this? Matthew turns Hosea's retrospective observation into a prophetic utterance. Paul exploits a grammatical point to reinterpret the promise in Genesis of countless offspring to refer to one person, Christ.

Beale mentions Matthew 2:15 as a clear counter example to non-contextual exegesis *because* it is biblical theological, which by his definition is 'not inconsistent' with the Old Testament context. This is not persuasive to me. Both examples cited above are truly 'odd' uses of the Old Testament (in keeping with Second Temple interpretive practices), and they are *also* powerful examples of biblical theology (Christ embodies Israel's story; God's promises are fulfilled in Christ). To put it another way, the Biblical Theological message in these passages, although not *generated* by or *dependent* on such hermeneutical methods, is certainly born on the wings of these methods, not a 'sensitivity' to contextual or semi-contextual concerns. Beale may protest, but to describe these biblical theological expositions as 'not inconsistent with the quoted text' without clarifying how that non-inconsistency is demonstrated, indeed, what that even means, does not help to explain the phenomena.

Matthew's interpretation of Hosea shows that the ultimate meaning of Hosea's words is not constrained by Hosea's context, but actually transcends that context and *transforms* Hosea's words in light of the grand, ultimate context of the eschaton which was inaugurated at Christ's resurrection. It is on the basis of the hermeneutical centrality of the death and resurrection of Christ that broader themes are now taken hold of and seen through that eschatological lens, rather than a concern on the part of the New Testament writers to be constrained by the original context of

the Old Testament. In other words, it is the summative force of God's revelation in Christ that *allows* the 'wider biblical contexts' to enter the discussion. We may call this biblical theology (and I do), but that will not serve as a buffer between the New Testament and the interpretive practices of the world in which the New Testament writers lived.

The 'Moveable Well'³ of 1 Corinthians 10:4

I very much appreciate Beale's interaction with my thoughts on this issue. My handling of this passage does seem to have struck a particular chord, as it occupies him for several lengthy footnotes and will, apparently, occupy an entire doctoral dissertation under his supervision. What seems to concern him is mainly an apologetic issue, that is, the 'precarious historical' nature of this tradition found in an inspired text. I want to think about his observations a bit more, but at this juncture I wonder whether this apologetic is not in some way driving his historical analysis. There is much that could occupy my thoughts here, but I would refer interested readers to my 1996 *BBR* article,⁴ not because I think I have the last word there, but because I do not think that he has fully addressed the issues that are raised.

Beale draws attention to what he considers a 'significant textual variant' in *LAB* 10:7, but in this case the evidence is not as damaging as he would have us think. It is true that the D manuscript group has 'it [the rock] followed' while the P manuscript group has 'the Lord followed'. But is it not the case, as Beale claims, that the latter group is of 'almost equal authority' to the former. There is always a bit of ambiguity in such discussions, but H. Jacobson, in his massive commentary, argues at length that the latter manuscript group routinely deviates from the Latin archetype, and that the changes that are made are at times stylistic, but

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- 3 Allow me to offer a needed clarification. My use of the phrase 'moveable well' is intended as a cipher for the ancient tradition of some miraculous and sustained supply of water during the wilderness wandering. Beale's critique of me is based in part on focusing on the specific notion of a moveable rock/well, which is a perfectly understandable conclusion to draw from the title of my article and from how I use the phrase. I was not clear in my use of the term and I stand corrected. It would have been clearer to refer to it as the 'miraculous water in the desert' tradition, with one strand being a moveable well/following rock, but one has to admit that some of the punch would be lost.
 - 4 'The 'Moveable Well' in 1 Cor 10:4: An Extra-Biblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text' *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6 (1996): 23–38.

other times are quite intentional so as to change the meaning of the text.⁵

This alone does not solve all text-critical issues (the π family should not be tossed aside automatically), for as Jacobson continues, each instance must be investigated on its own terms. As for the text-critical question posed in 10:7, it is important to keep before us that *LAB* only exists in Latin, (a translation from the Greek from Hebrew). Although Jews were likely responsible for the Greek translation, it was probably Christians who insured the book's existence by copying it into Latin.⁶ All of this might lead one to pose the following two general (though not the only two) scenarios and to ask which is the more likely:

(1) 'Lord' was the original Hebrew reading, and 'it' is a corruption, introduced somewhere along the way, the only evidence for which is a Latin textual family that seems to be marked by deviations from its archetype, copied by Christians, and thus perpetuating an early Jewish interpretive tradition.

(2) 'It' is the original reading, thus participating in a well-documented and early Jewish tradition of a miraculous and mobile source of water,⁷ and that 'Lord' was introduced later (perhaps by Christian copyists).

Space does not allow a fuller explication of this argument, but Beale's assertions that 'Lord' is the more difficult reading and of more or less equal authority to 'it' are not persuasive to me. Also, as far as I can see, his own explanation for how Paul came to say 'the rock that followed' seems no less midrashic than the Second Temple texts from which he wishes to distance Paul.

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- 5 H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, with Latin Text and English Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1.257–73, esp. 260–64.
 - 6 Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1.276–77. Although note Jacobson's caution against M. R. James's overstatement of the role of the church in perpetuating the book (1.210).
 - 7 It should also be mentioned that that *LAB* is replete with interpretive traditions, some well documented elsewhere, others only here. See, James H. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2.300. Alone this proves nothing, but an original 'it' changed later to 'Lord' makes best sense in view of the overall midrashic character of the book.

Implications

Beale is correct to draw attention to how historical conclusions affect contemporary method. We both affirm, in some sense, the need to allow the Bible's own behaviour to affect how we use it today. The difference between us is in how we explain apostolic hermeneutics in its historical setting and the degree to which this should stand as a model for contemporary exposition. A consideration of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament in its historical context (as I understand it) suggests to me a metaphor of 'path' rather than 'fortress' for contemporary biblical exposition, whereas Beale seems to be uncomfortable with such a metaphor, as it puts into jeopardy our hope for deriving true meaning from a biblical text (which does not necessarily imply that he prefers the fortress metaphor).

Despite my contention for the path metaphor, I am certainly not immune to the concerns that are reflected in Beale's position. Nevertheless, I remain convinced that not only apostolic exegesis, but also much of the history of interpretation, including contemporary, bears out the path metaphor. Interpretive breadth is unavoidable, not a function of poor exegetical method or a failure to maintain contextual ties. Rather, it is generated by the Bible's own gaps, or 'irritants' as James Kugel calls them. No, biblical interpretation is not a free-for-all, and 'all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life'⁸ are plain for all. But, the nuts and bolts of biblical exposition defy the firm convictions at every point for which we desire confirmation. Such an observation will not drive us to a 'pessimistic pedagogical and homiletical conclusion' as Beale warns. Rather, whatever implications there are for addressing the nature of biblical interpretation in our own Scripture, far more grave are the implications for failing to do so.

8 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1.4.

A Surrejoinder to Peter Enns

G. K. Beal is Kenneth T. Wessner Chair of Biblical Studies, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School and Visiting Fellow at St Edmund's College, Cambridge. He has written extensively on this and related subjects.

I am happy to have opportunity to reply to Peter Enns's response in *Themelios* to my review article¹ of his essay on the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, which appeared in his recent book, *Inspiration and Incarnation*.²

My first response to Enns's critique, and to his similar response in *JETS*,³ is to encourage readers to go back and read his reply to my reviews of his book not only in *Themelios* but also in *JETS*,⁴ and then read my reviews again. I do not think that he has advanced the argument much beyond what I said in my reviews. For example, he offers no substantive response, in my view, to the evidence that he holds various significant narratives in Genesis and in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Corinthians 10:4) to be 'myth' or 'legend' according to its classic definition, and that he acknowledges that the biblical writers mistakenly thought such 'myths' corresponded to real past reality (I have written a full 'surrejoinder' to Enns's *JETS* 'Response' elsewhere⁵).

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- 1 'Did Jesus and the Apostles Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Revisiting the Debate Seventeen Years Later in the Light of Peter Enns' Book, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, *Themelios* Vol. 32.1 (2006), 18–43.
 - 2 *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 113–65.
 - 3 Peter Enns, 'Response to G. K. Beale's Review Article of *Inspiration and Incarnation*, *JETS* 49 (2006), 313–26.
 - 4 'Myth, History, and Inspiration: A Review Article of *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns', *JETS* 49 [2006], 287–312, which was a review of the chapters on the Old Testament in Enns' book.
 - 5 On which see G. K. Beale, 'A Surrejoinder to Peter Enns' Response to G. K. Beale's *JETS* Review of his book, *Inspiration and Incarnation*', in *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (2007), and in *reformation21*. The Online Magazine of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals: www.reformation21.org, which includes a large expansion of point #1 directly below.

Nevertheless, I will elaborate upon some of what Enns considers to be major critiques of my review of his book.

(1) Enns contends both in his *Themelios* and *JETS* response that I misread the genre of his book and that I reviewed it as a scholarly work instead of a popular book. Since he has the same objection to my *JETS* review in his response there, and since he refers to this in the *Themelios* review, I will include his evaluation from *JETS* in my following comments. He says that it is an unfair critique to say that he should have given both sides of various issues (with some representative footnoting). Enns acknowledges that the book was secondarily written for a scholarly audience, so this in itself allows for the critique that I gave. In fact, Enns claims that graduate and college-level students are included in his popular audience; certainly such students should be given both sides of this kind of explosive debate, including the dispute over the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. But, in addition, I also clearly acknowledged that the primary audience was popular and the secondary audience scholarly, and I wrote with this fully in mind.⁶ Yet even if his conception of a popular audience did not include students, should not we as scholars do the best we can to present both sides of such debated issues that Enns discusses? This was not a felicitous move by Enns, since the book appears as a one-sided attempt to convince readers without presenting all the evidence.

(2) I argued in the *Themelios* review that there was more diversity in Second Temple Judaism on the issue of non-contextual hermeneutical approaches to the Old Testament. In contrast, Enns contended that there was a dominant uncontrolled, so-called midrashic approach. In his response, he agrees that 'Second Temple Judaism was not a hermeneutical monolith.' But then he immediately says that 'whatever diversity is there cannot be used to minimize the midrashic ... dimension of Second Temple Judaism that is far, far more pervasive than any concern to be "sensitive" to the Old Testament context.'⁷ Thus, while he is willing to admit that there was hermeneutical diversity in Judaism on this issue, it is a token acknowledgement. My review of Enns set forth some significant exceptions to the idea that Judaism, especially early Judaism, operated by an uncontrolled hermeneutic. In contrast to me, he apparently does not consider this evidence to be significant.

6 Beale, 'Myth, History, and Inspiration: A Review Article of *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns,' *JETS* 49 [2006], 312.

7 Enns, 'Response to Prof. Greg Beale', *Themelios* 32.3.

The verdict is out about how diverse early Judaism was on this issue, but circumspect conclusions need to be held rather than sweeping statements one way or another. There needs to be much more investigation on a case by case basis in the works of early Judaism before broad conclusions can be reached. Part of the problem in assessing this is that particular kinds of interpretative approaches are seen by some to have no concern with an Old Testament author's original intention. At the same time others see these approaches to have an understandable rationale that is consistent with such authorial intention (typology is a case in point). Enns responds to my mention of Hillel's rules, contending that such rules were not to be understood as being consistent with a contextual approach to the Old Testament. As a basis for his conclusion, he cites some hermeneutical presuppositions that are unclearly grounded in *early* (pre-AD 70) Judaism and do not support his thesis. In this respect, it is unfortunate that Enns does not mention David Instone Brewer's work (a work I mentioned in my review of Enns), which, as far as I know, is the only one that has attempted on a broad scale to evaluate pre-AD 70 rabbinic exegesis, and which comes to conclusions that are different from Enns (one may disagree with Instone Brewer, but, at least, his is a work that should be acknowledged). His comments about the Mishnah and Talmud are not as relevant, since they represent later Judaism, which is further removed from the period of early Judaism and the New Testament.

He contends that what unites some early Jewish texts (Jubilees, the Qumran Habakkuk pesher, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Pseudo-Philo) is the pursuit of 'mining Scripture for hidden, richer meanings in order to hear God speak once again in a community's present circumstances.' This is probably the case at many points, but to say with confidence that this is the major trend of how the Old Testament is used in these texts could only be concluded after more work was done on each Old Testament reference in these texts. Furthermore, such a revelatory stance is not necessarily irreconcilable with an attempt to interpret the Old Testament in ways that still have links to the original meaning. I remain unconvinced that even if this revelatory stance were true of other early Jewish texts (e.g., 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, 1 Enoch, and the Qumran War Scroll), it does not necessitate an uncontrolled hermeneutic, as the evidence of my *Themelios* review article attempted to show. Enns also claims that I said that 'although it has its moments, Second Temple hermeneutics is overall not nearly as "odd" as some people think.' This is

not precisely what I said, since the way Enns has phrased it makes it sound as though I think the overall thrust of Judaism is to interpret the Old Testament in line with the original authorial intent. More precisely, my point was merely to assert that there is more significant diversity on this issue in early Jewish (pre-AD 70) interpretative approaches than Enns and others allow.

(3) Enns disagrees with my contention that New Testament writers are characterized by using the Old Testament with the context in mind. He suggests that my approach is 'an *uncritical* adoption of etic hermeneutical categories', and that I 'assume that the New Testament writers share' my 'concerns with matters of contextual exegesis' (italics are mine). In other words, he argues that I make use of predetermined modern categories of exegesis for organizing and interpreting the New Testament, rather than familiarizing myself with the hermeneutical categories that are well recognized within the ancient Jewish culture.

In a similar manner, Enns says that for me to 'use words like "twist" or "distort" to describe non-contextual exegesis of the Second Temple period erects at the outset a hermeneutical wall of hostility between the New Testament and its environment.' His point in the context of the dialogue is that such exegesis may have been legitimate for ancient Judaism and Christianity, since it was the accepted socially constructed approach of the day. Just because we have a different, accepted approach today does not make that ancient, non-contextual approach wrong, nor should we evaluate Jewish exegesis through what we modern exegetes consider to be a correct contextual method of interpretation. The problem with this is that it does not recognize that in the contemporary period there is not necessarily an accepted approach. Enns says the accepted method today is the contextual approach that tries to obtain an author's original meaning. There is, however, a significant movement among some scholars today that affirms we cannot obtain such an original meaning, since it is impossible to interpret objectively. Consequently, they conclude that interpreters are left to reading into the texts that they interpret the reflection of their own socially constructed thoughts. Could Enns himself be reading the Jewish material through such a contemporary lens?

I agree with Enns's basic assumption that all interpreters, including Enns and I, have presuppositions that influence their interpretative approach. So, the issue is which lens makes best sense of the New Testament data, his lens or mine. This is where we disagree. Let us hope that neither of us

is being 'uncritical' as we examine the material through our respective lenses. In order to support his contention that I am 'uncritical' he would need to show evidence of having evaluated my writings over the past twenty-plus years, most of which have been studies of the Old Testament in the New Testament and, often, about how Jewish exegetical perspectives relate to this. He does not adduce such evidence.

I doubt that it is helpful to evaluate one another as being 'uncritical' scholars, since that lowers the level of the dialogue to *ad hominem* argumentation.

Enns lists only eight 'odd' uses of the Old Testament in New Testament in his book, and apparently on the basis that these texts are representative of many more, he deduces that New Testament hermeneutics is reflective of Jewish hermeneutics. In his reply he does not attempt to list any other examples of texts of which he considers the 'eight' to be representative. If he had other examples in mind as representative of the New Testament approach, he could have listed them in his reply. Consequently, he has left himself open to being considered unduly prejudicial toward only his view.

Also, in similar manner, he does not address my critique that we do not define New Testament hermeneutics by first going to Judaism, studying their approach, and then to the New Testament and beginning with the assumption that the Jewish approach is most likely the New Testament approach. In this respect, he has not heeded S. Sandmel's warnings against 'parallelomania'.⁸ As historians, we study, for example, Paul, and then (ideally at the same time) we study other sectors of Judaism (each in their own right). Then we make comparisons and, finally, conclusions. In this respect, I made the point in the *Themelios* review that even contemporary, critical non-evangelical German scholars (e.g., H. Hübner and D. A. Koch) working in this area take the methodological approach just mentioned. It seems that Enns so opposes a contextual approach by New Testament writers because he sees a different approach in Judaism. However he might see the New Testament data in a different light if he let them speak for themselves first rather than seeing them through the lens of Judaism. It is for these reasons that my language about New Testament authors using the Old Testament in a way that is 'not inconsistent' with the Old Testament, or is 'sensitive' to the Old Testament, or does 'not contravene' the Old Testament, or 'reveals a contextual awareness' or 'creatively develops' the Old Testament is not 'unnecessarily defensive, even protectionist,' as Enns concludes. Rather, such

8 'Parallelomania', *JBL* 81 (1962), 1-13.

language is an attempt to describe the phenomena of the New Testament in its first-century context. I am not a voice crying in the wilderness on this issue. Others both outside and within an evangelical perspective also have noticed the New Testament writers' bent toward being aware of broader Old Testament contexts of the specific passages that they quote.⁹ Of course, this issue is greatly debated in New Testament scholarship in general.

Enns also believes that the New Testament writers' belief in Christ, especially in his death and resurrection, gave them christotelic lenses that changed their interpretation of the Old Testament so much that, unless one was a Christian, one could not read the Old Testament in the same way. It is true that belief in Christ caused them to perceive their former moral blindness and to be able better to interpret the Old Testament Christianly (in the light of progressive revelation). However, it is also true that they would insist that the Old Testament can be understood by unbelieving Jews who anticipate a Priest-King, a suffering Servant-King, a new High Priest, etc. For example, while Luke 24:45 says that the resurrected Christ 'opened their minds [of his followers] so that they understood the Scriptures', he also says a little earlier, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and from all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.' Thus, Jesus holds his followers accountable *even before the time of the resurrection* for not understanding that the Old Testament foresaw this event.¹⁰

As Carson also says, in response to Enns, because the interpretations by Christ and the apostles:

truly are there in the text, readers can be berated for not having seen them – i.e., the assumption is that if it were not for their moral

9 In this respect, the following are a representative sampling of works: C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952); more recently, e.g., see R. B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) on which see my forthcoming review in *JETS* and F. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (T & T Clark, 2004); see also the forthcoming volume, *Commentary on the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker), with sixteen contributors.

10 I am thankful to D. A. Carson, 'Three More Books on the Bible: a Critical Review', *Trinity Journal* 27 NS (2006), 43–44, who has reminded me of these most basic points; see his entire review of Enns' whole book, where many good insights can be found.

turpitude and their ignorance of God, they would have seen how the texts are put together, would have grasped more clearly what this God is truly like, and would have understood their Bibles properly.¹¹

By 'properly', I assume that Carson means 'sufficiently', but of course, not with the full richness of meaning that fulfilment brings on the other side of the resurrection. Consequently, the apologetic of the New Testament writers is not only 'believe in Christ and you will understand the Bible better', but it is also demonstrating to their unbelieving audience that, even as non-Christians, they can perceive from the Scriptures that the Messiah was to die and rise again.¹² This is why in Acts 17:11 Luke says that the Bereans to whom Paul and Silas were witnessing 'were examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.' Luke can also say that Alexander, who 'was mighty in the Scriptures,' though 'acquainted only with the baptism of John,' was 'teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus', apparently concerning Old Testament fulfilment in Jesus. Then, when he was taught about the rest of Jesus' ministry 'more accurately,' he was able to refute Jewish opponents by 'demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah' (Acts 18:24–28). Note that he had an 'accurate' understanding of the Old Testament in relation to John's baptism (which includes Jesus' baptism). However, after receiving the full revelation about prophetic messianic fulfilment in Jesus, he was able to have a 'more accurate' understanding. This shows that there can be an accurate understanding of the Old Testament in relation to its fulfilment in Jesus. There can also be a greater understanding in the light of progressive revelation about Jesus. There is no reason to understand this word 'accurate' in any different way to that in which we would today (i.e., having an understanding that significantly corresponds to a realistic perception of the object of understanding in view, with which the other uses of 'accurate' [*akribōōs*] in the New Testament are consistent [cf. BAGD, 39]).

(4) Enns replies to my critique of his analysis of 1 Corinthians 10:4 concerning Christ as the 'rock that followed'. He does not address my major point: Enns had concluded that Paul is referring to a Jewish legend about a well that followed Israel in the wilderness; he says that though Paul believed the legend was true, in reality, we now know that it was

11 Carson, 'Three More Books on the Bible', 44.

12 Carson, 'Three More Books on the Bible', 44.

legend (he says the same thing about the Genesis 1 creation account and the Flood account, and I made the same critique in my *JETS* review, and he did not address the problem in his response to me there). I wish that Enns would have responded to this very important issue.

It is relevant that Paul himself says the following in 1 Timothy 1:4: 'do not pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation'. Ironically, the kinds of myths that Paul is combating appear to be those fanciful speculations based on the Old Testament, which do not correspond to actual past events, especially perhaps genealogies in Genesis, as for example, found in Jubilees and Pseudo-Philo.¹³ Likewise, 2 Peter 1:16 affirms, 'for we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.' The word used for 'tales' (*mythos*) here refers to that which historically did not happen, in contrast to that which did occur, indeed was 'witnessed' (on which see in the commentaries on 2 Peter *in loc.*, for instance by Bauckham, Kelly, and Neyrey).

So, if Enns is correct about the legendary nature of 1 Corinthians 10:4, then not only was Paul unaware that what he was recording was 'legend' (as Enns actually says) but, if he had known, he would have repudiated it, as he does in 1 Timothy. Is this really a likely scenario? Enns would have us believe that the New Testament writers imbibed the myths that were held in the surrounding Jewish culture. However, 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Peter indicate that they were much more discerning than this and believed that God had broken into history through Christ and had revealed salvific truth in doing so. It was a *historical truth* that was different from the surrounding religious myths of pagan and Jewish culture.

Enns responds to me concerning the textual problem in LAB Pseudo-Philo 10:7 (sic; actually the reference is 11:15), and produces an argument that counters my proposal that the original reading in 11:15 was 'Lord' instead of 'it [the water, or by metonymy the rock-shaped well]' that 'followed' Israel in the wilderness. Readers will have to decide how persuasive they think this is. My major point in discussing the textual problem was not upon the probability of my textual analysis (which I would still be happy to debate), but that Enns never mentions the existence of the textual problem in his discussion of the Jewish background of 1 Corinthians 10:4. This is not even covered in his article

13 On which see in the commentaries on 1 Timothy *in loc.*, e.g., among others, by Stott and Collins; similarly Fee, Lea and Griffin, and Marshall.

dedicated to 1 Corinthians 10:4. In fact, in my review at this point, I concluded the discussion by saying that my own evaluation of the textual problem 'could be debated, but our intention here is merely to point out the textual uncertainty' of the reference in Pseudo-Philo 11:15. The point is that this is not a minor textual problem, despite one's final conclusions about it, and to base a major conclusion in 1 Corinthians 10:4 on this Pseudo-Philo text is precarious. He says that 'the presence of a "moveable well" in Pseudo-Philo demonstrates that such a tradition was roughly contemporaneous with Paul.'¹⁴ But, in fact, the textual tenuousness of Pseudo-Philo 11:15 removes this text from being a 'sure' first-century witness to this tradition, which leaves only Tosephta Sukka 3.11 (date ca. AD 300) and Targum Onkelos Numbers 21:16–20 (date ca. AD 250–300). These are the only really solid textual witnesses to the kind of Jewish legend that Enns says Paul was dependent on; however, because of their late date, it is difficult to say that the legendary tradition was even extant in the first century.¹⁵ In contrast to Enns, if one consults the discussion by A. C. Thiselton on 1 Corinthians 10:4, it will be seen how much of a fuller picture of the Old Testament and Jewish evidence is presented and more

14 Enns, 'The 'Moveable Well' in 1 *Corinthians* 10:4: An Extrabiblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text', *BBR* 6 [1996], 27.

15 In this connection I must comment on a misrepresentation, unintentional no doubt, by Enns concerning the textual evidence for the problem in Pseudo-Philo. He says, 'H. Jacobson, in his massive commentary, argues at length that the latter manuscript group [the *p* family, which supports the 'Lord' reading in 11:15] routinely deviates from the Latin archetype, and that the changes made are at times stylistic but other times quite intentional so as to change the meaning of the text.' This citation from Jacobson is made by Enns to indicate that the 'Lord' reading is more likely a scribal corruption and not representative of the original wording. But this is only what Jacobson says at the beginning of his discussion; he goes on to say that 'we can find an additional – and more rational – explanation of our textual variants beyond a perhaps somewhat irresponsible and egoistic scribe.' More likely, he says, the scribe for the above manuscript group (*p*) was a 'translator-reviser' who was copying from the Latin archetype but also was making changes to that archetype based on a 'Greek version that served as a model for his [Latin] exemplar,' and he made changes on the basis of the Hebrew original or of 'a second-and different-Greek translation' of that Hebrew original. (H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, with Latin Text and English Translation* [AGAJU 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996], p. 261). Thus, the *p* scribe was not making changes based purely on his own interpretative interests but also on earlier Greek or Hebrew manuscripts that served as the original from which the Latin archetype was copied. Thus the *p* scribe had access to earlier Greek and/or Hebrew manuscripts of Pseudo-Philo than did the *D* scribe, who had access only to the Latin. After considering all the evidence, Jacobson finally concludes that 'each

circumspect conclusions reached.¹⁶

(5) Let us remember that Enns does not exempt Jesus from being just as culturally determined as are the apostles in their use of the Old Testament. This means for Enns that Jesus was not concerned with the original meaning of Old Testament authors and that he read in meanings that had nothing to do with such original meaning.¹⁷ It would be helpful to hear Enns explain how such a view fits into his understanding of the incarnation. For example, it is obvious that the supernatural could break through in Jesus when he did miracles; why could not the same kind of breakthrough occur in his hermeneutics? Would not even those evangelicals who stress kenosis much more than others, at least, allow for this?

(6) One of my replies to Enns's contention that New Testament writers do not employ a grammatical-historical approach to interpreting the Old Testament is that there are other approaches that can still develop in a consistent, though creative manner the original authorial intentions of the Old Testament. I referred in my review article to a typological approach and to a biblical – theological approach. The latter uncovers how the New Testament writers explore and tease out intertextual and intratextual relationships within the Old Testament itself. I argued, for example, that the use of Hosea 11:1 is a good example of a New Testament writer doing a biblical theology of Hosea by exploring intratextual relationships between Hosea 11:1 and other texts within Hosea. Enns responds to this by saying that I am acknowledging that apostolic exegesis does some things that 'might be left open to a ... charge of twisting and distorting.' No, I would not concede this, though I would concede that there might be some difficult uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament that are

family [of mss. *p* and *D*] *v* has a fairly equal claim on our attention. Every textual problem must be resolved on its own, with internal criteria of evidence.' (Ibid., p. 264). This is a fuller picture of Jacobson's evaluation of the manuscript families, which presents a quite different, much more positive picture of the *p* family than Enns' incomplete comments convey. Could a Christian scribe later have added 'Lord,' a possibility Enns suggests? It is possible but, up to this point, no one has adduced sufficient evidence to make this a probable scenario. Indeed, a text-critical proverb in some circles is, 'all things are possible, but not all things are probable.' Why would not such a purported Christian scribe substitute 'Messiah' or 'Christ' or 'Jesus' instead of the more ambiguous 'Lord,' the latter of which a Jewish scribe could have felt comfortable with?

16 *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 727–30.

17 *Inspiraton and Incarnation*, 114–15, 132.

difficult to understand. My view of the way typology and biblical theology work are not at odds with what could be referred to as an 'organic' approach to Old Testament meanings (here I refer the reader back to my review article in *Themelios*, where I explain how such uses make sense of the Old Testament passages, cited in line with the Old Testament original meaning). Once one considers these kinds of other methods of 'organic development' of the Old Testament, his list of 'odd' uses by New Testament writers is reduced to almost nil.

Conclusion

According to Enns, biblical writers were consciously intending to be understood as writing a historical genre, *but, in fact, we now know such events are legend*. Enns says that, though such accounts do not convey historical truth they still have important theological truth to tell us: that we are to worship the God of the Bible and not pagan gods. He even differs here from Robert Gundry, who contended that some narratives by gospel writers, which traditionally had been taken to be history, are not, since they were intentionally and consciously employing a midrashic method that added significant non-historical, but interpretative features. Enns is saying much more than this: the biblical writers thought they were recording history but they were wrong, since we now know they were unaware that they were recording myth. This is a conclusion that does not appear to pay due hermeneutical respect to the conscious historical genre signals by biblical writers, however interpretative they may be.

In conclusion, Enns's attempt to argue that the New Testament writers 'preached the right doctrine but from the wrong texts,' for all the reasons noted above, I still find to be unpersuasive. Is it really inappropriately modernist to believe that Jesus and the apostles could have had understandings of the Old Testament that had significant links to the Old Testament's original meaning? If this could be concluded of some significant aspects of early Jewish interpreters, why not also of the New Testament?

Should not the element of divine inspiration also affect the answer to this question to some degree; could not divine revelation break through to cause New Testament writers to perceive the original intention of Old Testament texts? I am also troubled by the implications of Enns's conclusions, which leaves us with a Bible written by *inspired authors*, who

at significant points thought they were writing historical accounts, but, indeed, unbeknownst to them, were really mythical (though these are questions that can only be addressed in another venue).

'Come to the Father': Ignatius of Antioch and his calling to be a martyr

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This world is not conclusion;
A sequel stands beyond.
Invisible, as music,
But positive, as sound.
It beckons and it baffles;
Philosophies don't know,
And through a riddle, at the last,
Sagacity must go.
To guess it puzzles scholars;
To gain it, men have shown
Contempt of generations,
And crucifixion known.

Emily Dickinson

In the seven letters of Ignatius of Antioch we possess one of the richest resources for the understanding of Christianity in the era immediately following that of the Apostles.¹ Though somewhat staccato in style and filled with rhetorical embellishments they manifest, in the words of biblical

1 Rowan Williams, *Christian Spirituality* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 14. For two exhaustive overview of studies on Ignatius, see William R. Schoedel, 'Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch' in Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard, eds, *Temporini Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), II/27.1:273–349 and Charles Munier, 'Où en est la question d'Ignace d'Antioche? Bilan d'un siècle de recherches (1870–1988)' in Haase and Temporini eds, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II/27.1:358–484.

scholar Bruce Metzger, 'such strong faith and overwhelming love of Christ as to make them one of the finest literary expressions of Christianity during the second century'.² Accepting what is called the middle recension of these seven letters as genuine,³ it is evident there are three concerns which were uppermost in Ignatius' mind as he wrote these letters.⁴ First of all, he longed to see unity at every level in the life of the local churches to which he was writing. In his own words, he was a man 'dedicated to the cause of unity'.⁵ Second, he ardently desired his fellow believers to stand fast in their common faith against heresy. While there is no scholarly consensus as to the number of heresies in view in Ignatius' letters,⁶ it is clear that one of them was a form of Docetism, which maintained that the incarnation of Christ, and consequently his death and resurrection, did not really take place. Finally, Ignatius is eager to recruit the help of his correspondents in the successful completion of his own vocation, which is nothing less than a call to martyrdom.⁷

- 2 Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 44.
- 3 On their authenticity, see Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 9–15; Schoedel, 'Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch' in Haase and Temporini eds, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II/27.1:286–92. It was the Irish Calvinistic Archbishop, James Ussher (1581–1656), who pioneered the way to the modern perspective on what constitutes the authentic letters of Ignatius. See his *Polycarpi et Ignatii epistolae* (Oxford, 1644). On the transmission of the text of these letters, see also the brief summary by Andrew Louth, 'Ignatius of Antioch' in Maxwell Staniforth, trans., *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers* (1968 ed.; repr. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987), 55–56.
- 4 John E. Lawyer, Jr., 'Eucharist and Martyrdom in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch', *Anglican Theological Review*, 73 (1991), 281.
- 5 *Ignatius, Philadelphians* 8.1 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 95). See also *Polycarp* 1.2; *Philadelphians* 7.2.
- 6 Thus, for example, Charles Thomas Brown (*The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 176–97) believes that there are two heretical groups in view, Gentile Judaizers and Gnostics. If so, the first group is addressed in *Magnesians and Philadelphians*, while the Gnostics are responded to in *Trallians and Smyrnaeans*. For other helpful contributions to this discussion, see L. W. Barnard, 'The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 17 (1963), 193–206; Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 194–99; Jerry L. Sumney, 'Those Who 'Ignorantly Deny Him': The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1 (1993), 345–65; Schoedel, 'Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch' in Haase and Temporini eds, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II/27.1:301–304.
- 7 It is noteworthy that Ignatius never uses the term *martyrs* as a technical term. See Munier, 'Où en est la question d'Ignace d'Antioche?' in Haase and Temporini eds,

All of these three areas of Ignatius' letters have occasioned both significant scholarly elaboration and sharp critique. Of the three, it is Ignatius' desire for martyrdom that has occasioned the most criticism as a number of scholars have suggested that Ignatius' remarks about his death reveal a man mentally unbalanced. W. H. C. Frend, in his monumental study of *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, describes Ignatius's letters as displaying 'a state of exaltation bordering on mania',⁸ while G. E. M. de Ste. Croix bluntly states that Ignatius has 'a pathological yearning' for death, the sure sign of 'an abnormal mentality'.⁹ A careful study, though, of Ignatius' thinking about his own death reveals a man who rightly knows that Christian believing demands passionate engagement of the entire person, even to the point of physical death. To borrow some words from contemporary theologian Kevin Vanhoozer, martyrdom for Ignatius is 'a powerful form of truth-disclosive action', namely the truth about Christ and about himself as a Christian.¹⁰

In an important study of the differences between Ignatius' letters, Mikael Isacson has rightly noted that Ignatius' letters to the Romans and to Polycarp are substantially different from the other five. The one to Polycarp is the only one of which is addressed to an individual and contains mostly a series of pastoral exhortations from one bishop to another. The letter to the Romans is to a church with which Ignatius has no personal link, unlike the other five churches to which he sends letters. With regard to its content, it is extremely focused: it is on his impending martyrdom.¹¹ As such, Ignatius' martyr-centred letter to the Romans will be the focus of the central section of this paper.¹² Given his concern to rebut heresy, it is not surprising to find Ignatius linking the theme of martyrdom and

Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, II/27.1:456; G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 6, 77.

- 8 W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 197.
- 9 G. E. M. De Ste. Croix, 'Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?', *Past & Present*, 26 (November 1963), 23–24. He further suggests that Ignatius is the precursor of a type of early Christian martyr heavily critiqued by church leaders, namely, the voluntary martyr (23–24). There is no evidence to support this suggestion.
- 10 Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press/Leicester, England: Apollon, 2002), 364–65.
- 11 Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2004), 20.
- 12 For the phrase 'martyr-centred', I am indebted to Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 16.

Christological orthodoxy. This link is primarily made in the letter to the Smyrnaeans and will be examined in the final section of this paper. First, what can be known about his journey to Rome, the historical context of his letters, needs to be laid out.

The physical journey

Ignatius, bishop of the church in Antioch of Syria, had been arrested in this city somewhere between AD 107 and 110, and sent to Rome for trial.¹³ There are no details of the persecution in which he was arrested, though Ignatius does mention others who were probably arrested during the same persecution and who had preceded him to Rome.¹⁴ He was taken across the great roads of southern Asia Minor in the custody of ten Roman soldiers, whom he likens to 'savage leopards'.¹⁵ He expects the end of the journey in Rome to have one certain outcome: death.

Yet, there is a difficulty concerning certain details of his arrest. Since Ignatius is on his way to Rome for execution, this would suggest that he is a Roman citizen, because a citizen's right to trial by the emperor was, at this stage in Roman history, a firmly established right.¹⁶ However, some modern scholars have asked why, if he is a citizen, does he say that he is expecting to meet 'fire, cross, beast-fighting'¹⁷ when he gets to Rome, since it has been believed that these forms of punishment were not used in the execution of citizens at this time?¹⁸ In general, Roman punishment was measured to fit the social status of the criminal rather than the nature of the crime. In the words of Ramsey MacMullen: 'everything depended on

13 For the date, see Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch*, 3–9. Schoedel suggests that Ignatius' martyrdom might conceivably be placed as late as AD 135, though he opts for a date before the death of the Emperor Trajan in AD 117: 'Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch' in Haase and Temporini eds, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II/27.1:274, 347–49.

14 Ignatius, *Romans* 10.2. Polycarp, in his sole surviving letter, mentions the names of two of these prisoners, Zosimus and Rufus: *Philippians* 9.1.

15 Ignatius, *Romans* 5.1. This is the earliest occurrence of the word for leopard in Greek. See D. B. Saddington, 'St Ignatius, Leopards, and the Roman Army', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 38 (1987), 411.

16 F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1988), 453–54 and 454, n. 11. Compare Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.3–4, who also mentions sending imprisoned Christians to Rome for trial.

17 Ignatius, *Romans* 5.3 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87).

18 Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch*, 5.

status'.¹⁹ Thus, beheading or the opportunity to commit suicide were the major forms of execution for those upper class citizens of the Empire who had committed a capital offence. But others, those of the lower classes, would be exposed to a whole range of horrific violence, including burning, being forced to drink molten lead, being crucified, being beaten to death, and being mauled to death by dogs and ferocious beasts.²⁰ Yet, as Peter Garnsey and Ramsey MacMullen have pointed out, citizens of the lower classes could be exposed to these latter forms of punishments, especially as the second century wore on.²¹ This might imply that while Ignatius was a citizen, he may well have come from the lower classes.

The road Ignatius probably travelled, the main highway across southern Asia Minor, ran westwards to Ephesus, where travellers, or in this case, a prisoner, would take ship to go either directly to Italy or on up the coast to Troas. Near Laodicea, though, his guards turned north and west to Philadelphia and later to Smyrna, where Ignatius apparently stayed for some time. Polycarp (c. 69/70–155/156), recently appointed bishop of Smyrna, sought to minister to his needs upon his arrival in that town. When he came to Smyrna there were also representatives of three other churches to meet him. Damas, the bishop of the church in Magnesia-on-the-Meander, had come along with two elders from his church, Bassus and Apollonius, and a deacon, Zotion.²² From Tralles came the bishop Polybius²³ and from Ephesus a number of leaders: Onesimus the bishop, a deacon by the name of Burrhus, and Crocus, Euplus and Fronto.²⁴

19 Ramsey MacMullen, 'Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire', *Chiron*, 16 (1986), 147.

20 For the range of punishments, see MacMullen, 'Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire', 147–66. For the punishments to which Christians were subject, see Elaine H. Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion: Paradigms for the Christian's Response to Persecution?' in Bentley Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Volume 1: The School of Valentinus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 266–70.

21 Peter Garnsey, 'Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire', *Past & Present*, 41 (December 1968), 3–24; MacMullen, 'Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire', 149–53. See also the larger study by Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) and Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 39–41.

22 Ignatius, *Magnesians* 2.

23 Ignatius, *Trallians* 1.1.

24 Ignatius, *Ephesians* 1.3–2.1. It has been argued that the Onesimus here is none other than the slave Onesimus referred to in Paul's letter to Philemon. The name, however, is a common one and it is unlikely that it is the same person. See William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch. A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 43–44.

It was at Smyrna that Ignatius wrote the letter to the Roman Church,²⁵ which contains the heart of Ignatius' reflection about his martyrdom. This is the only one of all Ignatius' letters that is dated. He was writing it, he tells the Roman believers, on the ninth day before the Kalends of September, that is, 24 August.²⁶ Obviously a date is included since he wishes to give the church at Rome some idea as to when to expect him.²⁷ Not long after writing this letter to the Roman Church the Antiochene bishop left Smyrna for Troas. This stage in Ignatius' journey is not clear: the soldiers took him either to Troas by road or by a vessel that would have sailed within sight of the shore. We are also uncertain as to how long they stopped at Troas.²⁸ Ignatius, however, was able to write three more letters from there: letters to the churches at Philadelphia, Smyrna, and finally one to the man who befriended him in Smyrna, Polycarp.²⁹

The Roman soldiers and their Christian prisoner seem to have left Troas in something of a hurry and made their way to Neapolis in Macedonia.³⁰ From there they would have passed through Philippi to Dyrrachium, on what is now the Adriatic coast.³¹ From Dyrrachium they probably would have taken another ship for Brundisium in Italy and then by land made their way to Rome. At this point a curtain is drawn across the historical events and nothing more of Ignatius' earthly career is known, except the report by Polycarp to the church at Philippi that he was martyred, presumably at Rome.³²

The spiritual journey

As Ignatius' remarks about martyrdom in his letters are read, one fact above all must be kept in mind. As William C. Weinrich has put it: 'Ignatius [here] reflects upon *his own* coming martyrdom.'³³ This explains the passionate nature of some of his statements. It also means that we should

25 Ignatius, *Romans* 10.1.

26 Ignatius, *Romans* 10.3.

27 Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 14–17.

28 Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 17.

29 Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 11.2; *Smyrnaeans* 12.1; *Polycarp* 8.1.

30 Ignatius, *Polycarp* 8.1.

31 For the mention of Ignatius passing through Philippi, see Polycarp, *Philippians* 1.1.

32 Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 18. See Polycarp, *Philippians* 9.1 for the report of Ignatius' death.

33 William C. Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom. A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Contexts of Persecution and Martyrdom in the New Testament and Early*

not take these letters to be a systematic theology on martyrdom.³⁴ Ignatius speaks for himself and about himself. Again, Weinrich comments: 'What he says, he says about himself as one who is going into death because he is a Christian.'³⁵

It would appear that Ignatius is aware that certain individuals in the Roman Christian community, who came from higher social circles in Rome, had 'connections' and political influence that they could exercise so as to get Ignatius released.³⁶ If Ignatius says nothing to these believers about them not using their influence, he believes that they may well try to get him freed and may even succeed in this endeavour. Since he does not want this (for reasons detailed below), he decides to speak. 'What fills me with fear,' he tells these politically influential believers at Rome, 'is your own kindly feeling for me.' It might be easy for them to intervene to get Ignatius released, but this will only make it more difficult for Ignatius 'to get to God'. He thus urges the Roman Christians, 'keep your lips sealed'. If they do, then they will enable Ignatius to become 'a word of God'.³⁷ In other words, the silence of the Roman believers will mean that Ignatius, by his martyrdom, can proclaim to the world the sincerity of his faith. Ignatius' claim to be a Christian will then be seen to be more than mere words. It will be authenticated by deeds – in this case, the act of martyrdom.³⁸ The authenticity of Ignatius' faith will be revealed by his dying well.

In spelling out how he wants the Roman believers to act, Ignatius reveals the conviction that he does not view his martyrdom as an individual event, but one that involves the entire Roman Church.³⁹ The Roman believers are not mere bystanders who are simply expected to allow something to happen. Both Ignatius and the believers at Rome must choose either to act out the implications of Christ's passion or to desire the

Christian Literature (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 115. This is an excellent study of early Christian thinking about the pneumatology of martyrdom and I am deeply indebted to a number of Weinrich's insights.

34 Pace Williams, *Christian Spirituality*, 14.

35 Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom*, 115–16.

36 Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 23–24; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. Michael Steinhauser and ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 88–89.

37 Ignatius, *Romans* 1.2–2.1 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 85).

38 Ignatius, *Romans* 2. See also Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 171.

39 Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom*, 134–35.

world. Thus, he tells them: It is the hope of this world's prince to get hold of me and undermine my resolve, set as it is upon God. Pray let none of you lend him any assistance, but take my part instead, for it is the part of God. Do not have Jesus Christ on your lips, and the world in your heart; do not cherish thoughts of grudging me my fate. Even if I were to come and implore you in person, do not yield to my pleading; keep your compliance for this written entreaty instead.⁴⁰

For the Roman believers to enable Ignatius to attain to his calling of martyrdom is, in a very real sense, to share in that suffering with him.⁴¹

But there is another request here. Ignatius knows that he is no superman. He is a man with a vivid imagination who can well envision the sort of death that awaits him at Rome. As he says earlier in the letter:

Leave me to be a meal for the beasts, for it is they who can provide my way to God. I am His wheat, ground fine by the lions' teeth to be made purest bread ... Fire, cross, beast-fighting, hacking and quartering, splintering of bone and mangling of limb, even the pulverizing of my entire body – let every horrid and diabolical torment come upon me, provided only that I can win my way to Jesus Christ!⁴²

Ignatius is afraid that at the last his courage may fail and that he will ask the Roman believers to get him freed. Thus, he tells them, do not listen to me if that happens: 'Even if I were to come and implore you in person, do not yield to my pleading; keep your compliance for this written entreaty instead.'⁴³ Given his fears, it is quite understandable that he asks the Romans to pray for him. 'The only petition I would have you put forward on my behalf,' he asks them, 'is that I may be given sufficient inward and outward strength to be as resolute in will as in words.' Again, near the end of the letter he pleads with them, 'Intercede for me that I may have my wish.'⁴⁴ Ignatius' request for prayer for perseverance bespeaks the realization that true faith is found to be genuine only in the place of endurance.⁴⁵

40 Ignatius, *Romans* 7.1–2 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87).

41 Ignatius, *Romans* 6; Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom*, 135–36.

42 Ignatius, *Romans* 4.1; 5.3 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 86, 87).

43 Ignatius, *Romans* 7.2 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87).

44 Ignatius, *Romans* 3.2; 8.3 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 86, 88).

45 See Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 368.

Martyrdom as imitation and renunciation

Why, though, is he willing to die? First, Ignatius is certain that his martyrdom will please God. As he declares with confidence about his desire to die for Christ: 'I am not writing now as a mere man, but I am voicing the mind of God.'⁴⁶ The use of genitives in his description of himself as 'His [i.e. God's] wheat' and 'the purest bread for Christ'⁴⁷ reveals Ignatius' awareness that 'God is the author of martyrdom'. Consequently he must be pleased with those who die for the sake of their faith in Christ.⁴⁸

Why exactly does Ignatius' martyrdom please God? First of all, he conceives of it as an imitation of the death of Christ. 'Leave me to imitate the Passion of my God,' he says at one point.⁴⁹ If God the Father was pleased with his Son's death for sinners, Ignatius' dying for his faith in Christ is also pleasing to God. Just as Christ's death was one in which violence was done to him, but he did not retaliate,⁵⁰ likewise was the death of Ignatius, the imitator of his Lord's passion. Weinrich rightly notes, though, that there is not the slightest hint that Ignatius' death has any salvific value for others as Christ's death has.⁵¹

46 Ignatius, *Romans* 8.3 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 88). See also *Romans* 2.1, where he is urging the Roman Church to allow his martyrdom to take place: 'It is not men I want you to gratify, but God' (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 85).

47 Ignatius, *Romans* 4.1 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 86).

48 Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom*, 115.

49 Ignatius, *Romans* 6.3 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87). Noteworthy in this text is Ignatius' high Christology. In referring to Christ as 'God', Ignatius evidently expected the Christians in Rome to be both familiar with a high Christology and comfortable with it. See also the following texts where Ignatius describes Christ as God: *Romans*, Salutation 'Jesus Christ our God' (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 85), 6.3; *Ephesians*, Salutation, 1.1 (where Ignatius refers to the 'blood of God'), 18.2; *Smyrnaeans*, 1.1.

Reinforcing these texts is the statement in *Magnesians* 6.1 that 'Jesus Christ ... was with the Father (*para patri*) from all eternity' (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 72). This clause is parallel to the Johannine affirmation in John 1:1 that 'the Word was with God (*pros ton theon*)'. In *koine* Greek at this time, the use of *para* with the dative to express the idea of 'with someone' was receiving competition from *pro* with the accusative. In other words, Ignatius' statement that Jesus was 'with the Father' and John's declaration that the Word 'was with God' are making the same point: Jesus Christ/the Word enjoyed intimate, personal communion with the Father from eternity.

50 See, for example, 1 Peter 2:21–23.

51 Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom*, 112–13. Thus Weinrich comments: 'It is ... quite

Martyrdom is also the expression of and culmination to Ignatius' ultimate renunciation of the world. As he states: 'All the ends of the earth, all the kingdoms of the world would be of no profit to me; so far as I am concerned, to die in Jesus Christ is better than to be monarch of earth's widest bounds.'⁵² Martyrdom vividly brought to the fore a key theme of much of early Christian teaching and conviction: the world, in their case the world of the Roman Empire, was neither a friend of the Church nor of her God.⁵³ However, it is curious, as Frend points out, that apart from the reference to the soldiers guarding him as 'savage leopards', Ignatius says nothing directly about the Empire.⁵⁴

One of Ignatius' most powerful evocations of this theme of renunciation comes in the following declaration in his letter to Rome:

Earthly longings have been crucified (*ho emos erōs estaurōtai*) and in me there is left no spark of desire for mundane things, but only a murmur of living water (*hydōr zōn*) that whispers within me, 'Come to the Father'.⁵⁵

The reference here to the 'living water' is almost definitely an allusion to Jesus' words in John 7:37–39 that liken the Holy Spirit to 'rivers of living water'.⁵⁶ It is the Spirit, therefore, who speaks within Ignatius, 'Come to the Father'. The Spirit speaks thus from within a context of crucifixion: the death of Ignatius' 'earthly longings', according to Maxwell Staniforth's

doubtful whether Ignatius conceived of his martyrdom as sacrificially vicarious for his fellow Christians' (*Spirit and Martyrdom*, 113). Compare, this with Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 199.

52 Ignatius, *Romans* 6.1 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87). Frend sees in this statement an echo of Paul's statement in Philippians 1:21, 'For me to live is Christ and to die is gain' (*Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 198). On this theme of martyrdom and renunciation, see David A. Lopez, *Separatist Christianity: Spirit and Matter in the Early Church Fathers* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 74–78.

53 For further discussion of this theme, see Lopez, *Separatist Christianity*.

54 Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 200. On the reference to the soldiers, see Ignatius, *Romans* 5.1.

55 Ignatius, *Romans* 7.8 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87, altered).

56 See also the link of the Spirit and water in Revelation 22:1–2, 17. See the comments of Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 185; Henning Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1985), 77.

translation cited above.⁵⁷ This phrase 'earthly longings' is literally 'my love'.⁵⁸ In the century following Ignatius, the great Alexandrian exegete Origen (c.185–254) initiated a long tradition of interpretation of this Ignatian text when he remarked that 'one of the saints, by name Ignatius, said of Christ, "My Love is crucified"'.⁵⁹ Origen goes on to say that he finds it odd that Ignatius uses the term *erōs* for Christ, but he states that he is unwilling to censure him for such. However, over and above the fact that the term *erōs* is not used in the New Testament at all, let alone referred to divine love, the context of Ignatius' statement seems to demand that it be understood as 'earthly longings'. The use of the conjunction 'and' places the phrase 'earthly longings' on the same level as the clause 'in me there is left no spark of desire for mundane things'.⁶⁰ In other words, the 'living water', the Spirit, has quenched the fire of 'earthly passion' and is exhorting Ignatius to 'come to the Father'.⁶¹ Thus, the Spirit is leading Ignatius to the Father by way of martyrdom and his leading entails a death to all earthly longings. This passage reflects both a keen understanding of the opposition of the Spirit to 'earthly longings'⁶² and the awareness that martyrdom is, in a sense, a gift of the Spirit.

57 Similarly Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 181: 'My longing'.

58 Thus J. H. Srawley, *The Epistles of St. Ignatius Bishop of Antioch* (3rd ed.; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919), 78; Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia*, 76: 'Meine Liebe'.

59 *Commentary on the Song of Songs Prologue 2* (trans. R. P. Lawson, *Origen: The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies* (Ancient Christian Writers, vol. 26; Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press/London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), 35). For another much later example, see Samuel Pearce, 'Lines written on the words of Ignatius, "My Love is Crucified"' in Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M.*, ed. W. H. Pearce (London: G. Wightman, 1831), 223–25. Pearce (1766–99), an English Calvinistic Baptist pastor, clearly understands Ignatius' words to be a reference to Christ.

60 I am indebted to a good friend, Dr Benjamin Hegeman of SIM, now based in Houghton, New York, for this point.

61 P. Th. Camelot, trans., *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne: Lettres, Martyre de Polycarpe* (3rd ed.; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1958), 134–35, n.1; Brown, *Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 109.

62 Similarly J. B. Lightfoot translates this phrase by 'my earthly passion has been crucified' (*The Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp* (2nd ed.; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), II/2, 222). See also the comments of Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 81, 83.

Martyrdom and being a disciple

In an important study of Ignatius as martyr and Christian disciple, Daniel N. McNamara notes that within Ignatius' letters the bishop of Antioch speaks of 'being a disciple' in two different ways. First, he expresses the hope that he will 'be found a disciple' in his confrontation with death as a martyr. By this McNamara understands Ignatius to be saying that 'he hoped that his final confrontation with death would be found consistent with his profession of faith in Christ'. In a second understanding of what it means to be a Christian disciple, the emphasis is placed on the devotion of the Christian to the Lord Jesus.⁶³

For Ignatius, martyrdom is the clearest way to express his personal devotion to Christ and his rejection of the world. But he is quite aware that there are other ways to journey. For example, his urging of the believers in Rome to express their devotion to Christ by allowing him to die as a martyr clearly indicates an awareness that his path of discipleship and theirs are not identical. Although Ignatius might see martyrdom as the straighter road upon which he must travel, he is not denying the fact that there are other paths which other disciples can travel.⁶⁴ In this regard, it is vital to note that he does not exhort any of the believers in Rome, nor for that matter any of his other correspondents, to join him as a martyr. He obviously does not see martyrdom as being essential to discipleship.⁶⁵

Martyrdom and the defence of the Faith

A final aspect of Ignatius' thinking about his martyrdom is the way that he believes it forms a bulwark against a species of false teaching that threatened the unity of at least a couple of the churches to which he was writing, namely those in Smyrna and in Tralles. Present even during the days of the Apostles,⁶⁶ the proponents of this perspective, known as Docetism, denied the death of Christ and asserted that Christ's 'sufferings were not genuine'.⁶⁷ Ignatius uses what was becoming a technical word

63 Daniel N. McNamara, 'Ignatius of Antioch On His Death: Discipleship, Sacrifice, Imitation' (Unpublished PhD thesis, McMaster University, 1977), 247.

64 Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 254-55.

65 Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 198. See also, in this regard, Ignatius' exhortation to Polycarp in *Polycarp 2*.

66 See, for example, in the New Testament: 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John

67 Ignatius, *Trallians* 9-11.

to describe these theological opponents of core Christian teaching: they have embraced 'heresy' (*haireisis*).⁶⁸ Moreover, according to Ignatius, those who have embraced this false teaching do not live godly lives, for they have broken with the church, refusing to attend the Lord's Table or to pray together with the church.⁶⁹ While Docetism was not part and parcel of every variant of second-century Gnosticism it can be found in a variety of Gnostic documents. In *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, for example, it is asserted that 'Jesus is a stranger to ... suffering'. In another text, entitled the *First Apocalypse of James*, a statement is attributed to Christ in which he affirms, 'Never have I suffered in any way'.⁷⁰

Now, in the letter to the church at Smyrna Ignatius makes a powerful connection between his own death and that of Christ. He writes that Christ was 'truly pierced by nails in his human flesh' and 'truly suffered'. It is thus necessary to confess over against the heretics that 'his Passion was no unreal illusion'.⁷¹ Nor was Christ's physical resurrection an illusion. 'For my own part,' Ignatius declares, 'I know and believe that he was in actual human flesh, even after his resurrection'. Ignatius finds proof for this declaration in the resurrection accounts in Luke 24, where Christ appeared to his disciples, challenged their unbelief, and urged them to eat and drink with him.⁷²

If the Docetists were correct and all of the Lord Jesus' incarnate life were 'only illusion,' then, Ignatius declares with biting sarcasm, 'these chains of mine must be illusory too!'⁷³ From the point of view of Docetism, if Christ did not really suffer, it was meaningless for any of his disciples to take such a pathway. Martyrdom was thus not a distinctive characteristic of the Docetist communities. A number of second-century authors after Ignatius

68 See Ignatius, *Trallians* 6.1. He also uses the term 'teaching falsehood' (*heterodoxountas*) with regard to this perspective: Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans* 6.2. It is interesting that Ignatius is the only second-century Christian author to use this term. See Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 174–75.

69 Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans* 6–7.

70 Both texts cited by Guy G. Stroumsa, 'Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 12 (2004), 272.

71 Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans* 1.2–2 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 101, altered).

72 Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans* 3.1–2 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 101). On the Docetists at Smyrna, see also Sumney, 'The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch', 349–53; Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 158–79.

73 *Smyrnaeans* 4.2 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 102). See also *Trallians* 9–10.

note the absence of martyrs among such communities.⁷⁴ But Christ's suffering was real and this validated the physical suffering of his people. Ignatius continues:

To what end have I given myself up to perish by fire or sword or savage beasts? Simply because when I am close to the sword I am close to God, and when I am surrounded by the lions, I am surrounded by God. But it is only in the name of Jesus Christ, and for the sake of sharing his sufferings, that I could face all this; for he, the perfect Man, gives me strength to do so.⁷⁵

Ignatius' martyrdom was thus a powerful defence of the saving reality of the incarnation and crucifixion. In suffering a violent death, Ignatius was confessing that his Lord had also actually suffered a violent demise. So important was that confession, it was worth dying for.

74 See the references in Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion' in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, 265–71. There were some Gnostics who appear to have affirmed Christ's bodily sufferings and thus the value of martyrdom: see Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion' in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, *passim*; Heikki Räisänen, 'Marcion' in Antii Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, eds, *A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'* (Leiden/Boston: E. J. Brill, 2005), 100–24.

75 *Smyrnaeans* 4.2 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 102)

Origins of the Particular Baptists

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Introduction

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls, (Jeremiah 6:16).

The English Particular Baptists first appeared as a distinct group in the early seventeenth century. They combined the believers' church practice of baptism with contemporary Calvinist soteriology. The origins of this movement are somewhat puzzling at first glance, as they combine what would appear on the surface to be contradictory theologies. Their soteriology was similar to that of the bulk of the Church of England at the time, particularly the Puritan stream; yet their practice of baptism and elements of their form of church government paralleled those of the Anabaptists, whom they universally disavowed. It is common today for Baptists to identify themselves with these continental radical reformers. Is this justified?

This paper will seek to establish the identity and origins of the Particular Baptists and delineate their characteristic beliefs, especially where these differed from other believers of their time. I will seek to show that the Particular Baptists find their roots in English Puritan Nonconformity, almost completely to the exclusion of any Anabaptist influence. Theirs were churches whose origins lay in the magisterial Reformation; differences between them and their Puritan contemporaries are primarily a function of their understanding and application of the Scriptures in not so much a different manner, as in one more consistent and complete.

The First Particular Baptists

Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel, (Isaiah 8:18).

The earliest documented Baptist church in England dates from the return to Spitalfields of Thomas Helwys (d. 1616) and a group of English exiles from Holland in 1611, where they had been involved with the English separatist, John Smyth (c. 1570 to 1612).¹ However, while the General Baptists, of whom Helwys and his church were part, were in many ways similar to the Particular Baptists, they represent a different movement with separate roots.²

The story of the Particular Baptist movement in England begins, interestingly enough, not with the General Baptists, or even with other believers' churches across the Channel, but with a church of the English Separatist movement. A clergyman of the Church of England, Henry Jacob (1563 to 1624), was one of the signatories of the 1603 'Millenary Petition' calling for reforms in the Church.³ While he saw the need for reform, he rejected the more extreme calls of some such as Browne, Barrow and Johnson to separate completely from the state Church. His views on non-separating reforms are stated in his 1605 *Reasons taken out of Gods Word and the best humane Testimonies proving a necessitie of reforming ovr Chvrches in England*, which got him a stay in the Clink for his trouble. He followed many Separatists into exile in Holland, though he never appears to have aligned his views with theirs. However, he did come to realize over time that a distinction had to be made between those 'true churches' with which he kept fellowship, and the 'false Church of England', from which he must come apart.

His desire to establish a different type of church is expressed in the 1605, *A third humble Supplication*. This church would:

Assemble together somewhere publickly to the Service & worship of God, to vse & enjoy peaceable among our selves alone the wholl exercise of Gods worship and of Church government viz. by a Pastor,

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- 1 H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 38.
 - 2 James M Renihan, 'An Examination of the Possible Influence of Menno Simons' *Foundation Book upon the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644*, *American Baptist Quarterly*, 15, No. 3 (September, 1996), 191.
 - 3 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 41.

Elder & Deacons in our severall Assemblies without any tradicion of men whatsoeuer, according to the specification of Gods written word and no otherwise ... And [we] shall also afterwards keepe brotherly communion with the rest of our English Churches as they are now established.⁴

Jacob's view remained far more moderate than that of Smyth and Helwys regarding the legitimacy of the Church of England and the permissibility of continued relations with it, though he would, in effect, advocate separatism.

The JIJ Church, Southwark

On his return to England in 1616, Jacob's vision found expression in the church that he gathered in Southwark. Though independent, this church was neither rigid nor hostile in its separation from the Church of England. It would come to be known as the 'JIJ' church, after its first three pastors, Henry Jacob, John Lathrop, and Henry Jessey. The JIJ church was not, at its inception, a Baptist church, being perhaps best described as an 'Independent Congregational Church with semi-separatist leanings'⁵, though others have described it plainly as 'Separatist'.⁶ It is from this gathering that the first Particular Baptist church would soon arise.

The situation of the JIJ church was anything but stable. Its first pastor, Jacob, was hounded out of England, and died in Virginia;⁷ he was replaced by John Lathrop (1584 to 1653). Mr Lathrop came into a situation that was as unstable theologically as it was dangerous physically. The JIJ church wrestled with matters which were bound to arise from their efforts to maintain an independent, yet still friendly stance toward the established Church. During Lathrop's ministry, several people of more extreme separatist views came into the church. This theological difference, combined with the danger inherent in the growing size of the church which made common worship increasingly risky, led to a number of splits in the church in the 1630s.⁸ These divisions were generally amicable.

4 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*.

5 Renihan, 'An Examination of the Possible Influence of Menno Simons', 191.

6 A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1956), 57.

7 M. A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1996), 27.

8 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 43.

The records preclude one from concluding that at this point the reason for separation from the established Church had anything to do with the preferred mode of baptism. There is reference to a certain Mr Eaton and others, who having received a 'further baptism', left the JIJ church to form their own fellowship in 1633. Whether this re-baptism was motivated by a rejection of infant baptism itself, or merely of that baptism as administered (unworthily) by the Church of England, is not clear. Barrington White holds their departure to be attributable to the latter.⁹

It is thus possible that a Calvinist church of Baptist practice existed as early as 1633. At the very least, there was a gathering of Calvinistic separatists who had experienced 're-baptism'. Some who shared Mr Eaton's views on baptism, whatever these may have been, are noted as having seceded from the JIJ church by 1638 to join a group led by John Spilsbury (1593 to c.1668). Spilsbury was a signatory to the landmark *First London Confession of Faith* (1644), and is held by some to have been its principal author.¹⁰ The so-called *Kiffin Manuscript*, which gives church minutes from the JIJ church and others, observed that:

Mr Tho: Wilson, Mr Pen & H. Pen, & 3 more being convinced that Baptism was not for Infants, but professed Believers joined with Mr Io: Spilsbury the Church's favour being desired therein.¹¹

By now (1637), the JIJ church had her third pastor, Henry Jessey (1601–63),¹² Lathrop having followed Jacob's path in fleeing Laudian persecution in England for the New World. Jessey continued in the irenic stance of his predecessors concerning the Church of England.¹³ The Spilsbury church, which is the first that can be categorically identified as Calvinist Baptist, maintained an amicable relationship with the JIJ church despite their differences.¹⁴

9 Barrington White, *The English Baptist Separatists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1983), 59.

10 James Renihan, 'John Spilsbury', in *The British Particular Baptists, 1638–1910, Vol. I*, ed. M. A. G. Haykin, (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 24.

11 Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 28.

12 Slayden A. Yarborough, 'The Origin of Baptist Associations Among the English Particular Baptists', *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol 23, No 2, (April, 1988), 17.

13 Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 28.

14 Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 29.

Baptism

It becomes evident that at this point infant baptism had come to the fore as a matter of concern among the semi-Separatists, who were associated with the Particular Baptists, both within and outside of the JIJ church. While for those who followed Eaton out of the JIJ church the mode and subject of baptism may, or may not have been as salient a concern as was the matter of who administered the rite, before long the theology proper of the ordinance came under scrutiny.

In May 1640, the JIJ church divided between Jessey and Praise-God Barebone (c. 1596 to 1679) due to space restrictions. Richard Blunt, one of those who had earlier left with Eaton, returned to the Jessey church at this time, and began to raise questions about the mode of baptism, 'being convinced of Baptism yt also it ought to be by dipping ye Body into ye Water, resembling burial & riseing again. 2 Col: 2.12 (sic). Rom: 6.4'.¹⁵ After conferring about this, the church sought further instruction. However, as they knew no one else in England who practised immersion baptism,¹⁶ they sent the Dutch-speaking Mr Blunt to Holland to discuss the matter with the small Arminian sect in Rhynsburg. This was a group who had departed from the usual Anabaptist practice of baptism by affusion or sprinkling and had adopted immersion as the mode of administration.¹⁷ Upon his return, Blunt baptized Mr Blacklock, a teacher, and he in turn baptized 'the rest of their friends that were so minded', forty-one in all. It is not clear whether Blunt was baptized in Holland, or baptized himself, or whether he and Blacklock baptized each other. The matter of succession and its importance in recovering the practice of baptism by immersion would come to present as thorny an issue among the Calvinistic independents as it had earlier for Smyth and Helwys. While he would later become a Baptist, Praise-God Barebone, the leader of the other church to form from the JIJ division, adamantly opposed the practice of believer's baptism by the churches, on the basis that there was no proper succession.¹⁸

15 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 45.

16 Interestingly enough, the Calvinists appeared to be unaware of the existence of the General Baptists. Whether this only reflects ignorance, or that the latter did not yet practise believer's baptism at this point, is unknown.

17 Glen H. Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 6, No 4, (Oct 1962), 327.

18 Renihan, 'An Examination of the Possible Influence of Menno Simons', 193.

These concerns notwithstanding, the 're-baptized' group from the Jessey church then formed two churches, one under Richard Blunt, the other under Thomas Kilcop. Shortly after Blunt's return from Holland, the Spilsbury church then also adopted immersion as the proper form of baptism.¹⁹ However, unlike the Jessey church, they recovered its practice not by succession (which had presented a considerable concern both to the General Baptists while in Holland and to Blunt, evidently), but simply on biblical authority.²⁰ Together with the Calvinistic Baptist congregation planted in Crutched Fryers by Green and Spencer, there were now four Particular Baptist churches in London.²¹ By the time that the *First London Confession* of 1644, representing the views of the Particular Baptist churches, was issued, there were seven such gatherings. In this confession is laid down for the first time by any Baptists that immersion was an essential element of proper baptism.

Particular Baptists, Particular Beliefs

Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, (Luke 1:1).

Though the movement was, strictly speaking, now only a few years old its basic beliefs were more or less fixed by this point and are well reflected by the 1644 confession. The goal of the 1644 *Confession* was not so much to establish a statement of Baptist orthodoxy, to which all must subscribe, as to defend the burgeoning movement against its detractors. It was hoped that once the reasonableness of the Baptists' beliefs was seen and the orthodoxy of their views on soteriology and the place of the magistrate made plain, they would be left alone. W. L. Lumpkin points out that as the movement grew so did opposition to it. This would often take the form of accusations that the Particular Baptists were simply Anabaptists who would bring in anarchy similar to that seen at Münster in the previous century. Such treatises as *A Short History of the Anabaptists of High and Low Germany*, *A Warning for England especially for London*, and *A Confutation of the Anabaptists and of All others who affect no Civill*

19 Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 30.

20 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 47.

21 Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 30.

Government, called for a response on the part of the Particular Baptists to distance themselves from both the Anabaptists and the General Baptists, with whom they differed on matters of soteriology and disdain for the established Church.²² Indeed, the title page identifies the *Confession* as being that 'of those churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists', and its express intent is 'for the taking off those aspersions which are frequently both in Pulpit and Print, (although unjustly) cast upon them'.²³

The *First Confession* indeed bears considerable resemblance to the 1596 *True Confession* of the Congregational church of Francis Johnson, upon which it is most evidently based. As Glen Stassen points out, the Particular Baptists 'do not depart from the basic Calvinist position of that pioneer Congregational statement'.²⁴ The views the *Confession* expresses concerning God (Art. I-II); the eternal decrees (Art. III); the depravity of man (Art. V); the person of Christ (Art. IX); the three-fold offices of Christ (Art. X); the extent of the atonement (Art. XXI); and the nature of saving faith, are unremarkable from a Calvinist point of view and consistent with those expressed by the Congregationalists. Ecclesiology does not leap to the fore either, less time being spent on it than in the *True Confession*.

What does, of course, distinguish the *First Confession* from the *True Confession* and other Calvinist confessions is the view of baptism it espouses. Though it is only described in two articles, XXXIX and XL, baptism has a distinct significance for the Particular Baptists. The position of the statement on baptism and the space allotted to it is instructive. While seen as a crucial element of biblical church practice, it is evident that it is subordinate to the proper understanding of God and his works in Christ, and to a general Calvinistic understanding of soteriology and even, to some extent, of church government. This is consistent with the way in which the Particular Baptists arrived at their convictions on baptism, and shows them to esteem it as important as a logical outworking of proper faith and practice, not the driving force behind them.

Baptism was to be dispensed only to those professing faith, and to be administered by immersion. It was a sign, 'answering the thing signified', which is three-fold:

22 William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), 145.

23 Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 153.

24 Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 328.

1. the washing of the whole soul in the blood of Christ;
2. the interest of the saints in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ;
3. the raising again of the saints by the power of Christ in the general resurrection.

Baptism was to be administered by 'a preaching disciple' (later amended to 'men able to preach the Gospel'), and not limited to any particular church-officer – although evidently not to be administered by just any Christian. The view of baptism as a washing of the soul (Titus 3:5) the Calvinists shared with their General Baptist brethren.

What is singular in the Particular Baptists' understanding of this sacrament is the centrality of the death and resurrection of Christ; the two passages regarding baptism that were most dear to the Calvinist Baptists, Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12, clearly establish this foundation. This understanding of the significance of baptism reflects a particular Christology: God's power to save was not seen so much in the obedience and sacrifice of Christ *extra nos* as it were, but in the mercy and power by which Christ died, was buried, and was raised again. The Christian's union with Christ in this death and resurrection was of great significance. This certainly is consistent with Calvin's view of justification, which reflected less the rigid forensic declaration of innocence of Melancthon than the believer's mystic union with Christ which then justifies him.²⁵ In this, they may well have been closer to the original Calvin than their fellow English Calvinists were.

Other elements of interest in the *First London Confession* regard the Baptists' view of the function of the magistrate. The King and those appointed under him for the maintenance of the civil order are seen as being an ordinance of God (Art. XLVIII). The antipathy that one finds in the Anabaptists, or even in Smyth (absent in Helwys), is not seen here. The involvement of the Baptists in the Model Army during the Civil War reflects their comfort in supporting the structures and even the military of the appointed civil power. Indeed, it appears that many churches were formed *in* the Army during the War. However, the State is not accorded any role in regulating worship (Art. LI). The Particular Baptists make it

25 Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology – An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 443.

clear that they will worship God according to conscience, their allegiance to the State notwithstanding.

Thus the picture of the Particular Baptists that begins to form, is of a group of independent Calvinistic believers who had much in common with their Presbyterian and Congregational co-dissenters. There are, of course, significant differences in the understanding of baptism. These appear to be consonant with a somewhat more nuanced expression of the Calvinistic understanding of God's work of salvation in Christ. But the Particular Baptists appear to be rather more Congregationalist semi-Separatists, with a different understanding of baptism, than either General Baptists or Anabaptists who happen to have a Calvinistic soteriology. Both the *First London Confession* and our brief examination of their development over the first decades of the 17th century reflect this.

Origins

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning nor ending of days, (Hebrews 7:3).

Having described the early years of the Particular Baptists and examined some of their beliefs, we are now in a position to move on to examine the question of the origins of this group. As there are three schools of thought as to the origins of the Free Church movement as a whole,²⁶ so are there basically three schools of thought as to the origins of the English Baptists in general, and of the Calvinistic Baptists in particular. The first of these, the Successionist school, reflects a belief that there is an 'organic succession of Baptist churches going all the way back to either the ministry of John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan river or the day of Pentecost.'²⁷ While this view has its adherents at the popular level, it is effectively devoid of genuine evidential support.

26 Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1968), 8ff.

27 Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 15.

Anabaptist Origins

The bulk of historians have attempted to situate the origins of the Particular Baptists at a point rather closer to the period of the Reformation. This second school of thought on Baptist origins sees very real ties between the English Baptists and the Anabaptist movement. It does not pronounce on the particular point at which the Anabaptists may have separated from the state Church (although there is certainly some kinship here with the Successionist or Sectarian view). It does, however, situate the Baptists' origins in Reformation or pre-Reformation times, in the separation of the Anabaptists from both the Catholic and magisterial Protestant churches. It is held that the Anabaptists directly or indirectly influenced Baptist thought, especially in the areas of baptism and relations with the State. It is between the adherents to this school and those that hold that the Particular Baptists have roots exclusively in the Puritan secession from the Church of England that the dispute about origins lies primarily.

The case for Anabaptist origins for the Baptists found favour in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This was concurrent with a rise in serious scholarly interest in the history of the Anabaptist movement. It is certainly the harder to establish of the two primary competing views, simply because there is no solid evidence for any link existing between them and the English Particular Baptists.

The General Baptists

In its first form, this theory envisages direct contact between the first Baptists and the continental Anabaptists, out of which emerged the Baptists' distinctive views on baptism and church government. The founders of what were to become the General Baptists, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, had fled to Holland by 1607.²⁸ Smyth was a Puritan clergyman of the Church of England, and a Calvinist. He had struggled with the ministerial order of the state Church, being as it was at variance with the classical Calvinist conception of a four-fold ministry (pastor, elder, deacon, doctor). During his time at Cambridge he had contact with

28 W. R. Estep, 'Anabaptists, Baptists, and the Free Church Movement', *Criswell Theological Journal* 6 (Spr 1993): 307.

Separatists such as Francis Johnson (d. 1617), who was his tutor.²⁹ In 1606, some time after being reprimanded for preaching in a parish church without a licence, Smyth broke with the Church and founded the separatist church at Gainsborough. It was over the next two years that the bulk of his church made its way to Holland where there was greater religious liberty. There was great turmoil among the English separatist churches in Holland, of which Smyth's was only one. Disputes over church government, valid orders of ministry, and prayer book worship abounded. Smyth's congregation had united on the basis of a covenant (quite usual for Congregational churches), but by 1608, Smyth questioned the validity of such an approach. Subsequently he disbanded his church, reforming it on the basis of confession of faith in Christ and believer's baptism,³⁰ which he inaugurated by baptising himself, and then the others.

From this point on Smyth's beliefs on the organization of the church changed rapidly. By 1610, his church began to seek union with the Waterlander Mennonites. He had by now rejected his se-baptism and sought baptism by the Mennonites, whose church he considered a true church and capable of giving him valid baptism. Helwys had broken with Smyth by this time. He would return to England in 1611, with a portion of the church, to face imprisonment and subsequent death in Newgate. This was because of a treatise he would write on religious liberty, a personally endorsed copy of which he was ill-advised enough to send directly to James the First.

It is thus certain that the Smyth-Helwys church had contact with the Mennonites in Holland. Estep would argue that there `seems little doubt that Mennonite influence played a role in Smyth's rethinking the biblical teachings on baptism and the church.'³¹ However, it does not follow that any of this influence made it back to England. Smyth apparently accepted the Melchiorite³² Christology common among the Anabaptists. There is, however, no evidence that Helwys did so. As well, on the matter of the role of the magistracy, Smyth sided with the Anabaptists, stating that no Christian could serve as such. Helwys was far more moderate, insisting solely that `men's religion to God is betwixt God and themselves; the king shall not answer for it, neither may the king be judge between God and

29 Estep, 'Anabaptists, Baptists, and the Free Church Movement', 304.

30 Leon McBeth, 'Baptist Beginnings', *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol 15, No 4, (Oct 1960), 38.

31 Estep, 'Anabaptists, Baptists, and the Free Church Movement', 312.

man' (*The Mystery of Iniquity*).³³ This is a radical enough statement for its time, but it still allows for a more conventional role for the magistrate. As concerns the rejection of Calvinism, this appeared to have been developing in the theology of both these men before any contact with the Dutch Mennonites, Smyth having already expressed his dissatisfaction with the Calvinistic notes that informed the reader of the Geneva Bible.³⁴

Thus, it is far from certain that any influence that the Anabaptists, through the Mennonites, had on the English separatists who were to become the General Baptists, ever made it back across the Channel. Those who fell under their sway, with Smyth, became Mennonites, while those who left Smyth did so early, before this involvement. While theology no doubt played a role in the split, the superheated environment of the exile community in Holland, combined with the very dynamic personalities involved, (strong men such as Smyth, Helwys, Johnson, and Robinson, to name a few), were the primary reasons for the split in the Separatists. Those who went back under Helwys did so as Baptists, but most likely with no more than collateral influence on the part of the Mennonites and their theology, combined with whatever they may have imbibed of the religious atmosphere in Holland in the early years of the seventeenth century.

It must also be stated that even if one should see a solid connection between the Anabaptists and the General Baptists, this ultimately proves to be of little relevance to our question, that of the origin of the Particular Baptists. Both groups may share the name Baptist, but their origins are completely separate. The General Baptists in England, known as such primarily because of their view of the atonement as being universal to all yet effective only for those who believe. This group traces their roots to the party that returned from Holland with Helwys. They continued at Spitalfields after Helwys' imprisonment, surviving under intense persecution. By 1624, there were at least five General Baptist churches in England.³⁵

32 After the Anabaptist Melchior Hoffmann, whose view of the Incarnation precluded Christ taking on actual human nature through Mary. This was seen to ensure that Jesus was not contaminated by inherent human sinfulness.

33 Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 47.

34 Estep, 'Anabaptists, Baptists, and the Free Church Movement', 310.

35 McBeth, 'Baptist Beginnings', 39.

On the other hand, the Particular Baptists, as we have seen, came out of the semi-Separatist JIJ church. From the beginning, the theology and outlook of the Particular Baptists differed from that of the General Baptists. They were far less hostile toward the Church of England. Their soteriology had a different basis as well, being far more conventionally Calvinistic (hence the label 'Particular', in reference to their belief that the application of Christ's atonement is limited to the elect alone). The two groups also differed in their understanding of the significance of baptism. The General Baptists saw it as signifying not the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, as it did for the Calvinists, but the inward washing of the heart by prior repentance.³⁶ As Stassen points out, the General Baptists 'placed their emphasis on concepts which do not even appear in the Particular Baptists'.³⁷ The point on which one naturally connects the two groups, baptism, seems to have had a markedly different significance for each. It therefore seems safe to assert that the Particular Baptists were not influenced by the General Baptists. Indeed, as has been pointed out, the former appear unaware that there were others in England who practised believer's baptism at the time.

The Particular Baptists – Direct Contacts

The Particular Baptists were not without their own contacts with the Dutch. As previously noted, Mr Richard Blunt was sent, with letters of commendation, to Holland in 1640 and returned with similar letters. Dealings between the two groups were amicable, despite their theological differences, and it was after Blunt's return that the Jacob church began the immersion/baptism of believers in earnest. It is not clear whether Blunt was actually baptized while in Holland, nor is it evident that he brought back with him any of the Mennonite theology of baptism. If he only sought believer's baptism by a true church in order to maintain some form of baptismal succession, it is not necessary to infer that he accepted the theology that went with it. If, on the other hand, his trip was a fact-finding mission, it is probable that he brought back information about the theological underpinnings of Anabaptist baptism. If actual baptism had not been sought, it would seem less risky and expensive to have

³⁶ Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 340.

³⁷ Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 341.

exchanged information by correspondence. One could, therefore, infer that Blunt did indeed seek baptism, for which personal contact would be required. In any case, one can assert at the least, as does Stassen, that Blunt must have come into contact with Mennonite ideas while in Holland. This does not, however, imply that they had any definite influence. As K. R. Manley points out, the *Kiffin Manuscript* gives adequate evidence that Blunt's group had been convinced of the truth of believer's baptism prior to his foray to Holland.³⁸

The Possibility of English Anabaptist Roots

There is another possible avenue of influence on the Particular Baptists by the Anabaptists. If, as seems to be the case, there was no transmission across the Channel in the early seventeenth century, is it possible that the influence arrived earlier? Could there have been a native English Anabaptist influence on the Particular Baptists, which did not need to rely on a direct Dutch connection? It has been speculated that Anabaptist activity in England during the sixteenth century, under the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I, generated and/or merged with local English dissenting groups to result in movements that provided the seedbed for the Particular Baptist churches. The Puritans and dissenters were motivated not only by continental Calvinist influence, as has always been accepted, but also by continental Anabaptist thought. Thus, even if one argues for a solely Puritan lump as the origin of the Particular Baptists, this must include some Anabaptist leavening.

This hypothesis has some evidence to support it. There certainly appears to have been considerable Anabaptist activity in England during the sixteenth century. Fourteen Dutch Anabaptists were executed under Henry VIII. Estep cites sources maintaining that eighty per cent of those executed under Mary were Anabaptists.³⁹ In 1575, under Elizabeth, two Anabaptists were burnt at the stake at Smithfields. However, there does not seem to have emerged a real leader for the movement, thus A. C. Underwood can dismiss the presence of Anabaptists in England, stating that it 'cannot be regarded as the seed-plot of the English Baptist movement'.⁴⁰

38 Kenneth Ross Manley, 'Origins of the Baptists: The Case for Development from Puritanism-Separatism', *Baptist History and Heritage*, 22 Oct 1987, 43.

39 William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 209.

40 Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 27.

M. A. G. Haykin certainly agrees that there is no established link between the two movements.⁴¹ However, Lumpkin holds that English Anabaptism did have an effect. He goes into greater detail in establishing the Anabaptist presence during the sixteenth century. He points out that there were some 30,000 Dutchmen in England by 1562, and that between fifty to a hundred-thousand left Holland during the religious persecution of that century. They even came to form the majority of the population of Norwich by 1587! Again, however, he can only claim at most that 'it seems reasonable to suppose that, unconsciously or otherwise, principles of Anabaptism became a part of the thinking of zealous Englishmen who were seeking a more thorough reformation of the Church'.⁴² He quotes Gregory to the effect that 'the Anabaptists were Puritans before Puritanism had sprung into recognized existence, and held substantially all that Puritans afterwards contended for'.⁴³ Estep effectively echoes this sentiment.⁴⁴

However, for all their perceived similarities, and despite any ostensible influences, there were significant differences between the Puritans and the Anabaptists. Soteriology, ecclesiology, and their attitude toward the State were completely at odds. Concern for purity of religion was hardly confined to the Anabaptists, thus those who showed similar regard for the pursuit of holiness are not, by default, radicals. A. G. Dickens points out that there were several foreign exiles in London, during the Edwardian years at least, who worshipped in churches gathered along Puritan lines. These were churches that held to Reformed theology with a distinctive congregational organization, and exercised a freedom that caused Church officials, such as Bishop Ridley, considerable unease.⁴⁵ However, it would seem unlikely that those of Anabaptist leanings would, or could have participated in these churches.

It must be pointed out as well that however difficult it might be to establish links between the Anabaptists, the Puritans, and later the Separatists, it is interesting to note that where the Anabaptists appeared to be the most active, their disappearance corresponded with the rise of Separatism. Early General Baptists appeared in precisely the same areas in

41 Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 17.

42 Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 14.

43 William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*.

44 Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 215.

45 A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1964), 328–29.

which early Lollardism had been strong.⁴⁶ It may well be more than coincidence that the hotbeds of Anabaptism became hotbeds of Separatism.

However, Barrington White dismisses any connection between the 'radical sectaries' (an even broader group than the Anabaptists) and individual Separatists. He thinks the common elements found among the latter, such as church discipline and congregational autonomy, are more likely to originate in: a. Bucer's teachings mediated through Calvin, and in b. the particular situation of the Presbyterian Puritans and their insistence on the parity of ministers and the right of congregations to elect their own ministers. He also points out, from G. Williams, that English Anabaptist Christology was exclusively Melchiorite. This would place it at odds with the orthodox Puritan understanding of the Incarnation.⁴⁷

White highlights a factor that will arise again: the relationship of the English Separatists and the European radicals 'seems to have been that of men who came to similar conclusions because they viewed the Bible in a similar way and because they came to study it in the context of a similar situation'.⁴⁸ He also rightly observes that it is 'next to impossible to measure the impact of Anabaptist ideas in a situation where their impact is bound to be denied or ignored even if it were considerable'.⁴⁹ One sees this explicit denial on the frontispiece of the 1644 First London Confession, exchanged letters of commendation between the Separatists and the Dutch Mennonites notwithstanding.

This is certainly an area that would benefit from additional research. There has been an ongoing debate about the origins of the Reformation in England, whether it was imposed from above (top-down), or the result of a popular uprising against a corrupt Church (bottom-up), or a mixture of the two. More details about the nature of popular dissent, beyond those emerging from isolated local investigation such as that undertaken by Dickens,⁵⁰ would help to discern the degree to which Anabaptism was

46 Manley, 'Origins of the Baptists: The Case for Development from Puritanism-Separatism', 38.

47 Barrington R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 162.

48 White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 163.

49 White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 164.

50 In *The English Reformation*, Dickens draws on contemporary local documents to attempt to assess the degree of popular dissatisfaction with the religious status quo, and the extent of the permeation of religious change of all strata of society.

playing a role. But at present, there appears to be no concrete evidence of Anabaptist influence from native sources as a tributary from which flowed the Baptist movement in England.

The 1644 *Confession* and Anabaptist Influence

In his oft-cited work, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', Glen Stassen has claimed to discern, by a rather different approach, the influence of the Anabaptists on the development of the Particular Baptists. Instead of seeking to establish some sort of direct lineage, or relying upon an existing English Anabaptist presence exerting an influence, he has examined the *First London Confession*, comparing it with the Congregationalist 1596 *True Confession*, on which it is most certainly modelled. He has found, in the differences between the two, what he has determined to be evidence of the influence of Menno Simons' thought on the Particular Baptist Confession. He finds that the structure and content of the Particular Baptists' statements on baptism have a marked similarity to parts of Menno's *Foundation-Book*. This doctrine of baptism, he maintains, is foundational to other differences between the Baptists and the Congregationalists in the area of ecclesiology. It shows itself primarily in the substitution of baptism for covenant as the basis for the identity of the local church.⁵¹ He also points out statements that are different in degree in the Baptist Confession concerning the work of Christ. There is an emphasis on obedience to the commands of Christ, and reliance on his strength, who knew suffering and struggle.⁵² Reconciliation through Christ, and not just remission of sins, is a prominent theme. In all these things, Stassen sees the Particular Baptist thrust as being more Christocentric than that of the Congregationalists, which he attributes in part to Anabaptist influence.

These changes in emphasis may certainly be seen as being consistent with the Anabaptist doctrine of *Nachfolge*, that a disciple must not simply be declared righteous (as they understood the Reformers to teach), but must conform his behaviour to Christ, not in the least in his suffering. The Anabaptists struggled with Luther's forensic view of justification, seeing

In this way, he hoped to determine how great a role popular dissent played in the Reformation, and how much was imposed from higher authority.

51 Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 329.

52 Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 331.

salvation as being far more transformational than (it is maintained) Luther stressed. However, the modifications that Stassen has noted may simply be a retuning of the Calvinism that underlies both confessions, as he himself points out, though in the area of baptism he finds it impossible that the views expressed in the *London Confession* could ever have had Congregationalist thought as a source.⁵³ He excludes, as have many others, the General Baptists as a source of the Particular Baptists' theology of baptism.

Stassen admits that the Calvinists may well have arrived at their conclusions about believer's baptism from the exegesis of their favourite texts in this regard, Romans 6:3–5 and Colossians 2:12. However, he observes that not all of the motifs in these two Scriptures are drawn out, only those relating to the Particular Baptist understanding of baptism.⁵⁴ He asserts that there must have been another source or tradition that caused them to interpret these particular texts in a manner that supported believer's baptism: in other words, the cart drove the horse in this area. This cart would be Mennonite influence from the baptismal teaching of the *Foundation-Book*.⁵⁵

The *Foundation-Book*, which had widespread circulation, was important in establishing uniform Mennonite belief and practice in the wake of the abuses and excesses of the early sixteenth century.⁵⁶ Stassen finds the emphases of the *Foundation-Book* quite consistent with the innovations introduced by the Particular Baptists. The similarity seems especially marked in the area of baptism. He sees the statements on baptism to be comparable in the *Foundation-Book* and the *First London Confession*. In particular, the emphasis of the Particular Baptists on baptism as signifying the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ echoes Menno's understanding. The uses of the Romans and Colossians passages are likewise similar.

Stassen does not argue that the Particular Baptists appropriated Menno's theology of baptism in its entirety. Such a claim would be indefensible, given the many differences in overall soteriology. He does, however, hold that the Baptists, while remaining firmly Calvinistic, incorporated many aspects of Menno's conception of baptism into their theology. He finds no other plausible source for the change in baptismal

53 Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 337.

54 Stassen 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 338.

55 Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 341.

56 Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 342.

theology from either the position originally held by the Congregationalists (from whence came the Particular Baptists), or for their divergence from the views of the other independent group of baptising churches, the General Baptists.

Stassen feels that this manner of selective influence on the Baptists by Mennonite theology explains how some could claim them to have Anabaptist roots or sympathies even though they explicitly rejected much of what the Anabaptists stood for. What they agreed with, the Baptists incorporated into their teaching and practice, suitably modified to be conformable to Calvinistic thought. That with which they disagreed, such as the Mennonites' pacifism, separatism, anthropocentrism and Christology (where this was at variance with the orthodox understanding), they rejected.⁵⁷

This is perhaps the strongest case that can be made for any discernible influence of the Anabaptists upon the Particular Baptists. Not surprisingly, Stassen's assertions have not gone unchallenged, though it appears that for more than thirty years little was written disputing his approach. In his 1996 paper, J. M. Renihan challenges Stassen's findings. He points out that Menno's teaching on baptism differs significantly from that of the Particular Baptists. This is to the extent that he finds it unlikely for the Baptists to have taken any of what remained into their own faith and practice. For instance, Menno did not insist on baptism being by immersion, but 'of a handful of water'.⁵⁸ This may seem a quibble, except that the Baptists strongly believed that the central motif of baptism, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, must be signified by the physical dipping under the water, if baptism was to 'answer the thing signified'.⁵⁹ The Baptist understanding of baptism as in a real way a sacrament meant that the physical action must represent what was being signified. A baptism without immersion could not, however one dressed it up, portray the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the Particular Baptists understood it to do. This linkage of sign to significance, Renihan asserts, was foreign to Menno. It is unlikely that the Particular Baptists drew their understanding of baptism as reflective of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection from Menno if the form was seen to be so incompatible to such an interpretation.

57 Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of the Particular Baptists', 347-48.

58 Renihan, 'An Examination', 198.

59 Renihan, 'An Examination'.

Of somewhat less importance, but significant nonetheless, is Stassen's discernment of a similarity to Menno's teachings in the limited emphasis of the Particular Baptists on baptism as the washing of the soul in the blood of Christ. Renihan points out, however, that this aspect of the significance of baptism has a marked importance in the *First London Confession* that Stassen overlooks.⁶⁰ As well, the third aspect of the Particular Baptists' view of baptism, the eschatological understanding of the sacrament as a looking forward to the general resurrection at the return of Christ, was completely absent from Menno's *Foundation-Book*. Therefore if theological borrowing has occurred, it seems to have been extremely selective.

Renihan finds the argument that the *Foundation-Book* is a possible source of Particular Baptist theology, and as a result, a vector for Anabaptist influence in the origin of the Particular Baptists, to be forced and inconsistent. He goes on to situate the developments in Particular Baptist baptismal theology, which is indeed incompatible with the 1596 Congregationalist position, in the debate within the semi-Separatist community.

The JIJ church had divided amicably between Jacob and Praise-God Barebone. The split was not due to size alone but also to theological differences, baptism being one of them. Barebone argued the case against the re-institution of believer's baptism (he was subsequently to see the light and become a Baptist!) in his 1642 book *A Discourse Tending to Prove the Baptisme in, or under The Defection of Antichrist to be the Ordinance of Jesus Christ*. He objected to introducing the novelty of believer's baptism without Scriptural warrant or historical continuity. He was hardly the only exponent of this opinion, and he was answered by Spilsbury and Thomas Killcop.⁶¹ His concerns, as Renihan points out, are reflected in Articles XXXIX and XL of the *First London Confession*, which his book predates. Renihan goes on to argue that these articles are not an adaptation of Menno's baptismal theology, but rather a response to Barebone's assertions.⁶²

This is certainly a plausible explanation for the Particular Baptists' statements on baptism, and Barebone is more likely than the Mennonites to have been a participant in such a debate. What may weaken Renihan's

60 Renihan, 'An Examination', 199.

61 White, *The English Baptist Separatists of the 17th Century*, 60.

62 Renihan, 'An Examination', 202.

hypothesis is the degree to which the articles of the *London Confession* focus on the theology of baptism while effectively excluding any comment on the authority of the church to baptize. If a central concern of Barebone was the propriety of a church conducting believer's baptism, this would seem to miss the point of the objection. However, the similarity between their concerns and agreement on many of the vital aspects of baptism may well be reflected in Barebone's subsequent conversion to the Baptist way. The agreement had been closer than would be found with Menno and thus a more likely source or inspiration for the Baptists' theology of baptism.

Puritan Roots

The third major view of the origin of the Particular Baptists places their roots exclusively in the Puritan tradition. The Baptists are in essence Calvinist independents who left the Church of England. With their understanding of the authority of Scripture and consequent view of the church and her ministers, they were also led to assume that believer's baptism was the most consistent with the teaching of the Bible and was the logical outworking of decades of distancing themselves from the established Church. Certainly the documented history of events clearly shows the Particular Baptists to have emerged from Puritan semi-Separatism.

Once one leaves the similarity between the Particular Baptists and the Anabaptists on the matter of baptism, there is disagreement on most other matters. On Christology, soteriology, the church's relationship with the state, the Christian's position on warfare, the two groups were far apart. Had the Anabaptist understanding of baptism carried any weight with the Particular Baptists, it is most unlikely that nothing else would have accompanied it into the body of Baptist orthodoxy. It seems improbable that such an integral element of Christian faith and practice as baptism would have been the object of such selective application, in the way Stassen portrays it.

The source of the Particular Baptists' doctrine of baptism is every bit as likely to have been Puritanism itself. The notion of the gathered church, separated from those not in covenant with God and one another, was found to be antithetical to a universally applied baptism of insensate infants. The emphasis of the Reformers on a return *ad fontes*, which

brought every belief and practice under the examination of the lens of Scripture, would certainly be bound to reveal that there is no record of infants being baptized in the New Testament. The Calvinist doctrine of election can also support baptism as a mark of the elect as readily as it does the mass sprinkling of infants.

It is far more likely that the Particular Baptists arrived at similar conclusions to the Anabaptists on the matter of believer's baptism by examining the Scriptures as good and consistent Calvinists. Their subsequent departure from the ranks of the Separatists and semi-Separatists in recovering believer's baptism by immersion would not represent as stark a departure as did the Anabaptists' break with the Catholic and Protestant churches of the sixteenth century. The Separatists were already practising a form of church government that was close to the believers' church ideal⁶³ and very consistent with the practice of believer's baptism.

The early Baptists certainly wanted it understood that theirs was a movement based not on Anabaptism. Instead it was to be the perfecting and completion of the application of Reformed Protestant doctrine to the worship and service of God. In the negative, we have the unambiguous statement on the frontispiece of the 1644 *First London Confession*, which was identified as representing the views 'of those churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists'.⁶⁴ In the introduction to that document we find an explicit denial of charges levied against them of 'holding Free-will, Falling away from grace, denying Originall sinne, disclaiming of Magistracy'.⁶⁵ These were hallmarks of the Anabaptists. In the positive, the irenic nature with which the Baptists viewed others, particularly those Protestants from whom they differed, shows a willingness to be identified with them. The conclusion of the 1644 *Confession*, states 'if any shall doe us that friendly part to shew us from the word of God that we see not, we shall have cause to be thankfull to God and to them.'⁶⁶ As T. George points out,⁶⁷ in the preface to the *Second London Confession* (1677) the Baptists express 'our hearty

63 Manley, 'Origins of the Baptists: The Case for Development from Puritanism-Separatism', 41.

64 Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 153.

65 Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 155.

66 Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 149.

67 Timothy George, 'The Reformation Roots of the Baptist Tradition', (<http://www.nbseminary.com/Documents/BapConf02/T%20George.htm>), 3.

agreement with them (*Presbyterians and Congregationalists*) in that wholesome protestant doctrine, which, with so clear evidence of Scriptures they have asserted'.⁶⁸

Thus the Particular Baptists explicitly own their allegiance to their fellow Puritan Protestants while, at the same time, categorically rejecting any links to the Anabaptists. If there are roots of the Particular Baptists to be found in Anabaptism, these Baptists will not hear of it. They see themselves to be as the historical evidence and the theological weight has shown them: they are direct descendants of English Puritanism, related to both the Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

Further Considerations

Abstain from every appearance of evil, (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Mechanisms

For all intents and purposes, our examination of the origin of the Particular Baptists should end here. The evidence is clearly against any connection to the Anabaptists, or any yet uncovered 'Trail of Blood' of properly-ordered Baptist churches stretching back to John the Baptist. One should be able safely to say that, based on the evidence, the origin of the Particular Baptist churches lies in English Puritanism as it expressed itself outside of the Church of England. The same trajectory that took the Puritans out of the Church continued to draw many, first from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism, and then to a rigorously biblical application of the Lord's teachings on baptism and the church in a Baptist format.

This conclusion, which agrees with that reached by scholars such as White, W. Hudson, and Haykin (but which, it must be conceded, disagrees with the views of a similar number of competent men and women), depends on a demonstrable transmission of either ideas or structure, or the lack of the same. The references that were consulted all seek to establish or disprove such a linkage. As even Estep would quote, 'History, to be above evasion or dispute, must stand on documents, not on opinion.'⁶⁹

68 Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 236.

69 William R. Estep, 'A Believing People: Historical Background', s.v. *The Concept of the Believers' Church*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1967), 38.

However, M. J. Whittock explains that there are other means by which influence may have been communicated that are not readily exposed by simple examination of historical data. The organic model of studying the origins of the concepts held by the Particular Baptists requires, that for any continuity to exist there must be either direct propagation or a transmission that is reflected in official doctrine. By and large, the material does not show any such linkage, though Stassen tried to make the case for the partial transmission of doctrine as regards baptism. The historical accounts and confessions that we have examined are prime tools in trying to show or disprove an organic model of transmission.⁷⁰

Whittock holds that, in contrast to the organic model, a dynamic model may be a preferable way to understand the connection between movements. In this analysis, it is held that ideas may jump systematic gaps, without any explicit trail by which to trace them. This is accomplished either by: 'small packages' being transferred without overall theology being affected to the extent that would be represented confessionally, a variant of what Stassen attempted to demonstrate; or by variance between laity and clergy that, of course, is not likely to be represented in historical documents. This would allow for the exertion by an existing Anabaptist presence in England of an undocumented influence on the development of Particular Baptist doctrine, as maintained by Estep and Gregory, for example.

As an example of this possibility, Whittock points to the later emergence in large numbers of Quakers from the Baptists. He would identify the presence of Anabaptist ideas as a likely catalyst for this departure.⁷¹ He also thinks the strong presence of Fifth Monarchy thought among the Particular Baptists had a possible origin in continental Anabaptist thought.⁷² We may see evidence of these 'small packages' of ideas, while not being able to observe the wrapping, as it were, reflected in the available documentation. One could also, by this analysis, bring the Successionist model back to the table, as it could be rendered plausible in a similar manner.

70 Martyn J. Whittock, 'Baptist Roots: The Use of Models in Tracing Baptist Origins', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 57 (Oct, 1985), 319.

71 Whittock, 'Baptist Roots: The Use of Models in Tracing Baptist Origins', 322.

72 Whittock, 'Baptist Roots: The Use of Models in Tracing Baptist Origins', 323.
Martyn J. Whittock, 'Baptist Roots: The Use of Models in Tracing Baptist Origins', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 57 (Oct, 1985), 319.

The problem with this is Whittock is still left to admit that concrete evidence of such ideas is difficult to prove. There is also the criticism that the organic model relies on formal confessions which will not betray any departures from group orthodoxy (the winners write the history). This criticism seems to miss the point that in the case of the Baptists such documents as the *Kiffin Manuscript* make quite available to us the inner debate as it was conducted at the time. There appears to be little tendency on the part of church clerks to paper over differences – they were made very open. On top of this, the many disputations that were held with anti-paedobaptist Calvinists would have given ample opportunity for dissenting voices among the Baptists to be heard. There was no formal council extant to determine orthodoxy. Certainly at some point, Anabaptist sympathies, were they present, would have made themselves evident.

Another problem with the dynamic model's identification of doctrinal 'packets' that seem to have jumped between tracks, without leaving any formal confessional evidence, is that we cannot, having found them, then proceed to attribute them to a particular source. There may be a third party involved that is common to the two. The Fifth Monarchist views, for example, may have had either another origin, or an intermediary one by which they were passed. The presence of evidence does not show how it got there, and therefore it remains rather circumstantial – there is little limit to where the dynamic approach might take us.

While Whittock's nuancing of the approach to analyzing Baptist history supplies a worthwhile caveat, it does not seem likely that it should materially affect our conclusions in this case. However, it might incline us to be less dogmatic than we would naturally wish to be.

Motivations

The entire debate, and the vehemence with which it at times has been conducted, should make us pause before categorically pronouncing the matter resolved. The evidence seems to reflect fairly unambiguously that the Baptists are of English Puritan origin. Why, then, has the debate persisted? It would appear that even the search for a dynamic model of transmission has been motivated not by clear evidence that is unaccounted for by other theories (there is little: that is much the point of the dynamic model). Rather, it has been motivated by a desire to see things from a different perspective. Such caution and investigation of the

alternatives is laudable, but it also invites us to pursue further the matter of why one should not be content with the existing interpretation.

Why should a group as suspicious of ecclesiastical tradition as the Baptists seek to argue for what many might uncharitably deem to be simply a variation of the 'apostolic succession'? Why is it so vital to establish where we have come from, if we are confident that we now practise and believe as did the Apostles? D. F. Durnbaugh finds some connection between the emergence of the Successionist view of Baptist origins and the denominational competition in the nineteenth century that moved many to seek to certify the antiquity of their particular beliefs.⁷³ The present-day urge in most circles, not only Baptist, to return to the primitive practice of the Church (certainly very much a factor in Baptist origins) makes the establishment of this succession attractive.

The Anabaptist connection has its own ways of tugging at one's heartstrings. A similar objection to the state church and the post-Constantinian history of Christianity as reflected by Successionism provides motivation for the Anabaptist theory of origins. To see Baptists as magisterial Reformers who just happened to get it right risks for many tarring them with the same triumphalistic, imperialistic brush as the state churches that persecuted dissent. The accounts of the persecutions of the Anabaptists inflicted by Protestants and Catholics alike made them objects of sympathy in many Baptists' eyes, especially those at the end of the nineteenth century. The Anabaptists were certainly perceived as those who stood apart from the worldly church, and with better historical research, were being seen in a more favourable light than previously.⁷⁴ Thus the presence of any tenable link between the Baptists and the Anabaptists was encouraged.

There is also an on-going struggle in Baptist circles over the degree to which an individualism, derived not from Scripture but from Enlightenment thought, has permeated and come to dominate Baptist ecclesiology. The view of many would be that Baptists no longer practise the faith of the Apostles, at least insofar as the place of the individual is concerned. The response to this concern has coalesced in the document entitled, 'A Baptist Manifesto'⁷⁵. Those who drafted and signed this

73 Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church*, 9.

74 Ian Sellers, 'Edwardians, Anabaptists and the Problem of Baptist Origins', *Baptist Quarterly*, 29, (1981), 98.

75 Curtis W. Freeman, 'Can Baptist Theology Be Re-visioned?', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 24.3 (Fall, 1997), 303-310.

document are drawing on sources which, both theologically and attitudinally, are very sympathetic to Mennonite thought, especially as it is expressed in the writing of John Howard Yoder and, derivatively, Stanley Hauerwas. Their vision for the Baptist identity charts a more 'baptistic' than particularly 'Baptist' course. The view that the Baptists' roots lie with the Anabaptists rather than with the Puritan separatists is far more compatible to such a sentiment, and may also lie behind the popularity of this view. It is noteworthy that even those who would support this understanding do not seem to find the roots of the current individualism to be in the thought of the earliest Particular Baptists.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the most straightforward answer to the theory of origins is the one supported in this paper: one of Puritan semi-Separatist roots. It is perhaps less romantic (though the history is riveting) and renders the Baptists perhaps all too similar to those from whose history and power they would like to see themselves separate. However, it honestly portrays who the Baptists were and who they are today. It is said that one can choose one's friends, but not one's family. The Baptists have some ancestors that many would rather not have – but they are there, and have been instrumental, for better or for worse, for making Baptists who they are today.

Conclusion

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? (1 Corinthians 14:10).

Both for reasons concerning historical method and historiographical motivation, the ongoing debate about Baptist origins must be approached with humility and caution. This should be reflected in modern day investigations into Baptist roots. No one approaches this subject without certain pre-conceptions, or without wishing the matter to go a certain way – the author of this paper is not himself immune to this temptation. But the matter needs to be dealt with, for with the changing situation in Northern and Western Christianity, the crucial question is fast becoming not which denomination one belongs to, but whether or not one holds to the authentic Christian faith at all, whatever form its practice may take (and these cannot be separated). Approaches to other denominations and traditions will have to be made, and unless Baptists are clear on the

decisions and motivations their forefathers made, they risk either being submerged by mainline Christianity or standing aloof as valid Christian bodies go under one by one. In Canada particularly, Baptists are a small minority. Any approaches they tender to other bodies must be done so with a firm idea of where they came from and why.

Before the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses reminded them that it was God who had taken them through the desert. Only then were they ready to receive the Law again, and enter in. So, in facing a radically-changed landscape, we must be sure of where the Lord has brought us from and where he has brought us to, that we might know where he is leading and what role we as Baptists are to play. The question of Baptist origins, how we ask the question and what we do with the answer, is far from academic. If Baptists have an important role to play in proclaiming the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus, and our forefathers certainly seemed to think they did, much turns on how we deal with this question.

The Last Word: The Great Commission: Ecclesiology

Robbie F. Castleman

I did a *Google* web search the other day on 'The Great Commission' and got 61,300,000 hits in 0.23 seconds. I had been working on an exegesis of Matthew 28:16–20 and in all the commentaries I had used for part of my work, none addressed the question that had come to me during this time. Who coined the term 'The Great Commission'? I even emailed one of my favourite New Testament scholars and friend, Craig Keener, and he didn't know. If Keener doesn't know, it's time to risk the Web.

It turns out that this passage may have got its summary label from a Dutch missionary Justinian von Welz (1621–88), but it was Hudson Taylor, nearly 200 years later, who popularized the use of 'The Great Commission'. So, it seems like Welz or some other Post-Reformation missionary probably coined the term 'The Great Commission' and since that time, the passage has been the theme for countless mission talks and conferences. (It may be of some comfort to Web-sceptics to know that I ended up finding this bit of history in a hard-bound book on the history of world missions belonging to a colleague here at John Brown University.)

What I realized both from my exegetical work, and somewhat confirmed by this historical find, was that for the first 1600 years of the greatest exponential mission-driven expansion of the life of church, this passage was read and understood as the trinitarian foundation of ecclesiology, not as fanfare for missiology. The disciples, as the apostolic authority of the soon-to-be-Spirit-empowered-Church, are called together in order to be drawn into, to be called into, the on-going mission of the triune God.

Jesus commissioned these eleven on that mountain in Galilee to 'make disciples' through initiation into the embodied life of God in the church by baptism in the triune Name and through teaching what they had learned from Jesus about faithful obedience. This is not a passage about sending the disciples out to buck the system, take on the world, and save the

universe. The 'Great Commission' doesn't begin here, or at Pentecost, or with Paul, or when a Christian today decides on a mission agency to give to or go with. The 'Great Commission' began long, long ago in the hidden depths of God's own being.

The triune God is eternally a commissional God. The mission of the Father was the sending of the Son. The mission of the Son in the incarnation was to reveal the life of the Father. The Spirit's mission is to bear witness to the Son through the Church. Contrary to the opening mantra of Star Trek, there are no 'strange new universes where no one has gone before'. God has been there. God has been at work from before the beginning. God goes before us into our future, and into the tomorrows of the world. These eleven disciples and all who have believed their witness (John 17:20), the Church, the Body of Christ, are commissioned to indwell, declare and demonstrate God's love for the world.

This is really a text about the commissioning of the Church to share God's life and, in the power and reality of that union with Christ by the Spirit, to share in joy of God's on-going mission to the world. The early church, the patristic Fathers, and for over 1600 years the Church recognized that this final passage of Matthew focused first on who Jesus is. Because God is good, because Jesus is risen from the grave, because the Spirit is poured out, God's people are called to let the world know the good news of a victorious Saviour and the very presence of God in the world by the Spirit. Jesus is saying, as you 'go along your way' (a good translation of the usual 'Go ye'), with the power of my very Spirit, be heralds of this Good News. Alert people to recognize and submit to my Lordship through inauguration into my Body, and nurture their fitness for my unrivalled reign in their lives!

The crescendo begins in this passage when Jesus declares, 'All authority' belongs to him absolutely. In this, Jesus is unburdening these disciples, whose faith was ambivalent until Pentecost ('they worshipped him; but some doubted'). It's understandable that the redefinition of Jewish monotheism would take a bit of time!). Jesus inaugurates this commissioning with the assurance that the burden, the mission, is his, not theirs. The Risen One has already accomplished the mission, borne the burden and triumphed victoriously for the salvation of the world. In union with Jesus and in union with each other, these disciples and all those who have believed to this day are to announce this Good News of this Kingdom to all the people groups of the world.

Theology is the bedrock of mission. The New Testament writers and the early church recognized something that Kevin Vanhoozer summarizes well when he writes:

if the God who reveals himself in history were to correspond to who God is in eternity, the 'missions' of God to the world must correspond to eternal 'processions' with God's being.

In other words, God's mission is an extension of God's character and triune nature, God's essence, God's very self. From the fact that the Son is sent into the world and historically begotten, then, the early church derived the truth as expressed in the historic creeds that the Son's being, in relation to the Father, is 'eternally begotten'.

God's mission to the world involves God's eternal being as Father, Son and Spirit, and it is this eternal relationship that is the real focus of Jesus' 'Great Commission'. So, Jesus first words make sense, don't they? On that final day with his best students, on that day of his ascension, on that day (probably just about ten days before the birth of the church at Pentecost) Jesus says, 'All authority in heaven and on earth' is given to him. Make no mistake about it, Jesus is making very, very clear that he is, 'Begotten, not made, one in being with the Father', and with the Father, will send the 'Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life' to empower the Church to join the triune mission.

The focus of Matthew 28:16-20 is ecclesiology; it's about the Church's inauguration, identity and union with Christ in order to be an extension of his own life in the world. Ecclesiology is the fountainhead of missiology. Like Jesus, we are commissioned to 'do' who we 'are' and that's what makes it GREAT.