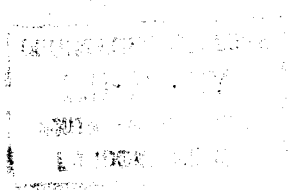


Foundations

**A Theological Journal
published by the
British Evangelical
Council**



**If the foundations
be destroyed, what
can the righteous do?**

Psalm 11:3

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EDITOR: Rev Dr Eryl Davies MA DD
23 Bryn Eithinog
BANGOR, Gwynedd, N.Wales
UK LL57 2LA

All MSS, Editorial Correspondence and Publications for Review should be sent to the Editor.

ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Rev Alan Gibson BD
Rev Hywel R. Jones MA
Rev Peter Naylor MTH

BUSINESS MANAGER: Mr Aubrey J. Roberts
58 Woodstock Road North
ST ALBANS, Herts,
England, UK AL1 4QF
Tel: St Albans (0 727) 53148
(Evenings only)

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C O N T E N T S

| | |
|---|------|
| AN INTRODUCTION TO 1 SAMUEL | p. 1 |
| John C.J.Waite BD | |
| MODERN BIBLE TRANSLATIONS | p.12 |
| THE BEARING OF REGENERATION ON SOME ASPECTS OF PASTORAL WORK | p.23 |
| Hywel R.Jones MA | |
| BOOK REVIEWS | p.32 |
| WAS THE REFORMATION A MISTAKE? | p.52 |
| Andrew Davies MA | |



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Mr Aubrey J.Roberts
58 Woodstock Road North
St. Albans, Herts
England UK
AL1 4QF

AN INTRODUCTION TO 1 SAMUEL

John C.J.Waite BD, Barry

There are two kinds of problem that confront the serious student of 1 Samuel. On the one hand there are the problems that arise from the nature of the historical record itself. The period of history covered by 1 Samuel is very complex and momentous. It is one of the most crucial epochs in the whole history of the nation of Israel. Such a period makes great demands upon all who would endeavour to grasp the vital issues which are at stake. Inevitably it presents problems in the realm of understanding and interpretation. The fact that there are substantial lacunae in the record serves initially to heighten these problems. On the other hand there are those problems which are due solely to the pre-suppositions of Old Testament scholars. They arise only as a consequence of assuming that the author of Samuel has endeavoured to combine into a single narrative accounts from different sources. Thus parallel accounts of the same events are found to be discrepant and even contradictory. In fact when the real problems of understanding and interpretation are satisfactorily dealt with, the allegation of divergent sources is robbed of any seeming plausibility.

The Importance of the Correct Approach

It is a mistake to focus first of all upon the problems. Many, if not most, of the problems are due to a mistaken overall view of this two-volumed history. The division between I and II Samuel, though convenient, is unoriginal and artificial. It became necessary as a matter of expediency when the Hebrew text was translated into Greek. The vowel-less Hebrew text took up far less space than the Greek translation. It was not until the early sixteenth century that this division was introduced into printed copies of the Hebrew Bible. It is essential, then, to approach I Samuel as but the first half of a carefully planned

and intricately-structured history-work. That the entire work should bear Samuel's name even though the narrative runs on some forty years beyond his death is an eloquent testimony to the outstanding importance of this great judge and prophet of Israel. Never did Israel's chances of survival seem more slender than when Samuel at God's bidding assumed the office of judge. His wise, vigorous and above all, God-directed leadership brought the nation back from the brink of overwhelming disaster. He steered Israel through the momentous transition from loose tribal federalism to the establishment of the monarchy. Both Saul and David were anointed by him. Though David came to the throne some years after Samuel's death, it is plain that the latter's influence upon him had been of a profound and lasting nature.

Doubtless the author of Samuel, whoever he was, had a number of written sources available to him from which he constructed his great history. It is, however, entirely wrong to regard the work as a mere compilation. There is unmistakable evidence of a definite plan underlying the Book as a whole. The author has used his sources to set forth the unfolding of God's great eternal purposes in all that transpired during this crucially-important period in the life of the nation of Israel. The method of the historian is not hard to discover. He rounds off each main section of the narrative with a summary. Samuel's judgeship concludes with the summary in chapter 7:15-17. Saul's reign falls into two parts separated by the summary of chapter 14: 47-52. The characteristic formula marking the official commencement of his reign is to be found in chapter 13:1 following the account of the founding of the monarchy in chapters 8-12. This means that chapter 15 stands by itself as a transitional chapter. It is here that the author describes the solemn circumstances of Saul's rejection by God for his wilful disobedience in connection with the extermination of the Amalekites. From this point

onwards, although Saul continues to reign over Israel, he ceases to represent Yahweh. Chapter 16 records the private anointing of David by Samuel as Israel's future king and from this point onwards David is principally the subject of the narrative to the end of I Samuel.

The same method, of course, is employed in II Samuel. Chapter 8 is a summary giving a survey of David's wars and concluding with a detailed list of his chief ministers of state. This in fact completes what may be termed the official account of his reign. Chapters 9-20 are more concerned with David the man than David the king. At the close of chapter 20 there is a second summary - verses 23-26 - and the last four chapters form an appendix comprising six distinct parts. Here important material is preserved which could not have been conveniently fitted into the preceding narrative. More than mere expediency lies behind this arrangement. While it is true that the main themes of this history are the establishment of the monarchy and the development of the prophetic office as a strong counter-balance against any tendency on the part of the king to rule despotically, the author is also concerned with the priesthood and the true worship of Yahweh. His narrative opens with a description of the deplorable state of affairs at the central sanctuary at Shiloh where Eli the high priest fails to check the sacrilegious and immoral behaviour of his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. It is fitting, then, that the last chapter of II Samuel should refer to David's consecration of the site of the future temple on Mount Moriah which God had promised him his son should build. In this masterly way, the end points back to the beginning.

The Unique Character of Biblical History

All historians are necessarily selective in the histories that they write. Their selection of what to include and what to omit is dictated by the aims that they have set themselves. An historian reveals his own value-judgements, his point of view, his personal convictions in the selection he makes from the mass of material available. There is no such thing as purely

objective history. Biblical historians are no exception to this rule. There is this all-important difference however. They write under the constraint and direction of the Holy Spirit. What is reflected in their historical writings is not their point of view, nor their value-judgements but God's. Biblical history is thus entirely unique and does not conform to the secular view of history at all. It is because this basic point has not been grasped that Old Testament scholars have been so wildly astray in their appraisal of such histories as I and II Samuel.

We have clear evidence that the author of Samuel and his contemporaries were well acquainted with certain events which he has not included in his narrative. For example, he nowhere explains how the Mosaic tabernacle came to be located in Nob in the reign of Saul (I Sam.22:1ff) whereas it was in Shiloh in the time of Eli (I Sam.1:3,9). He draws a veil of silence over the fate of Shiloh after the Philistine victory at Eben-ezer. He makes a passing allusion to Saul's massacre of the Gibeonites in II Sam.21 and evidently makes the assumption that the episode was well-known though he has not included it in his record of Saul's reign. Saul's banishment of necromancers from Israel is referred to only in order to show why the witch at Endor was so reluctant to oblige Saul when he appeared in disguise at her house (I Sam.28:3,9).

The history recorded in the Books of Samuel is selective and not exhaustive and this must be borne constantly in mind when attempting to grapple with the problems that the narrative poses at various points. At the same time, the entire approach to history is vastly different from that of the secular historian. We expect historians to concentrate on events of major political and national importance - successful military campaigns, the extension of the boundaries of the kingdom, the material and economic state of society, advance in educational standards

and such like. Only two of Saul's many military campaigns during his reign are described in any detail - the Philistine campaign in chapter 14 and that against the Amalekites in chapter 15. The author's interest in these campaigns is due to the light they throw on Saul's character. They plainly reveal his conception of religion and his attitude to God. For the very same reason David's encounter with Goliath is narrated in almost minute detail (I Sam. 17). It is true that the sequel to his successful duel was the complete rout of the Philistine armies, but even so the expansion of this incident is out of all proportion having regard simply to purely historical considerations. The author intends to set David over against Saul in terms of his attitude to God. David's childlike confidence in God stands in the sharpest contrast to Saul's self-reliance. (Cf. II Samuel 8 where David's many military campaigns are briefly noted and the detailed account of the Ammonite War in chapters 10-12. The latter is expanded because of David's serious moral lapse and his whole-hearted repentance.)

It is also noteworthy that matters that might seem almost trivial judged by the canons of the secular historian are given considerable prominence in the narrative of the books of Samuel. For example, the rivalry between Elkanah's two wives, Hannah and Penninah, is described at length. The author even mentions the fact that Hannah made a little coat for her son Samuel every year and brought it to the tabernacle in Shiloh where Samuel was assisting the elderly Eli. The author is at pains to note Samuel's physical and spiritual growth through childhood and provides a memorable and moving account of his call to the prophetic office whilst still but a lad. These very personal and intimate details respecting Samuel's birth and spiritual development as also the extended account of David's life as an outlaw and later on of his family life when king lie in the forefront of the author's purpose and design. These two men of God have special significance for the whole history of Israel as the theocratic kingdom. C.F. Keil observes, "*Samuel*

was the model and type of the prophets; and embodied in his own person the spirit and nature of the prophetic office; whilst his attitude to Saul foreshadowed the position which the prophet was to assume in relation to the king." (Intro. to Com. of The Books of Samuel, p10) David, on the other hand became the ideal of kingship in Israel. In spite of his moral failure, he was "a man after His [the LORD's] own heart" (I Sam.13:14). He has much greater significance even than this. Jonathan Edwards with clear Scriptural warrant holds him to be "the greatest of all personal types of Christ, [he] did not only perfect Joshua's work in giving Israel the possession of the promised land, but he also finished Moses' work in perfecting the instituted worship of Israel". (Hist. of Redemption, Works Vol I, p552)

It is needful, therefore to see the Books of Samuel in the context of the unfolding of God's eternal purposes not only for His people but for the world as a whole. Before God gave His covenant law to Israel on Mt. Sinai, He had already disclosed His purpose regarding their adoption - that they should be "a kingdom of priests" (Ex.19:5,6). Israel were to be not only a priestly nation - set apart from all other nations as the congregation of the Lord - but also a royal nation, the kingdom of God. Keil, therefore rightly stresses, "The establishment of the earthly monarchy ... was not only an eventful turning-point, but also an epoch-making advance in the development of Israel towards the goal set before it in its divine calling". (op. cit. p9) This kingdom ruled over by God through the Davidic king was to be transformed into a spiritual kingdom, the Church, whose kingly Head is great David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was God's purpose all along that Israel should have a king. Hence in Hannah's inspired song at the birth of Samuel she is led up to the triumph of God's kingdom through "His king ... His anointed" (I Sam.2:10). The prophecy in her hymn was

initially fulfilled in David, but this was a pledge of its ultimate and complete fulfilment in the triumph of Christ over all His foes. This is confirmed in the covenant that God made with David in II Samuel chapter 7. When this is borne in mind, it makes for a much clearer understanding of the important chapters relating to the founding of the monarchy in Israel under Samuel. As a man in intimate touch with God who was well acquainted with the Mosaic Law (Deut.17:14-20) and who had doubtless pondered his own mother's hymn of praise, he could not conceivably have been opposed to the monarchy as such. R.K.Harrison reveals a shallow and inadequate grasp of Samuel's response to Israel's demand for a king to be appointed over them when he says, "... Samuel was unalterably opposed to the idea of kingship in Israel, presumably for the very good reason that it conflicted with his concept of the theocratic ideal" (Intro. to the O.T. p707). Such a view can be maintained only by setting aside the evidence that the Books of Samuel are a carefully-planned history in which the author presents God's unalterable purposes coming to pass through this eventful and crucial period. It is surely significant that Samuel does not demur when God sends him to Bethlehem to anoint David to be Israel's future king. His only hesitation arises from the danger to which he exposes himself in so doing (I Sam.16:1ff).

The Clarification of the Chronology

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of a proper understanding of the chronology of the Books of Samuel. Here lies the key to a solution of a number of the most pressing problems that have in part given rise to the claim that independent and divergent accounts have been woven together by a compiler.

A careful and unprejudiced study shows that there are substantial lacunae in the narrative of I Samuel. On one occasion this is explicitly noted by the author. Having described the return of the ark to Israel after its capture by the Philistines and its subsequent removal to a private house in Kirjath-jearim, he observes,

"And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kir-jath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years" (I Sam.7:2). This long period is passed over in silence. All we know is that at the beginning of the period Israel shows not the slightest signs of turning back to the Lord, in spite of the severe chastisements that she has suffered, but at the close of this period the nation as a whole has been brought to a truly penitent state - *"and all the house of Israel lamented after Yahweh"*. Is it a wild assumption to conclude that this spiritual volte-face is to be attributed to Samuel's nationwide prophetic ministry? Only by making this assumption can we explain the unquestioning acceptance of his leadership both as prophet and judge which made possible the national convention at Mizpah leading to Divine intervention and the overwhelming victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer. The sequel to this victory was a long period of peace with entire freedom from Philistine aggression. Yet the author has provided us with no more than the briefest of summaries (I Sam.7:13-17). He resumes his account when Samuel is old and entrusts some of his responsibilities to his sons in the hope that they may eventually succeed him (I Sam.8:1). It is impossible to estimate accurately how many years lie between the victory at Ebenezer and the commencement of chapter 8. It may be considered that twenty years are barely sufficient to bring Samuel from his prime to the threshold of old age. When this hiatus is taken into account it is not difficult to reconcile the statement of chapter 7: 13 - *"so the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel, and the hand of Yahweh was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel"* - with that of chapter 9:16 - *"thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me"*.

Perhaps the greatest difficulties in the chronology are connected with Saul. He is described on his first meeting with Samuel as "*a choice young man*". He is very much dependent upon his servant for the knowledge of his whereabouts during his search for his father's asses and is willing to be beholden to him for the money-gift - a quarter of a silver shekel - which they propose to give to "*the seer*" for his help in enabling them to recover the asses (I Sam.9:6-9). Here is a young man unsure of himself with a pleasing modesty about his gifts and abilities (I Sam.10:22) which some misconstrue as evidence of his incompetence to lead the nation successfully (I Sam.10:27). It is a very different Saul that confronts us in chapter 13. Here we meet a very self-possessed man showing great courage in a time of serious crisis who is prepared to act independently of Samuel, if not in defiance of him. He has a son, Jonathan, who is adult enough to take command of a section of Saul's army in a time of national peril. If we accept that the author has given a consistent record of these events, we are bound to acknowledge that many years must have elapsed to make conceivable these obvious changes. This long period of time is more than sufficient to account for the great deterioration of Israel's position in relation to the Philistines. The kind of strangle-hold which the Philistines have over Israel in chapter 13 would have rendered impossible the national assembly which Samuel convened in chapter 10 which issued in Saul's election as Israel's king. Likewise Saul's march to the relief of Jabesh-gilead at the head of 330,000 Israelites in chapter 11 presupposes that the Philistines were by no means in a position of control over Israel. An understanding of the chronology of this period largely removes the problems which at first sight might seem insoluble.

It is recognised that the Hebrew text of I and II Samuel has not been as well preserved as the majority of the books of the Old Testament. In particular the statement regarding the length of Saul's reign in chapter 13:1 has evidently suffered in transmission.

The literal translation of the Hebrew is: "*Saul was a year old when he became king ...*" If the author's original statement had been accurately transcribed we should have been relieved of the necessity to resort to conjecture with regard to the chronology of his reign. We must not overlook, however, that the apostle Paul gives the length of Saul's reign as forty years (Acts 13:21), As Ishbosheth, his fourth eldest son, is stated to have been forty years old when he commenced his reign over the ten north Israelite tribes five years after Saul's death (II Sam.2:10,11), this would well agree with Saul's having been Israel's king for forty years.

Samuel's Apparent Opposition to the Monarchy in Israel

We have now established that the author of Samuel was no mere compiler, but the author of a finely-conceived and skilfully-executed historical work. He was without doubt a prophet who perceived behind and in all the events that he records in his book the eternal purposes of God coming to fruition. There is no question of God's hand being forced by circumstances. It might appear at first sight that the introduction of the monarchy into Israel was an unforeseen and undesirable development, obscuring if not destroying the nature of Israel as a theocratic nation. But this is a superficial impression which reverent and careful study does not sustain.

What emerges clearly in the narrative in chapters 8-12 is that the people are tired of the theocracy. They consider themselves to be at a disadvantage to the surrounding nations in not having a king. Their idea of the monarchy was based entirely upon what they had learned from their contact with the nations round about them. Yet God, through Moses, had laid down that a future Israelite king must be fundamentally different from the kings of the Gentile nations (Deut.17:14-20). He must not rely upon military power, he must not have a harem, he must beware of the temptation to amass wealth, and above

all he must be entirely subservient to Yahweh seeking at all times to conform his life to the law of God.

Samuel's deep displeasure at the people's demand for a king was partly due to his sense of the nation's ingratitude, but chiefly because he understood that this demand reflected their dissatisfaction with the theocracy as such. God confirms that this is so when he tells Samuel, *"they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me that I should not reign over them"* (I Sam. 8:7). When God intimates to Samuel that He will send him a man from Benjamin, He instructs him to *"anoint him to be captain over my people Israel"* (I Sam. 9:15). When Saul arrives, Yahweh confirms to Samuel, *"Behold the man of whom I spake to thee. This same shall reign over my people Israel"* (v. 17). God's avoidance of the term 'king' and 'reign' was to mark off Israel's kings as Yahweh's representatives, His viceregents and not kings in the absolute sense. The rupture between Samuel and Saul and Yahweh's rejection of Saul was precisely because Saul was unwilling to be king in the מֶלֶךְ sense but was determined to be king in the מְלִיכָה sense. When the term מְלִיכָה is used by Yahweh in (I Sam. 16:1) it is to be understood in the restricted sense reflected in the word מֶלֶךְ. One of the aims of the author of Samuel is to set forth the uniqueness of the monarchy in Israel. He does so by comparing and contrasting Saul with David. It is a sad sequel to the history of the Books of Samuel that so few of David's successors were content to be kings in the מֶלֶךְ sense.

We have by no means tackled all the problems of I Samuel. We have endeavoured to deal with the major ones. Chiefly we have indicated that the satisfactory resolution of these problems can be made only when this great historical record is recognised for what it is - not only a self-consistent and skilful composition, but history written from God's standpoint and revealing the outworking of His immutable and eternal purposes. *(The author has agreed to provide an exposition of a selected passage of I Sam. for the next issue of The Journal)*

MODERN BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

- with special reference to the
New International Version of the
New Testament.

This article is a report of a special committee convened to consider the N.I.V. The report was commissioned and approved by the Council of The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches; as such, it does not express an official B.E.C. standpoint. We have included this report as a helpful basis for discussion of an important subject.

Part I The Basic Issues Raised by Modern Trans- lations

1. What should a translation be?

a) Based on the best original text.

Discussion of what constitutes such an original is a complex area of Biblical scholarship. The article on 'Text and versions' in the IVF New Bible Dictionary covers 16 pages and the five pages on the NT indicate some of the main issues.

b) Faithful to the original

True evangelicals face a dilemma. Verbal inspiration accepts that actual, and so individual words are inspired. But 'word by word' translation is impossible. This is inherent in differences in structure in any two languages, e.g. Greek has an aorist tense with no direct equivalent in English.

c) Avoiding interpretation

Translators should not try to be wiser than the Holy Spirit who inspired the Biblical writers. Since there is purpose in what He chose to include there must also be purpose in what He chose to exclude from His written revelation.

d) Harmonious

Accepting differences in style of writing by

different human authors the One Divine Author does not contradict Himself. Even if the same word in the original needs varied translation in different places the root idea remains the same, e.g. Leon Morris on the essential objective reference to the wrath of God in propitiation, Romans 3:25 and 1 John 2:2

e) Acceptable to the receptor language

Terminology and style should be in contemporary use of the greater part of the population. Wycliffe Bible Translators use a textbook which suggests *"the goal should be a translation that is so rich in vocabulary, so idiomatic in phrases, so correct in construction, so smooth in flow of thought, so clear in meaning and so elegant in style that it does not appear to be a translation at all, and yet, at the same time, faithfully transmits the message of the original"*.

In practice difficulties arise due to variations in one language as a result of:- dialect areas, e.g. USA and UK; cultural groups, e.g. public schools and immigrants; generation differences. See further para 4.

2. What part does a translation play in our understanding the Bible?

To some extent this will depend on whether the translation is used for personal reading only or as a basis for preaching which includes explanation (Acts 8: 30-31). Current attitudes seem to include these:-

a) It is everything. The modern translation explains itself.

This view ignores 1 Cor.2:14 and the ordinance of preaching. In extreme form it amounts to the heresy of Pelagianism, assuming the sinner's unaided power to convert himself.

b) It is nothing. (Almost) any translation into English will do.

This seems behind the view that if the AV was good enough for Whitefield and Spurgeon (if not the Apostle Paul!) then it is good enough for us. This ignores 2 Cor.1:13 (NIV rightly has 'understand' for 'epiginosko')

cp. also para 4.

c) It is really something but not everything. Unless the translation conveys something to those speaking the receptor language it is useless. But some words and ideas have a specialised use in the Bible which requires the aid of the Holy Spirit for spiritual understanding. The day of Pentecost was characterised by Acts 2:37 as well as Acts 2:6.

Clearly the Holy Spirit can and does use both translations which some now call archaic and some called modern. But we can hardly be indifferent to the challenge of providing Him with the best possible translation available to us.

3. How important are the theological pre-suppositions of translators?

They all have some. There is no such thing as 'pure Science' or 'absolute objectivity'. We all view the world and our work from the standpoint of our own position. This is a material question for translators.

a) Their view of textual criticism will affect the foundation text from which they translate.

b) Any hesitancy about verbal inspiration will lead to less care about the accuracy of individual words.

c) Their doctrinal views will affect their rendering of disputed words, e.g. C.H.Dodd's well-known view on propitiation is reflected in NEB rendering of 1 John 2:2 as '*remedy*'.

d) An acceptance of 1 Cor.2:14 will mean a modest claim for the fruits of translation.

4. What is 'modern' English?

No language still being spoken is entirely static. New words and forms are always being introduced and exist alongside older forms. Some cultural groups develop their own jargon, some of which is absorbed into wider usage but some of which

eventually disappears.

a) Changes in meaning do occur. Words used in a previous way can be a stumbling block to understanding, e.g. 'prevent' in the AV of 1 Thess.4:15.

b) Changes in style occur. The ponderous has given way to the snappy. But to be racy and colloquial may be inconsistent with the dignity of the subject matter of the Bible. There is some truth in the dictum that "*the medium is the message*". Do we want the Bible to read like today's newspaper? Which newspaper?

c) Changes in usage occur. Already by the time of AV the forms 'Thou' and 'Thee' were no longer general terms of address for the second person although always used as honorific forms of referring to God. This was a form of English usage not dictated by the Greek language where no such distinction as thou/you exists. Today many older Christians do find the use of 'you' for God irreverent. But many younger people brought up without the AV find the use of 'Thou' a problem in understanding the Bible and spoken prayers. A new generation of youth leaders and preachers are dropping the use of 'Thou' and it is only honest to say that evangelical usage of 'you' for God is increasing.

5. What dangers are there in a multiplicity of translations?

The C.L.C. catalogue currently lists 12 different English translations of the New Testament as well as a book called '*The New Testament from 26 translations*'.

a) The fascination of novelty. The latest may not always be the best. 'Translation tasting' could replace 'sermon tasting'.

b) Translations will be accepted because of commercial success and sales promotion rather than on their merits as translations. "*If everyone is using it, it must be good!*"

c) Doctrinal slants will appear. If doctrine should come before experience then accuracy must be more important than slickness.

d) The practice of memorising Scripture will be at risk where there is no standard text among Christians.

e) Difficulties are already being found where there is no agreed translation for group Bible study, pulpit exposition and the congregational reading of Psalms.

f) Local church unity can be harmed by a generation gap which polarises around translations. The devil is always looking for such a problem to exploit.

6. How will a modern translation be used?

Already these trends are discernible among evangelicals:-

a) As an aid to understanding the message of Scripture alongside other versions in private use.

b) As a tool for evangelism, where direct contact with those unfamiliar with AV language is intended, e.g. posters, tracts.

c) As a complete replacement for the AV throughout the whole range of ministry in a local church. Some have *"gone over to the RSV"*.

The entire replacement of the AV in dominant popularity and usage seems unlikely at the present. There are too many competitors for the title.

Part II A Consideration of the New International Version of the New Testament

The New International Version (NIV) was published in the USA in 1973. It is the first translation into English in the 20th Century compiled by a team of scholars who are *"all committed to the full authority and complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures, which they believe to be God's word in written form"* [Preface].

It has been adopted by the Gideons for distribution in schools in the UK and is in increasing use

16.

by evangelicals. Our concern has been to consider whether the translation itself lives up to what its users should expect from translators holding an evangelical view of Scripture.

The task is, to say the least, extensive. If there are about 8,500 verses in the Greek NT and an average of 30 words and textual or grammatical issues in each verse then the translators have been faced with a quarter of a million decisions to make. Although our Committee considered the whole of the NT, some parts were studied in more depth than others. Our conclusions are given here, each followed by further notes on the basis for our views.

1. The original text

In our view no translation should be disregarded solely because it is based on an original text which departs from the Textus Receptus. The NIV text does so depart from the TR but does not slavishly follow any one alternative text.

Notes The Committee approached this intricate and controversial subject with some care, conscious that our brief summary may over-simplify the issue.

Among many ancient manuscripts available to translators of the NT there is one copy found by Tischendorf at Sinai known as '*Aleph*' and another in the Vatican known as '*B*'. The so-called '*traditional text*' (Textus Receptus - TR) is the form of Greek original underlying the AV of 1611.

The NIV has been strongly criticised for its failure to adopt the TR. The critics argue that TR represents most closely the original and that texts such as Aleph and B contain variants introduced deliberately to weaken the doctrines of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ.

Evangelicals have not universally subscribed to this argument. Donald Macleod's article in the June, 1972 *Banner of Truth* quotes Warfield, Machen,

Cunningham and Spurgeon in support of an 'eclectic text', that is, one compiled from all available sources. It is clear that no strictly Biblical argument can be advanced for the primacy of any text. Nor does Scripture give the Church the authority to confer upon any text the status given for instance to the Vulgate Latin by Roman Catholics.

The principal argument for the use of an eclectic text is that, since no one text is sacrosanct, the use of established textual criteria is indicated to obtain the most authentic text. The NIV proceeds on this basis. This means in practice that in some cases NIV uses Aleph B texts in preference to TR. In other cases it uses TR rather than Aleph B. That is, NIV does not systematically attack TR but adopts each reading on its merits. The Committee did not, however, agree with all the textual conclusions of NIV, notably in Matthew 5:22; Mark 1:2; Luke 2:43 and John 1:18. While respecting the concern felt by the advocates of the primacy of TR the Committee believe that to dismiss the NIV on the basis of its use of an eclectic text is unjustified.

2. Footnotes

The NIV footnotes are not always helpful. The textual evidence is treated inconsistently and in our view sometimes wrongly.

Notes It seems unnecessary to be told so often that 'Christ' means 'Messiah' or that 'evil spirits' is literally 'unclean spirits'; in the latter case it would seem better to translate as the footnote.

More important is the textual evidence. In Matthew and Mark together there are only 43 footnotes drawing attention to MSS variations whereas the RSV has 80. (Moreover the textual variants might justify even more).

One particularly misleading footnote is on Matthew 5:44 which says, "Some late MSS add, 'bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you'" But another 18.

clause, *"those who despitefully use you and"*, has as much MSS support as the two clauses mentioned; two of the MSS referred to cannot be classed as 'late' and the 'some' masks the fact that almost all Greek MSS include these words.

3. English style

In general the accuracy of translation renders the original meaning in good, flowing modern English, giving special help with difficult passages.

Notes The narratives of the Gospels read well and there are many good and helpful renderings, e.g. Matthew 1:19, *"did not want to expose her to public disgrace"*, and Matthew 3:14, *"But John tried to deter him"*.

The doctrinal reasoning of the Epistle to the Romans comes through well, e.g. the first and second Adam in 5:12-21, the two natures in chapter 7 and the debate about practical issues in chapter 14.

Typology is handled in clear fashion, e.g. Melchisedec in Heb.7. Down-to-earth clarity brings us face to face with the essential issues for application to our present day in the faith and works debate in James 2.

The Committee acknowledges that the NIV use of 'you' for God would limit its usefulness among some at the present time but does not consider this factor justifies its rejection.

4. Liberties taken

In narrative passages particularly, more liberty is taken with the original than we consider to be justified.

Notes The preface tells us the translators *"have striven for more than word-for-word translation"* and this has led to a greater freeness than seems warranted, e.g. Mark 3:6 omits *'immediately'*, Matthew 1:20 and elsewhere omits the dramatic effect of *'behold'*. Matthew 21:33ff the same word is

translated '*farmers*' and then '*tenants*'. Matthew 6:25 the word '*important*' is added. Matthew 15:9 "*teaching as doctrines the precepts of men*" becomes "*their teachings are but rules made by man*".

Many more examples could be given and of alterations of sentence structure. Singly they are often not vital but taken cumulatively they indicate a freer handling of the text than might have been expected.

Our review also produced examples of places where the translation of verb tenses can be faulted, e.g. Acts 19:18 '*confessed*' (past for present), Romans 4:2 '*had*' (past for present), Romans 11:7 '*sought*' (past for present).

5. Closer accuracy in the Epistles

In the Epistles and Revelation less liberty is taken and the closer rendering retains the necessary theological precision.

Notes NIV retains for the most part the accepted

English theological terminology such as justification, atonement, reconciliation, wrath etc. An exception is '*credited*' for '*imputed*' in Romans 4 but this seems reasonable. '*Sinful nature*', is an improvement on '*flesh*' in Romans 7 and 8. So is '*slaves*' for '*servants*' in Romans 6. It is difficult to find any NIV rendering of the meaning of terms for which there is not some justification. Passages in the AV which can cause readers to lose the thread are rendered more clearly without loss of accuracy, e.g. Romans 2:25-27; 5:12-19.

In the great majority of instances NIV is an improvement on AV in the matter of tenses, e.g. Acts 2:47 '*who were being saved*' [pres. part], Romans 6:4 '*we were buried*' [aorist], Romans 5:12 '*all sinned*' [aorist], Romans 9:17 '*I raised you up*' [aorist], Romans 10:3 '*they did not submit*' [aorist], 1 Cor.1:18 '*are perishing, are being saved*' [pres. part] 1 Cor.2:6 '*are coming to nothing*' [pres. part], Rev.

1:5 'him who loves us' [pres. part].

6. Doctrinal purity

No major doctrinal issue is raised by any deviations we could discover from the original text used by the translators.

Notes In fact their choice of original text is not dictated by doctrinal considerations. See para 1 above.

There are deviations from the Greek which the Committee would criticise as we have indicated. But we could find no renderings of root meanings or choice of tenses which seemed motivated by an heretical doctrinal position.

The absence of the term '*propitiation*' will disappoint some, but '*atoning sacrifice*' which replaces it retains the necessary objective reference lacking in other modern translations.

An overall study of the NIV NT would not bring the reader into heresy. Under the blessing of the Holy Spirit it could bring him to believe in Him who said, "*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples*" John 8:31.

FOOTNOTE A detailed investigation of the New International Version translation of 1 Corinthians has been made also by the Rev John Cook. His "*serious reservations*" concerning it arise not from the literary form but the "*failure in many places to translate the Greek accurately and faithfully despite the claim in the preface that 'their first concern has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the New Testament writers' and their avowed objective 'to be faithful to the original text in Greek, and ... retain only what the original languages say, not inject additional elements of unwarranted paraphrasing'*"

Mr Cook wants the NIV "*translation of 1 Corinthians to be revised in the interests of accuracy and fidelity*. It is a matter of great regret that what

has been promoted as an evangelical translation should have such major faults and inadequacies" One reason, he suggests, for the failure to translate accurately is the use of "literary consultants who are not New Testament scholars, the avowed aim to be accurate and faithful in translation is jeopardised by this concern for literary style and acceptability in Modern English, such a procedure tends to subject the wisdom of God's revelation to the 'wisdom of this world' contrary to the apostolic method insisted upon in this very epistle."

Photostat copies of this study are available via the Editor (15p per copy).

THE BEARING OF REGENERATION
ON SOME ASPECTS OF PASTORAL WORK

Hywel R. Jones MA

The aim of this paper is twofold and two-tiered. First, and as a prior step, it attempts an examination of the vocabulary in the New Testament explicitly relevant to regeneration in the hope of building up a doctrinal statement on the subject. Secondly, and as the real goal, it aims to bring this material to bear on certain aspects of pastoral work and responsibility namely the admission of new members into the fellowship of the church and their subsequent shepherding where it becomes necessary to ask the painful question "Is so and so born again?"

On both parts of this subject John Owen wrote: *"it is a duty indispensably incumbent on all ministers of the gospel to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the nature of this work that they may be able to comply with the will of God and grace of the Spirit in the effecting and accomplishing of it upon the souls of them unto whom they dispense the word. Neither, without some competent knowledge hereof, can they discharge any one part of their duty and office in a right manner."* [Works Vol 3 p.227] As it is possible for mistakes to be made as a result of ignorance and even prejudice, it becomes important to gather the New Testament data and determine its significance for this purpose as we proceed.

1. The Use of Regeneration as a Noun (Παλιγγενεσίας)

In the sense in which we are considering this word, it occurs but once as a noun in the New Testament, namely Titus 3:5. There Paul is speaking of the source and application of salvation, and in the latter he refers to *"the washing of regeneration and*

renewing of the Holy Ghost." This statement is instructive for two reasons.

1. The Relationship it establishes between
Regeneration and Renewing

This link serves to indicate that there is no re-generating which does not issue in renewing. There is an identity of general character between these two realities and points to the predominant element of regeneration. This means that a candidate for membership must have an element of newness or having been changed about him. Something transforming must have happened to him. He must be different from the world.

2. The Distinction which is made between these
two realities in that Relationship

This is seen in two ways viz. in the nature of the elements themselves and the order in which they appear.

a) The Nature of the Elements

Renewing (ἀνακαλῶσαι) as a Pauline term has a wider scope than Regeneration. cf. Rom.12:2; II Cor.4:16 and also Eph.4:23 (but there ἀνανεω is used). The concept of renewing includes the reality of sanctification as well as regeneration. It is therefore all the more striking that in Titus 3:5 regeneration is specified distinctly beside the all-inclusive term.

From this it follows that though Regeneration cannot be isolated from renewing, it can be considered in distinction from it. It is a distinguishable matter in the application of a procured salvation. It can be looked for by those who have oversight in the church. It does exist.

b) The Order in which they are Specified

Regeneration comes before Renewing. As the word necessarily implies, it is the beginning of the bestowal of salvation. It is the initial act of which renewing is the all-inclusive consequent

24.

process.

Therefore the evidences of its having occurred are the evidences of having life, of birth not growth, much less maturity. Just as some ask too little, or nothing at all, of would be members, to their injury and that of the church, so some ask too much with similarly sad results. Hence the importance of understanding the doctrine that it may regulate our practice to the good of all.

II. The Use of Regeneration as a Verb

Here there are numerous texts to consider and in this case frequency of occurrence has a significance which is quite crucial for the formulation of the doctrine. A verb stresses an action, and primarily Regeneration is an act which is known by its effects and not an inward state to be analysed metaphysically or psychologically. It is "facts of life" which are to be looked for and not "frames or feelings". This is not to deny that there is an experimental element arising necessarily from being born again.

The primary verb employed in the New Testament is γεννωω with the prefix ἀνα or the additive ανωθεν. We shall examine its meaning and usage.

1. Meaning

This word is used in two senses in the New Testament. It can mean to beget or to bear i.e. give birth to, for example Matt.1:21 and 2:1. Prof. John Murray in his article on Regeneration in the second volume of his works lists the examples which go either way together with some which are uncertain indicating that to beget is a valid meaning. However he advances the view that to erect a distinction in theological terms between generation and birth on the basis of this two fold meaning of γεννωω is unwarrantable. He says: "*To be begotten again and to be born again are synonymous terms*" [p.178]. He has said earlier that: "*In later Reformed theology the term regeneration has been chosen to designate the initial act, that act in which God alone is active ...*" [p.172]. The term "later" is

used because earlier Reformed Theologians like Calvin, Owen, the framers of Dort included more under the heading of regeneration than the initial act, or subsumed Regeneration under the Effectual Calling. This brings Conversion to the fore in which man is active and so a clear statement on the divine monergism in Regeneration was blurred.

The activity of God and the passivity of man must be asserted in Regeneration and therefore perhaps something may be said for holding in our minds the distinction between conception and birth which Prof. Murray repudiates, and, to become more vile, even to think of a period of spiritual gestation between the two in some cases provided some caveats are borne in mind.

As there can be no gap between effectual calling, containing as it does irresistible grace, and conversion, some way must be found to understand the gradual coming to faith which many of God's people know, particularly the children of believers. As being generated is a secret work and therefore a non-discernible condition, provided no one were allowed to rest in such a position but urged on to repent and believe the gospel, does this not account for that without endangering any other doctrine? Some do see men as trees walking.

We should be prepared for people to ask for membership while in this condition. If God has generated them, they will be brought to birth apart from death intervening. They should be urged to sit under the Gospel for clearer light which will come if God has begun to work in their hearts. They should not be told that they have been born again.

2. Usage

This verb is used in the New Testament in two voices and two tenses.

a) Two voices and their significance

These are active and passive. The active only
26.

appears once viz. I John 5:1; the passive, many times (e.g. John 1:13). Clearly the emphasis is once more on Human Inactivity in the matter of Regeneration. In connection with these passives the following data appear.

- i. The Author of Regeneration - God (Jn.1:13) or Spirit (Jn.3:6)
- ii. Instruments in Regeneration - Water (Jn.3:5) and Word (I Pet.1:23)
- iii. Objects of Regeneration - Persons - "who", "a man", "us".

Under the first heading the inter-relationship of God and the Spirit presents no difficulty. What God does in people He does by His Spirit. We turn to the other two.

ii. Instruments in Regeneration

The question which arises here is as follows. Is Regeneration of which the Holy Spirit is the Author accomplished by Him alone or by Him through the instrumentality of water and the word?

a) Regeneration and Water

Dr. Leon Morris in his commentary on John and Professor Murray in the article on Regeneration already referred to, dismiss the only view of the significance of "water" which can claim to be regarded as an instrument in regeneration namely baptism. They point out that Nicodemus would not have understood our Lord to be referring to baptism by "water" and it was to him the Lord was speaking, and doing so at this point to clarify what he did not understand. This may therefore be dismissed and the conclusion drawn that one does not need to be baptized to be regenerated.

b) Regeneration and the Word

This is of great significance. Both James and Peter are referring to an instrument in James 1:18 and I Peter 1:23. James uses ἀποκύεω which actually means "emergence from the womb" i.e. brought to birth. Peter uses γεννάω which we have seen can have the same

meaning. In this the word is used by the Spirit.

In order to do these verses justice, either the distinction between conception and birth must be used, or regeneration must be regarded as including conversion as well as the recreative initial act. Professor Murray adopts the latter course, but without casting doubt on regeneration's monergistic character throughout. Yet it may be wondered whether it is necessary to say as does Professor Murray that *"regeneration is used in two distinct senses in the New Testament."* The distinction in thought between conception and birth can do full justice to these two texts by referring them to the latter and perhaps make for a clearer statement as well. This would make (re)generation prior in the ordo salutis but Berkhof does this (p.471 Syst. Theol.) and so does Warfield. He says: *"At the root of all lies an act seen by God alone, and mediated by nothing, a direct creative act of the Spirit, the new birth. This new birth pushes itself into man's own consciousness through the call of the Word, responded to under the persuasive movements of the Spirit; his conscious possession of it is thus mediated by the Word. A man must be born again by the Spirit to become God's son. He must be born again by the Spirit and Word to become consciously God's son."* [The Biblical Doctrine of Renewal in Bib. Theol. Studies pp.369 & 70]

While it is only those called by the Word who are to be admitted into church fellowship, due regard must be paid in this to what Archibald Alexander describes as *"many differing circumstances which cause a great variety in appearance and expression; such as the degree of vigour in the principle of life communicated ... There is as much difference in the original vigour of spiritual as of natural life."* [Thoughts on Religious Experience p.23]. A factor in this is that some know more of the content of Scripture and its teaching than others. Consequently some have a greater understanding of what

has happened in them than others. So one man's experiences in regeneration are not to be the standard for others. But as the Word is used and moreover preached (Phm.10) knowledge of some things is essential, and this must be tested for, but more of this later.

iii. Objects of Regeneration

The point to be made under this head is that by various designations persons are regenerated. This means to use Old Testament language that it is the heart that is changed. (Deut.30:6; Jer.24:7; Ezk.36:26) The heart is the person at source, in cameo, for *"out of it are the issues of life"* [Prov.4:23]. The result of regeneration is a new divine product (πνεῦμα - Eph.2:10); a new man (καλὸς ἄνθρωπος - Eph. 4:24) and a new creation (καλὴ κτίσις - II Cor.5:17)

This means that regeneration is no change of substance, nor of mental outlook alone, nor even of mind plus will without affections. It includes and affects the whole of man. The chief mark of regeneration is a spontaneous delight in God and all that pertains to Him. Commenting on Jeremiah 31:31-33 Warfield writes in the work already quoted (p.355): *"God promises to work a subjective effect in the hearts of Israel, by virtue of which their very instincts and most intimate impulses shall be on the side of the law, obedience to which shall therefore be but the spontaneous expression of their own natures"*. It is life that is to be looked for.

b) Two Tenses and their Significance

These are the aorist and perfect tenses. No other tense is used to describe Regeneration. Both are past instantaneous events. They refer to the completed and once for all nature of Regeneration, but do not necessarily carry the idea of suddenness.

The difference between the two tenses is important. While both stress finality of accomplishment, the Perfect also stresses the continuing effects of what has been done. The Aorist is like the stone plunging into the pond; the Perfect resembles the widening

concentric circles which result.

The Aorist appears in John 1:13; 3:3,4,5 & 7. Here the finality and perfection of Regeneration is indicated. It does not need to be repeated or augmented. The Perfect occurs in John 3:6. It means that what has its origin from unrenewed human nature displays its character in the kind of life it leads, and similarly with reference to what has originated from the Spirit.

The use of the Perfect presents us with the evidences that Regeneration has taken place. They comprise the cry of the infant in grace. They are found in I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7 and 5:4 & 18. This grammatical argument is strengthened by the theological explanation in I John 3:9 of why that particular effect is so, and all other effects too, namely *"God's seed remains in him"*. As Warfield says *"the new life will necessarily bear the lineaments of his new parentage"* [op.cit. p.195]. These evidences can be reduced to three namely faith, love and obedience, but all three must be, (and will be) present to some degree in the regenerated.

This faith contains an element of perception (I Jn.3:16) i.e. spiritual enlightenment, and of persuasion (I Jn.4:16) i.e. certainty. It has an object which is not the whole gamut of theology but that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh to take away sins by His death (I Jn.5:1; 3:5; 3:16) and thereby to give us life (I Jn.4:9).

This love is of a special kind and has special objects. As it is essentially "self-giving to" and not "getting for self from". God and the brethren are the objects of such love, and they are loved for what they are which is precisely why the world hates them (I Jn.3:13 & 14;16-18; 4:7 & 8 and 5:1).

This obedience is described positively and negatively (I Jn.2:29 and 3:9). Positively it means seeking to follow in Christ's steps (I Jn.2:6).or
30.

doing the will of God (I Jn.2:17) which though expressed in commandments is not grievous (I Jn.3:3). Negatively it consists in opposing sin (I Jn.2:1) purifying oneself from it (I Jn.3:3) because sin's dominating power has been broken (I Jn.3:9). The world is thus overcome (I Jn.5:4).

Where these evidences appear together, however faintly, they proclaim as loudly and as clearly as any should require that regeneration has taken place. The person concerned is therefore to be warmly received as a brother or sister, or, as the case may be shepherded on the basis that they are sheep in Christ's flock. The Biblical facts which indicate that some mistakes will be made for example Acts 8:21, Matt.25:1-30 and Hebrews 6:4-8 should neither deter us from examining people nor dispose us to ask for more than these evidences. The solemn warning against causing one of Christ's little ones to stumble (Matt. 18:6) should weigh heavily upon us.

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BOOK REVIEWS

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD by the Rev Dr Peter Toon

Published by Marshall Paperbacks @ £2.25 (154 pp)

The subject and theme dealt with in this book by Dr Peter Toon is the highest and treats perhaps the earliest Christian affirmation embodying the doctrine of the ascended, exalted God/Man Jesus Christ.

According to the Introduction of the book, the task the author sets himself is "*to attempt to explain what the Lordship of Jesus Christ means for the Christian Faith today*".

The Introduction describes the complex and varied pressures and temptations in Western society which lead to an erosion of traditional sources and views of authority. That erosion inevitably involves the authority of Christ in His Church, and in the world at large, which is infatuated with materialism, awed by science's accelerating prowess and enticed into permissiveness. Dr Toon comments "*the authority of Christ in His Church has been diminished. He competes with other 'Lords' ...*" [p.2] Again he writes "*The Lordship of Christ over moral systems and behaviour patterns appears to be a very rare phenomenon in today's world*" [p.3]. He adds that even in the churches one may look in vain for a clear unequivocal statement that Jesus is Lord. There, confused and confusing confessions are too often made, which are deferential to the claims of science and accommodating to the proponents of comparative religion.

In dealing with this grand theme the author covers considerable ground and presents aspects of Christ's Lordship which all too few contemporary Christians realise are involved in the confession

32.

that Jesus is Lord. Apart from some concessive statements the general tone of the book is orthodox, conservative and edifying.

While aiming to offer a popular presentation of this theme, which may account for his use of the *Good News Bible*, the author does attempt to identify and analyse the strata of teaching found among the different writers of the Bible, related to Christ's Lordship. He attempts to get at the textual and exegetical bases for this doctrine, and in so doing sometimes multiples quotations whose bearing upon his argument are not made clear. The comprehensiveness of the subject conflicting with the limits imposed by the format of the book may account for this. However, this is largely compensated for by the useful summaries found within the chapters. The addition of a prayer at the close of each chapter provides an humbling and reverential aspect to the studies.

The book consists of ten chapters and an appendix. The first chapter is an introduction to the theme, from which we have already quoted.

Chapter 2 is entitled '*The exalted Jesus*' and traces the two main parts of Jesus' life. Firstly, it describes His earthly human life from His humble birth to His crucifixion. Secondly, it examines Jesus' exalted humanity from His ascension on into the endless ages. The early Christians spoke of this, writes Dr Toon, convinced of the fact of Christ's resurrection, ascension and session at the Father's right hand in majesty, which they described in analogical and symbolical terms. Dr Toon puts forth a compromise solution to the apparently differing accounts in the Gospels of the resurrection appearances and the time scale of the actual ascension. He suggests that the ascension took place immediately on the first Sunday, but later appearances were temporary accommodations to the needs of His disciples - an entering again and again into the temporal and material conditions from His exalted state in the heavens. These visits or appearances were set into a symbolical framework of forty days culminating in a public ascension drawn

from Old Testament models. Acts 1:1-11. See pages 12-18 for this reconstruction.

Chapter 3 entitled '*Jesus, Messiah and Lord*' is a study of the concepts of Jesus as Messiah/King and Lord. It deals with Old Testament predictions and also explores the possibility of a relationship between Christ and the 'Suffering Servant' motif in Isaiah.

Chapter 4 entitled '*The meaning of the Ascension*' is a comparison of the 'insights' of several biblical writers on the subject of our Lord's ascension. Included in this chapter is a summary of the New Testament teaching. Although this is a comprehensive summary, perhaps he ought to have included the biblical teaching relative to the enthroned Lord waiting for the subjugation of all His enemies. See Ps.110:1; I Cor.15:25; Heb.1:13.

Chapter 5, entitled '*Jesus, Lord of the nations*' discusses the kingdom of Christ on Earth, i.e. the rule of the exalted Messiah and Lord, over nations and human history. The book begins to make more demands of the reader here, as it treats upon the invisible but universal scope of the reign of the ascended, exalted Jesus. This doctrine, says Dr Toon, is only meaningful through the mind and eyes of faith. The author deals with some problems sanely and courageously e.g., the interpretation of history; see pages 56-57. The author is prepared to venture solutions but in doing so presents some unusual explanations of interpretive problems. The reviewer found these, in the main, refreshing. However, there were some disconcerting, if only occasional departures from accepted conservative positions. There are hints of a tendency to rationalize e.g., pages 58-59, where Dr Toon uses the words '*presupposed*' and '*mythological*' of Paul's teaching on '*principalities and powers*'. Is this an over-eagerness to accommodate modern scientific thought at the expense of the inerrancy of Scripture?

Somewhat confusing and inconsistent translations of I Cor.11:3 (KEPHALĒ) are found on pages 61 and 72.

There are some important matters for consideration in the discussion of the '*Lord of Structures*' pp.59-63, some of which Evangelicals may be shirking.

Chapter 6, entitled '*Jesus, Lord of the Church*' enters into the question of the Church, taking into account the Church 'Invisible' and the Church 'Local'. He discusses whether the term 'Body' (i.e. CHURCH) has relevance both for the 'Invisible' and the 'Local' manifestation of the Universal Church and in what way Christ is said to be 'Lord' of both, and in what way the Church has its origin and sustenance in its Head.

The question of unity is taken up and there is an evident desire for 'oneness' both spiritual and visible at the local level. An aversion to 'separation' appears, derived perhaps from the author's sharing an Anglican view-point? That attitude may underestimate the necessity for the emerging of a God-honouring fellowship despite the abundance of 'congregations' in a given locality. See pp 65, 74-76.

The section on the Lordship of Christ over public worship enriches the concept of worship both for the congregation and those who lead it.

Chapter 7 entitled '*Jesus, Lord of the Universe*' deals with some knotty problems related to the divine/human Christ's role as Lord of the universe. Aspects covered include His pre-incarnate work as Creator, His continued sustaining of the universe as the ascended God/Man, the re-creation of a new cosmos, and the questions raised by the expanding concepts of the post-Copernican era of cosmic science. The author desires a better union between science and theology and suggests that theologians be prepared to sit at the feet of scientists to facilitate the making of 'new doctrine' such as a theology of the cosmic Christ. see pp 95-96.

Chapter 8 entitled '*Jesus, Lord of all religions*'

has some uncertain notes as the author grapples with the relation between Christianity and other religions. What for instance does he imply when he concedes that "... no longer can one hold the view that Christianity is wholly true and all other religions are wholly false"? p.101 para 1. If he is saying that the portrayal of Christianity by the 'Church' has not been wholly true then we concur, but are we talking about that or the nature of Revelatory Christianity?

In discussing the claims of Christianity to be the true religion over against all other religions, Dr Toon presents several approaches to this comparison. He examines 'cultural relativism' (the cultural bases for the different religions) then 'epistemological relativism' (the unknowableness of absolute truth) and then 'teleological relativism' (the same goal or end reached by diverse religious systems taking different routes). These are effectively analysed and dismissed. Dr Toon takes up Professor John Hick's views on Monism (essential oneness of all religions) and Universal salvation, and fairly discusses them, together with Hans Küng's philosophy of 'ordinary' and 'extra-ordinary' salvation, all of which he counters ably and succinctly. A further discussion of Barth's views on 'revelation versus religion' adds some backbone to the presentation of historic Christianity. see p.113. The whole is summarised by Dr Toon's own confession, marred perhaps by a somewhat equivocal expression on page 119, para 2. *"We avoid any suggestion that he who does not know of, or does not submit to, the Lordship of Jesus will be eternally punished"*. To that we reply that original sin and guilt renders all mankind liable to judgement irrespective of their knowledge of Christ or otherwise; human nature is fallen whatever its cultural roots as he himself points out on p.142.

Chapter 9 entitled 'The exalted Jesus and the Creeds' deals with the development of Christ's place within Trinitarian Confessions, with attention 36.

paid to non-biblical sources utilized by the Creed-makers. This is a good section in explication of the Creeds and clear and helpful analogies of the relation between Scripture and credal development are given.

Chapter 10 entitled '*Jesus, my Lord*' gives outlines bearing upon the lordship of Christ over the individual and also corporate church life. The chapter takes up the dangers arising from isolationism and individualism and also examines the centrality of love in the Christian faith as well as the high and radical ethic of its true disciples. pp.136-137. Finally an excellent section on guidance completes the study. This chapter is warm and appealing in its delineation of the Christian and his Lord.

An appendix containing excerpts from Reformed Confessions closes the book.

As the author himself emphasises, the ontological Christ is a fact which the mind and eye of faith embrace, until the eschatological return of Christ in power and glory.

The reviewer commends this book for thoughtful reading, the subject is high and Dr Toon does justice to it.

Gilbert T. Evans

TOO HOT TO HANDLE by Gilbert W. Kirby

Published by Marshall, Morgan & Scott.
Lakeland Paperback pp. ix, 147 £1.25

Nothing but good can result from dispelling ignorance, prejudice and petty divisiveness from evangelicals or any other body of people. The cause of the gospel has frequently suffered from such evils so any book designed to counteract them is to be welcomed provided it achieves its object. One must never forget what can sometimes happen by intervening to prevent a husband and his wife from having a fight!

The charge that evangelicals are more inclined to quarrels and divisions than liberals has more than a grain of truth in it. The liberal by believing nothing

in particular is able to smile benignly at the views of all men with the exception of those who believe the truth. But the convictions of the evangelical make it hard for him to tolerate persons whose views he must reject absolutely; and, unless he is careful to draw a distinction between truths essential to the gospel and those which are not, he will have difficulty in living in harmony with fellow evangelicals.

Earlier this year (as reported in the June issue of the *Evangelical Times*) some evangelical Baptists declared that all truth was equally 'mandatory' in order, apparently, to justify their unwillingness to unite with other evangelicals in the matter of theological education. Still reeling from the impact of this blow to our hopes of evangelical unity we are somewhat refreshed by the Principal of the London Bible College who reminds his readers that a necessary distinction must be drawn between truths essential and truths non-essential in delineating the bounds of Christian unity (pp.viii, 38). To part company from other evangelicals over what some choose to call their 'distinctives' (such matters as mode of baptism, church order, spiritual gifts etc.) is to be guilty of the terrible sin of schism because such beliefs are not part of the foundations essential to church unity.

In this book dealing with some thirteen theological issues which engender controversy between evangelicals Gilbert Kirby includes a variety of non-essential 'distinctives' such as views held by evangelicals on prophetic interpretation (including a helpful treatment of the Book of the Revelation), Sunday observance, the arts, Christian involvement in society, the Charismatic Movement, the sacraments and the place of women in the church. He is concerned that evangelicals should learn to live 'in fellowship' with one another even though they may differ on such issues. All evangelicals ought to share Mr Kirby's concern and deplore the fact

38.

that frequently we get more agitated when our views on minor issues are discounted than when the centralities of the faith are endangered.

Mr Kirby's handling of issues which involve the essentials of the faith is disturbing, such as when he deals with divergent views held on the nature of the church and the subject of Christian unity. Evangelicals are urged to continue 'in fellowship' with one another even when the behaviour of some threatens the centralities. The great weakness of this book is the author's failure to be biblical when it comes to specifying where, in practice, that fellowship is to be found. The New Testament knows of no other place than the local church, but Mr Kirby has other ideas.

He argues that evangelicals are united on the fundamental truths ("*the apostles' doctrine*" of Acts 2:42), but instead of urging them to do what they did in the New Testament times, unite in local churches, he proposes that they should express their unity and find their fellowship within evangelical movements such as the Keswick Convention (once a year!), the Scripture Union and the Evangelical Alliance (pp.39, 46). In this way he is advocating that evangelicals should continue to tolerate their church divisions over non-essentials and return to the theological indifference over the doctrine of the church which prevailed amongst evangelicals before the birth of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

The clock cannot be put back in this manner. The developments within the ecumenical movement have convinced many evangelicals that this movement, though it has challenged our sinful complacency over petty divisions, threatens to undermine the historic Christian faith. We can now see that the nature of the church is inseparable from the character of the gospel we preach. They rise or fall together. The evangelical unity demanded by the New Testament is nothing less than evangelical church unity.

By attempting to steer a middle-course on the issue of the church and the ecumenical movement the author

'does the splits' and ends up floundering between irreconcilables. He states that *"our understanding of the true nature of the Church is probably the most crucial issue of the day"* (p.17), but then proceeds to consider it as though it were just another of those controversies over non-essentials about which evangelicals ought to agree to differ. The cruciality of the issue for Mr Kirby appears to lie in the regrettable alienation it has caused between 'separatist' evangelicals and those continuing within the doctrinally-mixed denominations, where *"liberalism is tolerated alongside 'conservative' evangelicalism"* (p.39), rather than in the undeniable threat which the ecumenical movement constitutes to the future of the gospel.

The author plays the part of Mr Facing-Both-Ways. He appreciates the danger of the ecumenical movement and maintains that unity should never be bought at the expense of the truth (p.38); but whilst admitting that many within the ecumenical movement and the 'main-line' denominations are no longer on the line but deny the essential truths of the gospel he fails to deal with the implications of evangelical involvement with such bodies. He deplores those evangelicals who by arguing from 'guilt by association' refuse to continue in fellowship at a church level with evangelicals involved within the doctrinally-mixed denominations, and then adds, *"All this is happening at a time when radical theologians are denying the essential truths of the Gospel"* (p.47)! How then can it be a matter of indifference whether or not evangelicals continue in association with such heretics (to give them their New Testament name)? Is it of no consequence to the outcome of a spiritual battle whether or not we collaborate with the enemy?

By introducing the issue of the nature of the church and the subject of Christian unity into a book rightly pleading for tolerance between evangelicals over non-essential, though controversial,

40.

theological issues Mr Kirby lays himself open to the charge of being unable to distinguish the essentials and matters which vitally affect them from the non-essentials.

This book is only helpful when it deals with the relatively unimportant issues, and even then it is lacking in perception. Although Mr Kirby expounds the traditional 'Keswick teaching' in his chapter on the subject of holiness, drawing attention to its strong emphasis upon passivity, it does not seem to occur to him that the influence of this teaching since 1874 with its false doctrine of sin, the world and holiness was responsible for the evangelical aloofness of former years to the arts, politics and society in general about which he complains.

Like Mr Kirby we deeply regret the division which has developed between evangelicals. We regret that our evangelical Anglican brethren have been more eager to have 'fellowship' with Anglo-Catholics and other non-evangelicals within the ecumenical movement than with their evangelical brethren outside it. We regret the refusal of evangelical Anglicans to admit any possibility of their being wrong in collaborating with Anglo-Catholics and their unwillingness to discuss the matter further with their independent evangelical brethren (see Introduction to *Growing into Unity*, 1970). These are the real causes of disunity between evangelicals.

But unlike Mr Kirby we make an important distinction between Christian fellowship which can still continue between such evangelicals on a personal level, and church fellowship where issues transcending the personal are involved, such as co-operation with churches confederated (on Mr Kirby's own admission) with enemies of the gospel.

Paul E. G. Cook

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

Published in April and October by the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, New Delhi. Annual subscription £2.25

W.E.F., LES EMRAIS, CASTEL, GUERNSEY, C.I. U.K.

Launched a year ago, the ERT aims to "*bridge the gap between the professional theologian and the thoughtful Christian communicator*". While the articles vary considerably both in quality and importance, the first two issues contain some useful material, book reviews and information. The ERT reviews the worldwide spectrum of evangelical thought and opinion and plans to include more articles from other languages (e.g. Norwegian, Portuguese, Swahili, Arabic, Chinese, etc) not normally accessible to English readers. ERT could be useful to Pastors who wish to keep abreast of international 'evangelical' thought.

BIBLICAL CREATION

45p per single issue. Published October, February and June.

Details from B.C.S. 16 Woodview Avenue, Chingford, London E4 95L

The newly formed BIBLICAL CREATION SOCIETY, formed to expound the biblical teaching on creation, is publishing the first issue of this magazine in October with articles on the re-investigating of origins and the hermeneutical problem of Genesis 1-11.

CHRISTOLOGY AT THE CROSSROADS: A LATIN AMERICAN APPROACH by Jon Sobrino

Published by SCM Press 434pp £4.95

Sobrino's message is by no means new; his pre-suppositions and methodology are drawn from contemporary European and Latin American theologians

representing the attempt to redirect Roman Catholic Christology away from a systematic norm (e.g. Chalcedon) to one more historically and politically accommodated to the now popular liberation theology. Sobrino's presentation of this position is nevertheless important and scholarly and this book is being regarded by some as one of the seminal studies of our decade.

According to the author, the Chalcedonian formula concerning Christ's person is not a suitable starting point for Christology. Apart from the influence of Greek philosophy in its composition, the difficulties in understanding technical terms and the fact that dogma as such cannot give us access to the reality of Christ, he argues that the Chalcedonian statement *"does not make it clear that God is at work, through his own free choice, in the struggle for justice and the expectations of hope"* (pp.4-5). He maintains it is the concrete figure of Jesus Himself, not some later theological effort of conceptualization *"which unifies the various christologies of the New Testament"* (p.6). Because in Latin America, liberation theology has turned to the historical Jesus *"for guidance and orientation"* (p.10), the author sees his task as that of pointing up *"those traits of Jesus which are most securely guaranteed by exegesis and which offer us a most trustworthy image of the historical Jesus"* (p.14).

As we might expect, his approach is critical, involving a radical re-interpretation of biblical terminology and teaching. His conclusions are disturbing. For example, he infers from Mark 13 verses 22 and 30 *"that Jesus' ignorance is not merely in matters of incidental detail. It goes right to the core of his own person and his mission"* (p.101). In his detailed study of the death of Christ, he sees its main significance for us as *"a life of service to human beings ... Those who are oppressed will instinctively look to it to find a response to their own lives"* (p.235). Three basic requisites are then suggested as essential to an understanding of the

resurrection of Jesus, namely, a radical hope in the future which is inseparable from our questioning search for justice in an unredeemed world, an historical consciousness (*"the work of the theologian is not to secure the faith against the conflicts of history" but "to place faith in the midst of the historical conflict triggered by Jesus' resurrection"* p.253) and the following of Jesus. This latter point is the main thrust of the book for he claims that access to the Christ of faith can only come through access to the historical Jesus, through discipleship. In the closing chapters he discusses the tension between faith and religion and traces the notion and historical development of dogma.

This book will help evangelicals to understand the basis of liberation theology and, at the same time, to face the growing challenge for competent, relevant but thoroughly biblical writing in the areas of hermeneutics and political theology.

Eryl Davies

NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION: ESSAYS IN
PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

Edited by I. Howard Marshall

Published by Paternoster pp 406 £6.00

Title, length and various contributors suggest that this new publication will be an important tool for evangelical expositors of the New Testament. Certainly, the editor leads with the claim that *"we have written as conservative evangelicals who combine a high regard for the authority of Holy Scripture with the belief that we are called to study it with the full use of our minds"* (Foreword). Equally impressive is the declared *"aim of the symposium"*, which is *"to establish the principles and methods involved in understanding the New Testament"* (p.11). The relevance to the working

pastor of such a volume is obvious - yet caution is required! The Foreword also tells us that "not all will agree with everything that we say ... the statements in this book carry no sort of imprimatur".

This review is presented under the following headings for the sake of clarity:

1. The Structure of the Book

Helpfully, the publication divides into four parts: The Background to Interpretation; The Use of Critical Methods in Interpretation; The Task of Exegesis; The New Testament and the Modern Reader. The layout is comprehensive and to the point, covering the history of interpretation from sub-apostolic times to the present day and posing various questions raised by the more modern textual investigation.

2. Modern Critical Disciplines

Again, in an extremely helpful way the book gives a concise account of the rise and developing influence of historical, source, form, tradition and redaction criticism. All this, in fact, occupies most of Part 2 of the volume which, without such a contribution, would be sadly lacking. It is surely necessary that "conservative evangelicals" (the editor's words, not the reviewer's) understand and appraise the views of all past and present New Testament scholars, whatever their basic presuppositions. Here, in a nutshell, we are presented with Bultmann, Dibelius and the 'New Hermeneutic' etc.

3. Good Points

Apart from the comments above, 'New Testament Interpretation' contains some material which is good and, perhaps, excellent, including:

- i. Chapter 5: *Questions of Introduction* by
D. Guthrie
- ii. Chapter 6: *The History of New Testament Study*
by F. F. Bruce
- iii. An exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22 by R.T. France

(p.264) - compelling even if not convincing.

4. Bad Points

Unhappily, this section, in the reviewer's opinion, heavily outweighs (3).

i. Certain chapters are far too abstruse for even the well-read preacher - for example, Chapter 16, '*The New Hermeneutic*', A.C.Thiselton.

ii. An acceptance of the partial validity of the basic assumptions of modern critical discipline seems inherent in much of the volume. Bearing in mind the stated presuppositions of form criticism (p.153,154,187), we can understand the cautions thrown out by the Foreword. The publication is seriously vulnerable at this point.

iii. From this weakness, others flow. Why is a whole chapter provocatively entitled '*Demythologising - The Problem of Myth in the New Testament*'? Why, in closing, does the book commend the expository preacher to *"use tools, such as source-, form-, and redaction-criticism as creative hermeneutical aids"* (p.362). Why is there such thoroughly bad exegesis (in the reviewer's opinion) as that on pages 167 and 168, where we learn that it is *"unlikely that Matthew 18:17 is authentic"*. Why is the traditional 'grammatical-historico' method of exegesis played down in so many places? Why are there so many bald remarks guaranteed to distress informed Christians who will disagree that accurate scholarship must lead to statements such as:

"Theories which attempt to harmonise the narratives of Easter morning by postulating several different visits by the women to the tomb seem much more improbable than those which allow for a certain amount of confusion in the narratives" [I.H.Marshall, p.135].

"... the correct solution to a difficulty lies in the unhistorical character of a

particular narrative" [ibid, p.136]. In fairness, Marshall concedes that such a radical conclusion may only apply "on occasion"

"The problem of myth in the NT is that the NT presents events critical to Christian faith in language and concepts which are often outmoded and meaningless to 20th century man" [J.D.G.Dunn, p.300].

"... out of date conceptualisations determine certain traditionally important expressions of NT faith about Christ at this point - in particular the problem that 'ascension' (Acts 1:11) and parousia 'in clouds' 'from heaven' (Mark 13:26; 1 Thess.4:16) were not merely metaphors or analogies but were intended as literal descriptions ... which derive from and depend on a first century cosmology which is impossible for us" [ibid, p.300]

"Those who do go to the Bible will often find that there is nothing there which can be applied direct to the situation in question" [R.Nixon, p.334].

"... it can hardly be claimed that the issue of authority is greatly affected by whether isolated sayings are considered to be ipsissima verba of Jesus"; "The formation of the canon was a recognition of the fact that there were different interpretations of the Christ event current in the apostolic church"; "... we can have no cut and dried proof that all the New Testament documents were written by apostles or their companions"; "The diversity in church order between the Pauline churches and that at Jerusalem suggests that there is no one given form of order and ministry in the New Testament which is valid for

everyone everywhere"; "The Bible ... (is) not ... a direct solver of current problems" (*ibid*, p.334,338,339,342,345, 347).

"For the idea of sacrifices to propitiate God is so foreign that people may still find it objectionable when they understand it ... We need to go no further in exegesis to find out what is expressed by the metaphor (ie. of atonement, sacrifice and substitution - reviewer's note), and then to find a new metaphor ..."
[J. Goldingay, p.358]

5. Conclusion

This book is important because it challenges 'conservative evangelicals' to produce a similarly targeted volume in defence of what could be termed the B.B.Warfield understanding of the New Testament texts. A thermometer for the current evangelical climate, '*New Testament Interpretation*', one feels, will not be greatly appreciated by expository preachers. This reviewer, new to his duty, regrets to make this comment, particularly in the opening number of a new journal and with regard to a well-produced book concerned with such a sublime theme.

Peter Naylor

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN J.C.Ryle

Published by Evangelical Press pp.311 £2.75

This book contains twenty-one of the best but lesser known sermons preached by Bishop Ryle. Originally published in 1900 under the title of *The Christian Race*, this new title more accurately describes the theme of these sermons as Ryle preaches the gospel with a deep concern for the salvation of sinners. His style as usual is direct and practical and the sermons contain some good 48.

material. This is the kind of book you can happily give to both unbelievers and believers for their profit. Buy it and encourage others to read it!

FROM NOTHING TO NATURE

A Young People's Guide to Evolution and Creation

by Professor E.H.Andrews

Published by Evangelical Press pp.120 £2.50

It is refreshing to find a distinguished scientist like Professor Andrews questioning the theory of evolution and advocating the biblical account of creation. The author, who is Professor of Materials in the University of London and an international authority in the science of large molecules, provides us here with an accurate picture of the theory of evolution and a helpful criticism and exposure of Darwinianism and the whole philosophy of evolution. Technical terms are explained and the word-pictures, verbal illustrations, diagrams and photographs make the book interesting and extremely helpful. Here is a book that will help to confirm our young people and other age groups in their acceptance of the Genesis account of creation and should be regarded as essential reading for pastors.

KARL BARTH PREACHING THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

Edited by John McTavish and Harold Wells

Published by T. & T.Clark pp.279 £3.80

It is unlikely that many pastors have read the thirteen volumes which comprise Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. The volumes contain more than six million words and the style is repetitive, sometimes tedious and the language paradoxical. This new book, however, could be helpful as an introduction to Barth for the authors have searched the small print of the 'Dogmatics' for what they regard as the most significant exegetical passages.

In the first section Barth deals with subjects such as the knowledge of God in His works, the Name and unity of God, and gives expression to his

unorthodox view of revelation and his strong opposition to 'natural' theology (pp.2-6). He regards the Scripture writers, of course, as fallible witnesses to revelation but their words can become the Word of God in the 'event' of revelation. He also argues that the doctrine of inspiration current in the early church and the puritan period led to a naive secularisation of the whole concept of revelation.

The second section contains a provocatively unorthodox treatment of subjects like creation out of nothing, Christ and creation and the image of God. For example, he regards the creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2 as saga which he defines as *"the sense of an intuitive and poetic picture of a pre-historical reality of history which is enacted once and for all within the confines of time and space"* [p.62]. In other words, man's creation in God's image occurs in the area of primal history, in the present.

In the section entitled '*Epiphany*' Barth deals with the important New Testament concept of *"The fulness of time"* ('*that time in which God comes to us and we come to God*') and vital subjects such as the baptism, transfiguration and sinlessness of Jesus. He views the Lord's baptism as an *"act of obedience in which he entered upon his ministry and way of life in a manner typical and decisive for all that was to follow"* [p.136]. In typical Barthian style, what he calls *"The story of a contrapuntal and crowning event from the other side"*, namely, the attestation of the Son in His baptism by the Father, he regards as *"mythological"*.

The Lent and Easter section is by far the longest and most important section where in addition to dealing with subjects like the temptation of the serpent, the golden calf, David and Bathsheba, stupidity (Psalm 14:1) Barth turns his attention to crucial themes such as the purpose of Christ's work, justification by faith alone, reconciliation,

the history and meaning of the resurrection with a concluding discussion of baptism viewed as response to God's grace.

His treatment of these themes is certainly unsound and his exegesis more ingenious than biblical. He espouses universalism and criticises severely the reformers' theology of the atonement and justification (e.g. pp.190-193). The resurrection of Christ, Barth asserts, *"is not peripheral to the New Testament, but central: not inessential or dispensable, but essential and indispensable ..."*. He then makes an interesting attack on Bultmann's demythologising of Easter but Barth himself adopts an unorthodox stance partly because of his view of revelation time. This time has little to do with calendar events. *"Is the empty tomb"*, he asks, *"just a legend?"* His answer is an indifferent one. *"What matter?"* [p.211] He adopts a similar attitude towards the ascension: *"There is no sense in trying to visualise the ascension as a literal event"*. For Barth, history is dumb and speaks with a variety of voices contradicting each other. He bases his own understanding of the resurrection on the words ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι in 1 Timothy 3:16. *"He himself ... was justified by God in his resurrection from the dead. He was justified as man and in him as the representative of all men all were justified"* [p.213]. According to Barth, the resurrection as an historical fact is a process involving and representing the progress of the whole human race towards perfection.

One fact is clear. Barth does not embrace the evangelical faith, despite his claim to be reformed and a theologian of the Word. His influence, however, in recent years has been considerable and some pastors may deem it useful to acquaint themselves with his theology if only, in contrast, to proclaim the true word more clearly and relevantly in our generation. Provided it is read critically this book could be a useful tool for such pastors.

Eryl Davies

WAS THE REFORMATION A MISTAKE?

Rev Andrew Davies, MA
Chessington

In order to answer this question we need to ask four basic questions: 1. What was the Reformation? 2. What were its effects? 3. Was it a mistake? 4. Are there any positive lessons for us today?

1. What was the Reformation?

As the word suggests, the Reformation was a movement in Western Christendom, beginning around 1500 and continuing into the seventeenth century, to reform the Church according to biblical principles. We could also call it a religious revival, for the impetus to reform the Church sprang from powerful spiritual awakenings in the lives of several very able men. In fact, it was because of the truths which they had experienced that they sought to bring the whole Church to the same convictions. Many others were affected in the same way, so that what began as a spark in Germany soon became a roaring fire burning throughout Europe.

There were two essential elements in the Reformation.

(1) The assertion of the uniqueness and finality of the Scripture in all matters of faith and practice. The Reformers argued that the Church was subject to the Bible; and that human reason was likewise to submit to the authority of Scripture. Every man had the right to read it for himself and to interpret it in the light of its own self-testimony. This meant that the traditions of the Church, however ancient, must be brought to the bar of Scripture, and either received or rejected on that basis.

(2) The Reformers proclaimed, on the basis of biblical authority, the biblical doctrine of salvation, the Gospel. They found that the Bible asked

52.

and answered two fundamental questions: (a) What is a Christian? (b) What is the Church?

(a) In answering the first question, they saw that a Christian was not just someone who belonged to a Christian family or community or nation, but someone with a living, personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Martin Luther, for several years, sought to answer this question. He struggled to find a gracious God, to know that his sins were forgiven and that he was at peace with God. He did not find the answer in his good works, religious duties, self-abasement, or in the sacraments. He found it in Christ. That was to revolutionize his life.

(b) In answering the second question, they realised that the Church was not simply an organisation or institution, everybody living in a particular area who had been baptised as infants and were on a parish register. The Church was a company of people who knew God, whose sins had been forgiven, and who had experienced the love and power of God in their lives. They had been born again. They were spiritually alive. They rejoiced in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, because of that, they met together for worship and prayer; they organised and governed themselves under God's Word; and they sought to proclaim this same Gospel to others.

So, the Reformation was about two things:

(1) Authority Where did authority for belief and practice lie? The answer was clear. It was not in the traditions of the Church, since those traditions were human and fallible. Nor was it in fallen, fallible human reason. It was in Scripture alone, since Scripture was divinely inspired and revealed, verbally infallible, and factually inerrant. The Bible alone was God's Word to man. Both in form and in content it came from God. The Reformers never made the modern distinction between God's Word and Scripture. Luther said: *"I will not waste a word in arguing with one who does not consider the Scriptures are the Word of*

God". Zwingli said: "*The Scriptures come from God, not from men.*" This meant that the individual Christian and the Church are at all times subject to the authority of God's Word. The believer is not free to think or behave in a way which contradicts that Word. The Church is not free to draw up doctrines or prescribe rules which are inconsistent with the Scriptures. If we would know what a Christian is and what a Church is, we must go to Scripture for the answers.

(2) Salvation How could the sinner be reconciled to the all-holy God? How could the guilty be reckoned righteous, the lost found, the slave set free? Again, the answer was clear. No man could be saved by his own efforts, since they were imperfect. No man could declare himself righteous before God, when he was so obviously guilty. No man could find himself when he was so hopelessly lost. No man could liberate himself from the power of sin. Only God could save. Salvation was nothing if not of the Lord. The great solution to man's predicament was the Lord Jesus Christ. If the sinner was to be put right with God, he must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who had satisfied God's justice, borne God's anger, suffered the penalty of sin, and conquered death. By believing in Him the guilty would be declared righteous, the lost found, the enslaved liberated. This Gospel, the Reformers argued, is divine. It is due entirely to God's love. It is received by faith alone. And it is revealed only in Scripture through the Holy Spirit. Salvation meant not only the agreement of the mind to the truth, but also a persuasion of it, an experience of it in the heart.

2. What were its effects?

Its effects were profound and extensive. (1) Politically. Without it, there would have been no Puritans, no Pilgrim Fathers. The history of the USA might have been very different. Moreover, the Reformation broke the stranglehold which the Church

had exercised over many nations, and new national kingdoms broke free of ecclesiastical interference. (2) Economically. The Reformation encouraged personal industry and initiative, with a consequent desire to improve economic conditions. (3) Scientifically. The Reformers rescued scientific investigation from Church control. Men were encouraged to think for themselves on the scientific level. (4) Personally. The Reformation emphasised the importance of the individual conscience, a principle upheld in modern democratic society.

3. Was it a mistake?

The assumption behind this question is that the Reformation was a human movement, something man decided to do, an activity organised and directed by able people. But it is impossible to explain it in these terms only. Certainly there was organisation, and the leaders were all able men. But the historical context in which it occurred, the dynamic spiritual experience of Luther, and the astonishing growth and spread of the movement, can only be explained in terms of the mighty Hand of God.

Firstly, take the historical context. Professor A.G. Dickens has said: *"A flaming brand thrown into a heap of wet straw will hardly cause a smouldering. To explain the astonishing swiftness of the conflagration which followed Luther's defiance (at Worms), we must begin by describing the climatic conditions which had made the straw of European society as dry as tinder."*

Europe was involved in unrest and change of a quite unprecedented nature. Politically, national states were emerging, challenging the medieval concept of Empire and papal supremacy. Economically, there was growing discontent among the peasants. Trade began to increase; cities and towns began to grow in importance; and a monetary economy was developing. The old medieval apathy had gone. Socially, a new economic status gave birth to a lively new socio-economic class, the bourgeoisie, comprising landed

gentry, lawyers, and professional men, industrialists and merchants. This group gained new political weight, acquired higher education, and became open to Protestant thought. Intellectually, the Renaissance had produced a new era of cultural endeavour and expression, as well as widespread intellectual unrest. Renaissance scholars sought to recover good texts of the Hebrew O.T. and the Greek N.T., and people like J. Reuchlin and Erasmus sought to establish the exact meaning of the biblical text. A spate of new Universities emerged, with a new ferment of ideas. Moreover, the invention of the printing press came at precisely the right moment. Dickens has commented: "*Altogether, in relation to the spread of religious ideas, it seems difficult to exaggerate the significance of the Press, without which a revolution of this magnitude could scarcely have been consummated.*" e.g. Between 1517 and 1520 Luther's thirty publications probably sold well over 300,000 copies. And ecclesiastically, the Western Church was in a very troubled condition. It was an age of decline. There had been the scandal of two rival popes, one at Rome, the other at Avignon. A worldly spirit animated many of the clergy. There was little pastoral concern or preaching. Papal financial demands were widely resented, and many popes were politically active and morally lax. Spiritually, new religious movements were at work. The Waldensians in the Alps, the Lollards in England, the Hussites in Bohemia, had rediscovered biblical Christianity. The mystics were searching after a new, direct approach to God. The popular preaching of Savonarola in Florence had inspired an outburst of piety there. Clearly men were longing for personal communion with the living God.

No moment in history could have been more propitious for this powerful movement of God.

Then, secondly, what else but God's activity can explain the experience of Martin Luther? Into 56.

this seething, fermenting world of change, God thrust the young Luther. A brilliant and restless mind, he had, for several years, been searching for the assurance of peace with God. He felt his sinfulness before the holiness and justice of God, but had tried in vain to find peace in a life of acute self-denial and tortured study. He realised that good works, even of a religious kind, were not the cause, not even a cause of salvation. They did not contribute anything to a man's acceptability with God, since none of them was entirely free from sin. Then, in agony of soul, as he was preparing his lectures on Romans, light dawned upon him. He saw that not only was God just, in punishing sin, but that He was also justifier, in freely forgiving the sinner and clothing him with Christ's righteousness when that sinner believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He felt himself to be born anew and to have entered paradise itself. This moment of disclosure was nothing but the sovereign act of the God of grace.

Luther immediately saw that the idea of buying your way to heaven through the purchase of indulgences was a denial of the Gospel. Indulgences were certificates issued by papal authority in the belief that they would relieve people from some of the penalties of their sins. Luther saw that nothing except the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ could do that. Therefore, he began to attack the abuse of indulgences, by which large fees were charged for their purchase. At first he simply condemned the abuse, but later saw that the very idea of an indulgence was a denial of the Gospel. His 95 theses, which he nailed to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral, were his attempt to get the whole matter debated. In them he called attention to basic Scriptural truths. His concern was to reform an abuse, not to start a movement. But he had rediscovered New Testament Christianity, and he wanted the Church to make the same discovery. However, the papacy seemed unable to see the intensity of his convictions, and a gap widened between the Church and

Luther. He, in turn, began to see other truths more clearly, especially Biblical authority, the priesthood of all believers, and the validity of only two sacraments. He began to preach and teach them. Soon the Reformation fires began to spread.

Luther was clearly God's man for that hour. He had a dynamic personality, a brilliant mind, and was a profound, passionate preacher. Dr Lloyd Jones has called him a volcano. The only explanation of his experience and preaching is the activity of God. Everything was ready, and at God's time Luther was converted. Only a man like Luther could have given impetus to such a movement as the Reformation, for he was a man of fire, a prophet, to whom the Word of the Lord came.

Then, thirdly, the astounding growth and spread of the movement was due to God's activity. Others were affected in the same way. Zwingli in Switzerland was influenced by Luther, but also came to the same experience through his own study of the Bible. Through his preaching the Reformation spread west through German Switzerland. John Calvin was also converted. He lived in the French cantons of Switzerland, and was the greatest theologian and biblical expositor of the Reformation. Thousands came to be taught by him from all parts of Europe, and Geneva became the focus of the missionary endeavours of the movement. The Reformation spread further to West Germany, France, the Netherlands, Scotland and England, East Germany, Hungary and Poland. In Scotland John Knox was the spearhead of the movement, whilst in England it developed in a more uneven way. The Lollards had prepared the way. Henry VIII assisted it by severing his connections with Rome, assuming the title of Supreme Head of the Church. But it was the preaching and teaching of men like Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley, and other English Reformers that enabled a modified Calvinism to take root in this country.

So the Reformation directly affected large areas of Europe, and the succession of powerful preachers, able theologians and skilful writers, was an indication of the mighty hand of God being revealed in the salvation of thousands upon thousands of men and women.

4. What are the lessons for us today?

There are five.

- (1) We need to ask the right questions - What is a Christian? What is the Church?
- (2) We need to uphold and proclaim the biblical Gospel. It is clear, true, and it works.
- (3) We need to assert the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. The Bible stands up for itself. The Church has lost authority because it has lost confidence in God's Word.
- (4) The basis of union between Churches must be agreement about the Gospel and the Bible. Any other form of union will be shallow and weak. If we are going to work for union, let it be the unity which our Lord prayed for in John 17, that of true believers who are convinced of the power of the Gospel, and the authority of the Scriptures.
- (5) God is still the living God, the God of history. He controls the movements and events of men and works everything out according to His purposes. At the crucial moment He revealed Himself to Luther and Calvin. He came to them. And He is still the same.

*THE SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY THE AUTHOR AT
RUGBY, CANTERBURY AND EXETER; HIS AIM WAS THE MORE*

LIMITED ONE OF INTRODUCING THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT
RATHER THAN PROVIDING AN ANALYSIS AND DETAILED
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF IT.
