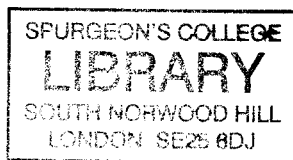
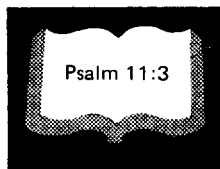


Foundations

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



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



ISSUE No. 3

Price 75p

November, 1979

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Printed by W.A.Back, Brighton

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Those wishing for further information about the aims, activities and Doctrinal Basis of the B.E.C. are invited to contact its General Secretary (Rev Roland Lamb) at 21 Woodstock Road North, St. Albans, Herts AL1 4QB.
Tel: St Albans (0727) 55655.

FOUNDATIONS is a Theological Journal
published in November and
May by the British
Evangelical Council.

EDITOR: Rev Dr Eryl Davies MA BD
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 Brian Edwards 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 (0727)
53148
(Evenings only)

All orders for this Journal must be pre-paid and should be sent to the Business Manager. Please make out cheques and postal/money orders to the BRITISH EVANGELICAL COUNCIL in £ sterling. The price per issue is 75p post free.

EDITORIAL

We value the many letters of appreciation and encouragement we have received from readers throughout the world. Sales, too, are encouraging. Only a few copies of the first issue remain unsold and increasing interest is being shown in the Journal.

The general consensus of opinion is that '*Foundations*' is meeting a longstanding need in our constituency for a theological journal which is thoroughly biblical and scholarly but also readable and relevant to Pastors and Churches. We intend to improve the quality of the contents - and possibly the format - with each issue and in this respect the suggestions and the contribution of articles and reviews from readers will be welcomed and carefully considered for possible inclusion in the Journal.

Our aim, of course, is to discuss relevant theological issues in a competent, biblical way, covering subjects such as Church History, Biblical and Historical Theology, Pastoralia and Apologetics in major articles and book reviews.

In this third issue, due to lack of space, we have had to omit a number of important articles and book reviews, including the promised articles on inerrancy, Redaction Criticism and Structural Sin. We hope to publish these articles in the next issue. Meanwhile, may we ask you to pray with us that, under God, this Journal will exercise an increasingly useful and God-glorifying ministry in our land and overseas.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY A WORLD AWAY?

Rev Roger W. Welch, BA (Hook)

'Contextualisation' is, without doubt, the theological 'trend par excellence' of the decade. "It has to do", according to the WCC's Theological Education Fund, *"with how we assess the peculiarity of Third World contexts"*. It *"takes into account the processes of secularity, technology, and struggle for human justice, which characterise the historical movement of nations in the Third World."* Each cultural and social context needs its own theology, and of all 'contextualised' theologies, the most prominent today is the 'Liberation Theology' of South America, with its sister black theologies in the USA and southern Africa.

This article will attempt to achieve two goals:

1. To provide, for those who do not possess it, a brief introduction to Liberation Theology, its history and doctrine.
2. To suggest areas in which the principles of this theology are already being applied to the British and European 'context', and to stress our need to respond.

The origins of Liberation Theology

To the casual observer, it appears that the theologians of liberation have exploded onto the theological scene during the 1970s. A closer look however reveals a movement with a source rather further back, growing only slowly until receiving impetus through the sponsorship of the World Council of Churches, supporting ISAL (Church and Society in Latin America), a Protestant group with its roots in 1940s youth movements. To this sponsorship from the WCC (in the early 60s) was added the impetus given by the Second Vatican

Council, which endorsed the exploration of socio-political and economic themes by Roman Catholic theologians. The explosion of the new theology then seemed to occur after the dominance of socio-political themes at the WCC gatherings at Uppsala in 1968, and Bangkok in 1973. By this latter conference 'salvation' was being clearly expressed in terms of political and economic liberation in the world. Meanwhile, Roman Catholic impetus was maintained through the conferences of Latin American bishops at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, and at Puebla, Mexico, in 1978, the latter being significant for the presence of John Paul II at one session. (His carefully worded address has left conflicting opinions as to the validity of Liberation Theology in the eyes of the Vatican.)

Indigenous or imported?

The exponents of Liberation Theology within South America have always considered their movement to be one of indigenous self-expression, the awakening within the South American consciousness of the limitations of western theology and its influence in preserving the political and economic dependence of the Latin Americans on western capitalism in general and the United States in particular. A glance at the backgrounds of the major writers, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, shows this to be simplistic. Many studied in European Universities in the early 60s, at a time when the Marxist analysis of society and history was clearly influencing both the liberal arts and theology. It was at just this time that two Europeans published books which were to provide the base for much subsequent South American thought, the Protestant Moltmann's 'Theology of Hope' (1965) and the Catholic Metz's 'Theology of the World' (1968). It also appears that many foreign clergy at work in South America in the 60s were responsible for propounding radical political philosophy to the exclusion of biblical truth. Therefore, in assessing the

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South American claim that "*western capitalist theology*" is inappropriate to their context, and indeed itself oppresses the people, we must not minimise the part played by the radical western bourgeois theologians in inducing and supporting that claim.

Praxis and conscientization

Anyone attempting to grasp the fundamentals of Liberation Theology, both in principle and application, must first become familiar with these two words.

A precise definition of 'praxis' is difficult, because it is subject to different interpretations. To know that in Greek it is 'a doing, or a mode of doing' takes us only part of the way. Praxis is the 'mode of doing' adopted by Liberation Theology. It is basically reflection upon action, based upon one's experience of reality, using the tools of the social and political sciences for expression. This produces a dynamic theology which is the result of action, rather than vice versa as in orthodox theology. This praxis uses an unorthodox set of hermeneutical principles as its justification. Using as a base presupposition the fact that God is immersed in history and in the reality of our world, the liberation theologian uses the experience of reality (i.e. his context) to question prevailing ideologies, exegesis, and theological assumptions, to come to a new way of interpreting scripture.

The process of becoming aware of the need for praxis, for liberation from the social and cultural factors which have conditioned theology hitherto, is called 'conscientization'. The greatest need of the present moment, to which many are addressing themselves, is the conscientization of the masses of the oppressed people of South America. The most successful agent in this educative process has proved to be the 'base community', cell groups of

poor people meeting in a home to read, discuss, plan action. Sometimes these groups are clearly evangelical, basing their activities on Bible study and prayer; at other times they are overtly political in content and aim. They display enormous diversity, but they provide almost the only hope for the academics wishing to see their ideas filter to the people who are supposed to be the concern of this theology. For the liberation theologian, conscientization is usually married to an analysis of historical reality which is Marxist in pattern.

The emerging theology

What kind of identifiable doctrine is produced by this 'Marxist Christian' analysis? The claim to possess a dynamic, ever-changing theology contains in itself a criticism of dogmatic creeds and standards, and certainly there is a continuing development of thought among liberation theologians which can make any assertion quickly redundant. However, there are areas of consistent thought and statement that we can comment upon as the foundations of the movement's doctrine.

God and his Kingdom

God has consistently been portrayed as a creator "*immersed in the world*", working redemption by liberating oppressed peoples, therefore always identifying with such peoples. The exodus is the most used biblical example of God's way of redemption. God's kingdom is the world and all who are in it, the church comprising those who are the reflective part of humanity, consciously moving toward liberation. Redemption history and secular history are one in this scheme.

Soteriology

As all men are in Christ, the task of the church is to bring Christ consciously to all men. This is salvation, but it is achieved through a

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humanising process, the awareness of being opened to God and to others. How? Through commitment to the struggle for socio-economic liberation; this is conversion. To define Christianity in terms of individual morality and personal redemption is to seriously distort the faith, in the opinion of the theologian of liberation.

Christology/Pneumatology

There is much work at present being done within Liberation Theology to develop a genuine Christology. As it stands, the interest in Christ is mainly in his life, the Gospels being used to attempt to show his relation to the political world. Christ is an example to follow, a fellow man, a leader, rather than a Divine Master and Saviour. There is significantly as yet no consistent doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Liberation Theology.

Easily dismissed?

It would not be difficult for us as evangelicals to demonstrate the inadequacies, heresies and liberalism of Liberation Theology. It has a faulty philosophical base in the scientific Marxist concept of man in society, a perverted doctrine of salvation, a selective use of Scripture with an hermeneutical system designed to serve its own presuppositions. It appears to be a contemporary 'contextualised' expression of 19th century liberalism, mixed with some 20th century Marxism and a good dose of Social Gospel; an altogether relativist theology, not a biblical theology at all.

If that were all that needed saying, then this article could be replaced with some 'suggestions for reading' that would begin with David Wells' excellent introductory critique in 'The Search for Salvation', chap.5 (IVP 1978). It is quite obvious however that the principles expounded by the theologians of liberation are having an effect upon

current evangelical thinking and writing in such a way that demands our attention. As Alan Gibson pointed out in the last issue of 'Foundations', evangelicals are becoming more concerned with social action; witness periodicals like Third Way, and the space given to it at NEAC and other conferences. To what extent is this social action adopting the presuppositions of Liberation Theology? More than we might think, I suggest. Consider the following areas.

1. At the popular level, Ronald Sider's 'Rich Christians in an age of hunger' (Hodder 1978), apart from challenging us about inequality in the world, and the need to alter our life-styles, also demonstrates an acceptance of some of the presuppositions of the liberation theologians in the area of '*the God of the oppressed*' and the '*sinfulness of structures*'. Should we blandly accept these positions, or make a more critical assessment of them?
2. A developing concern with the plight of the inner-city areas. Where this concern is to see Gospel-preaching churches established, we must commend it and encourage it. But it goes further than that; there are some who will work in such areas simply to identify with 'the oppressed', the racially, culturally, financially deprived. What is the message being brought to these people?
3. A loss of the message of individual redemption within socio-political action groups, whether they be concerned with race and housing problems or (the current favourite in US, due here soon) the anti-nuclear-power groups.
4. Perhaps most significantly, there is a definite shift in emphasis toward social issues among many charismatic groups and leaders, particularly in the Anglican church. Witness David Watson's foreword to Sider's book, implying that the social content of the Gospel needs an emphasis in such a

way that it will be the 'Reformation' for our age. Also, in the magazine 'Towards Renewal', produced by the influential community at Post Green, a recent article suggested (quoting American 'black' theologian James Cone), *"Luther could not hear God's liberating words for the oppressed because he was not a victim..."* Cone considers that American Christian leaders, and he cites Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards among them, have interpreted the gospel according to the political and cultural interests of white people. Do we accept that reluctantly, or do we question Cone's analysis?

5. Among many evangelicals there is, within the rationale of social involvement, a movement from 'creation ethics' to 'kingdom ethics', removing us from the emphasis to work for the establishment of a just and ordered society as a part of our creation mandate, to the struggle to see the eschatological 'kingdom' established through the restructuring of society on a Christian ethical basis. Whence this emphasis if not from Liberation Theology? What place personal redemption in its scheme? For a balanced treatment of this area see A.N.Triton's 'Salt to the World' (IVP 1978).

I believe these points are enough to demonstrate that we must come to terms with the teaching and influence of Liberation Theology, and have a satisfactory reply.

The way forward holds, I believe, two traps that must be avoided. The first is a thoughtless acceptance of the dishes served up to us by some evangelicals, liberally sprinkled with the method and content of Liberation Theology. The second trap is equally dangerous; it is to identify, expose, and reject all that is being said to us. Dr Edward Norman's 'Reith Lectures', printed by OUP under the title 'Christianity and the World Order', have been warmly accepted and commended by many evangelicals. Why? Certainly he has provided a

penetrating critique of the preoccupation of the church of today with the secular world, and also of Liberation Theology in particular. Is it really that we commend, or is it rather the innate conservatism of the man, which speaks more of traditional Anglo-Catholicism than biblical faith. Dr. Norman, remember, has not actually told us what he means by "*personal redemption*".

Which way forward for us? Many evangelicals in South America have found that a critical appraisal of the teaching of Liberation Theology with an open Bible has been of considerable value to them in seeing just how they ought to be communicating to the people of their countries. We need to follow their lead, I suggest, in these ways:

1. We need careful, honest, thorough, and faithful exegesis of Scripture, in the grammatico-historical framework of hermeneutics.
2. We need contemporary application of the teaching of Scripture, which means more than spiritualising away the social application of some passages.
3. We need to look realistically at the place of the local community of believers demonstrating that it is salt to the world.
4. We must examine our attitudes and life-styles biblically in the light of the points above, to be sure that we are not guilty of being simply incarcerated in a dying-culture that is no more 'Christian' than any new alternative, the defenders of the status quo by all means.
5. We must above all be proclaiming the timelessness of a Gospel which, by reconciling individuals to God can "*turn the world upside down*". Our best answer is not in words but in the power and "*deep conviction*" brought by the Holy Spirit alone.

Some readers may be interested to be acquainted with some prominent Liberation Theology works:

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Gustavo Gutierrez: A Theology of Liberation
SCM Press 1974

Juan Miguez-Bonino: Revolutionary Theology Comes
of Age SPCK 1975

Juan Miguez-Bonino: Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation
Fortress Press,
Philadelphia 1975

J.L.Segundo: Liberation of Theology Orbis Books,
New York 1976

J.Miranda: Marx and the Bible: a critique of the
Philosophy of Oppression Orbis Books,
New York 1975

To be published before the end of this year:

Andrew Kirk: Liberation Theology, an Evangelical
View from the Third World
Marshall, Morgan and Scott

JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE 1744 CONCERT FOR PRAYER

Rev Derek Swann, BA,BD.(Ashford)

In 1748 Edwards wrote a book, the fruit of a series of sermons delivered to his people at Northampton (N.America), bearing the title "*AN HUMBLE ATTEMPT to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth pursuant to Scripture promises and prophecies concerning the last time*". The sermons were based on Zechariah 8 vs 20-22 and Edwards explains that he was prompted to preach and then write on the subject because of the Scottish Concert for Prayer, 1744.

"In October 1744", he writes, "a number of ministers in Scotland taking into consideration the state of God's Church, and of the world of mankind, judged that the providence of God, at such a day, did loudly call upon such as were concerned

for the welfare of Zion to united, extraordinary applications to the God of all grace, suitably acknowledging Him as the fountain of all spiritual benefits and blessings of his church, and earnestly praying to him, that he would appear in his glory and favour Zion, and manifest his compassion to the world of mankind by an abundant effusion of his Holy Spirit on all the churches and the whole inhabitable earth, to revive true religion in all parts of christendom and to deliver all nations from their great and manifold spiritual calamities and miseries and bless them with unspeakable benefits of the kingdom of our glorious Redeemer, and fill the whole earth with his glory" [Edward's Works vol 2, p282].

He then goes on to give details of the 1744 Concert for prayer. It consisted of two major parts:

a) The setting apart of some time on a Saturday evening and Sunday morning every week for prayer, "as other duties would allow to everyone respectively".

b) The setting apart of the first Tuesday of November, February, May and August, either the whole day or part of the day, "as persons find themselves disposed, or think their circumstances will allow: the time to be spent either in secret prayer or in private praying societies or in public meetings".

Saturday and Sunday were chosen because "these times being so near the time of dispensing gospel ordinances through the christian world, which are the great means, in the use of which God is wont to grant his Spirit to mankind, and the principal means that the Spirit of God makes use of to carry on his work of grace, it may well be supposed that the minds of Christians in general will at these seasons be especially disengaged from secular affairs and disposed to pious meditations and the duties of devotion and more naturally led to

seek the communications of the Holy Spirit and success of the means of grace."

Tuesday was chosen rather than Monday because some people had public prayers and a sermon on that day. It had also been suggested that if "any were hindered from joining with others on the day agreed on, yet they would not wholly neglect bearing their part in the duty proposed, but would take the first convenient day following for that purpose".

Information concerning the Concert was spread by personal conversation and private correspondence rather than by any formal paper, "it was considered how this might give a handle to objections which they thought it best to the utmost to avoid in the infancy of the affair". The Concert was to continue for two years, beginning the first Tuesday of November 1744.

In Scotland, Robert Wightman, an Edinburgh merchant, was informed of the proposed Concert for Prayer by James Erskine and, in replying to William McCulloch of Cambuslang, remarked, "I am thankful to find myself disposed to join this society and providentially called to it. It is very much to my taste, on that very account that it is a secret one, and therefore, if you please, let me creep in amongst you at the throne of grace". He then added, "I wish a precise hour on Saturday evening and Sunday morning were fixed upon because it seems to me to be a material circumstance as it symbolises with celestial worship where such is the union of hearts that unity of voice and words is the natural effect of it" [Edinburgh Christian Instructor Vol 2, 1839].

The driving forces behind the Concert were undoubtedly the Rev William McCulloch of Cambuslang, James Robe of Kilsyth and John Erskine of Glasgow.

But it seems beyond reasonable doubt that the man who did most to establish the Concert was Dr John M'haunn, described by John Brown as "the most profound and eloquent theologian of the eighteenth century". John Gillies, his son-in-law, describes him as "the chief contriver and promoter of the Concert for Prayer" [Edinburgh Christian Instructor Vol 2 1839].

He was born in Argylshire in 1693 at Glenderule and studied philosophy at Glasgow University. His divinity studies were also at Glasgow as well as Holland and in 1723 he settled in a large Glasgow parish. Here his "activity and zeal carried him through a great deal of work. His calls to the sick were frequent. He was often consulted by persons who were thoughtful about their eternal state. He preached once a month to the Highlanders living in Glasgow in their own language. He assisted in concerting measures for the regular maintenance of the poor and particularly, when the erection of the Glasgow Hospital met with considerable obstacles, he promoted this object with great diligence and had a chief hand in composing the printed account of that excellent foundation. In all the schemes for suppressing vice and impiety he was a principal mover and was no less active in carrying them into execution" [M'haunn's Works: Introductory Essay by John Brown].

However, his zeal for true, inward religion was even greater. "About the year 1742 when numbers of people in different parts of the world became uncommonly concerned about their salvation", writes John Brown, "such an appearance engaged all his attention. He was at the greatest pains to be rightly informed about the facts; and having from these fully satisfied himself that it was the work of God, he defended and promoted it to the uttermost of his power. Nothing gave him so much joy as the advancement of vital religion. Being invited by the ministers in whose

congregations the religious concern chiefly appeared [McCulloch and Robe], he cheerfully went and assisted them. He did not consult his own ease nor his reputation among many who would pass for wise and prudent men but sacrificed all to what he is as fully convinced was the work of God".

M'haunn was probably the first minister in Scotland to open up an active correspondence with New England men such as Cooper, Prince and, above all, Jonathan Edwards. The results of his correspondence he circulated freely to his religious friends in Scotland and in turn wrote to his American correspondents about the state of religion in Scotland. So much was his heart in the work that he met once a week with some of his Christian friends in Glasgow and neighbourhood for mutually communicating religious intelligence and to converse on divine subjects. Glasgow became "an emporium of religious intelligence from the colonies" [Revivals of the 18th century with sermons of Whitefield. D.Macfarlan p222f].

It is more than likely that the 1744 Concert for prayer was prompted by some remarks made by Edwards in his work "Some thoughts concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England" 1742. "I have often thought it would be very desirable, and very likely to be followed with a great blessing, if there could be some contrivance for an agreement of all God's people in America who are well affected to this work, to keep a day of fasting and prayer; wherein we should all unite on the same day, in humbling ourselves before God for our past long-continued lukewarmness and unprofitableness; not omitting humiliation for the errors that so many of God's people - though zealously affected towards this work - through their infirmity and remaining blindness and corruption have run into; and together with thanksgiving to God for so glorious and wonderful a display of his power and grace in the late

outpourings of his Spirit, to address the Father of mercies, with prayers and supplications, and earnest cries, that he would guide and direct his own people, and that he would continue and still carry on this work, and more abundantly and extensively pour out his Spirit, and particularly on ministers ... I doubt not but such a thing as I have now mentioned is practicable without a great deal of trouble. Some considerable number of ministers might meet together, and draw up the proposal, wherein a certain day should be fixed at a sufficient distance, endeavouring therein to avoid any other public day that might interfere with the design in any of the provinces, and the business of the day should be particularly mentioned".

In the same section Edwards writes: "If the people of God at this day, instead of spending time in fruitless disputing, in talking about opposers, judging them, and animadverting upon the unreasonableness of their talk and behaviour, and its inconsistency with true experience, would be more silent in this way and open their mouths much more before God, and spend more time in fasting and prayer, they would be more in the way of a blessing. And if some Christians who had been complaining of their ministers and struggling in vain to deliver themselves from the difficulties complained of under their ministry, had said and acted less before men, and had applied themselves with all their might to cry to God for their ministers, had as it were risen and stormed heaven with their humble fervent and incessant prayers for them, they would have been much more in the way of success". [Jonathan Edwards Works Vol 1. p427].

All this Edwards suggested in 1742 and in 1744 the Concert for prayer began in Scotland.

News of the Concert spread. In Wales the matter was taken up at the Trevecka Association, March

29th 1745. "As a proposal was sent from Scotland to keep one day in every three months, beginning Nov 1st a day of prayers for two years and to meet every Sunday morning on account of the late work in England, Scotland, Wales and America, both to praise God for it and intercede and pray for its furtherance and to be humbled for the sins that attended it - we agreed to it - to keep the first of May next (the Quarter's end) and every Sunday morning with as many as we can have and also in private to give it a place in our hearts and time as much as we can every Saturday night and recommend it to others too."

Wesley, who had read Edwards' Narrative of Surprising Conversions not long after his Aldersgate experience and reprinted the work in 1744, also was involved in the Concert. In a letter to the Rev James Erskine he wrote,

Newcastle March 16 1744-5:

Dear Sir,

I sincerely thank you for the transcript of Mr Robe's letter. It shows a truly Christian spirit. I should be glad to have also the note you mention touching the proposal for prayer and praise. Might it not be practicable to have the concurrence of Mr Edwards in New England, if not Mr Tennent also herein? It is evidently one work with what we have seen here. Why should we not all praise God with one heart?

Whoever agrees with us in that account of practical religion in 'The Character of a Methodist' I regard nor what his other opinions are; the same is my brother and sister and mother. I am more assured that love is of God, than that any opinion whatsoever is so. Herein may we increase more and more.

I am dear Sir,

Your most affectionate servant."

In August 1746, a few months before the two years ended, the Scottish brethren met to consider the

future of the Concert and decided to renew it for a further seven years. An account of it was now printed and sent to brethren in England, Wales, Ireland and New England. (500 copies were distributed in almost every county in the province of the Massachusetts Bay, and also in several parts of Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Carolina and Georgia). It was at this point that Edwards added his own spiritual and intellectual weight to the Concert for prayer by producing his *"Humble Attempt"*.

The godly David Brainerd fully supported the Concert. Edwards wrote of a conversation that he had with him just two months before Brainerd died: *"He seemed much to wonder that there appeared no more of a disposition in ministers and people to pray for the flourishing of religion through the world; that so little a part of their prayers were generally taken up about it, in their families and elsewhere; and particularly he several times expressed his wonder that there appeared no more forwardness to comply with the proposal lately made in a Memorial from a number of ministers in Scotland, and sent over to America, for united extraordinary prayer among Christ's ministers and people for the coming of Christ's kingdom; and he sent it as his dying advice to his own congregation that they should practise agreeable to that proposal."* [Edwards' Works Vol II p381].

In a footnote Edwards adds: *"His congregation since this have with great cheerfulness and unanimity fallen in with this advice and have practised agreeably to the proposal from Scotland; and have at time appeared with uncommon engagedness and fervency of spirit in their meetings and united devotions pursuant to that proposal. Also the presbyteries of New York and New Brunswick since this have with one consent fallen in with the proposal as likewise some others of God's people in*

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those parts."

On June 28th 1751 Edwards wrote to John Erskine "What if you dear Sir and other ministers in Scotland ... should now take occasion to inform ministers in the Netherlands of it (the Concert) and move them to come into it and join with us in our united and extraordinary prayers for an universal revival of religion". [*The Cambuslang Revival Fawcett. p226*].

We know that in June 1754 at Glasgow the Concert was re-established for a third period, this time for another seven years. (Gillies Historical Collections Vol II p402 - footnote).

But Edwards' influence in the realm of united extraordinary prayer for an outpouring of the Spirit was not at an end. In April 1784 Dr John Erskine of Edinburgh, one of the early signatories of the Concert, sent a parcel of books to the Northamptonshire Baptist leaders (Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliffe and John Ryland). One of the books it contained was Edwards' *Humble Attempt*, which was duly circulated among them. Fuller writes in his diary, May 11th 1784 "*Devoted this day to fasting and prayer in conjunction with several other ministers who have agreed to spend the second Tuesday in every month to seek the revival of real religion and the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world. July 9th Some serious tenderness of spirit and concerned for the carnality of my heart for some days past. Read to our friends this evening a part of Mr Edwards' 'Attempt to promote prayer for the revival of religion', to excite them to like practice. Felt my heart profited and much solemnised by what I read. July 19th ... read some more Edwards on prayer as I did also last Monday night with sweet satisfaction.*"

In the June of 1784 at the Northamptonshire Association Fuller preached an impressive sermon

'On Walking by Faith' which was afterwards published and with it some notes of Fullers, "A few persuasives to 'A general union in prayer' for the revival of religion". In it seven points are urged:

1. Consider Christ's readiness to hear and answer prayer, especially on these subjects.
 2. Consider what the Lord has done in times past, and that in answer to prayer ...
 3. Let the present religious state of the world be considered to this end ...
 4. Consider what God has promised to do for his church in times to come ...
 5. If we have any regard to the welfare of our countrymen, connexions and friends, let that stimulate us in this work ...
 6. Consider that what is requested is so very small ...
 7. And lastly; It will not be in vain, whatever be the immediate and apparent issue of it ...
- 'Could we but heartily unite and make an earnest effort, there is great reason to hope great good might follow. Whenever these glorious out-pourings of God's Spirit shall come, all over the world, no doubt it will be in answer to the prayers of God's people. But suppose we shall never live to see those days, still our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. God would be glorified, and is this of no moment? It would convey this piece of intelligence to the world, that God has yet some hearty friends in it, who will continue to pray to him in the darkest times. But this is not all: our petitions may prove like seed in the earth, that shall not perish, though it may not spring up in our days. Thus the "prophets laboured, and the apostles entered into their labours" [John 4:38]; and what if we should be the sowers, and our posterity the reapers, shall we grudge at this?"

(Nine months prior to the 1784 Prayer Call a young

man had been baptised and begun preaching, but was not yet a pastor, only 'a poor journey-man shoe maker'. His name? William Carey).

In 1785 the Northamptonshire Association resolved *"without any hesitation, to continue the meetings of prayer on the first Monday evening in every calendar month."* In 1787 at Leicester the decision was renewed and at Warwick. Soon the Yorkshire Baptist Churches followed suit.

In 1789, to meet a growing demand, Sutcliff decided to issue Edwards' *"Humble Attempt"* and in the preface wrote: *"In the present imperfect state, we may reasonably expect a diversity of sentiments upon religious matters. Each ought to think for himself; and everyone has a right, on proper occasions, to show his opinions. Yet all should remember there are but two parties in the world, each engaged in opposite causes; the cause of God and of Satan; of holiness and sin; of heaven and hell. The advancement of the one, and the downfall of the other, may appear exceedingly desirable to every real friend of God and man. If such in some respects entertain different sentiments, and practise distinguishing modes of worship, surely they may unite in the above business. O for thousands upon thousands, divided into small bands in their respective cities, towns, villages and neighbourhood, all met at the same time, and in pursuit of the same end, offering up united prayers like so many ascending clouds of incense before the Most High."*

The Independents, too, felt the power of Edwards' book. At Warwick, in the house of Mr Moody, was convened a meeting of ministers on the 27th June 1793 to consider the momentous question, *"What is the duty of Christians with respect to the spread of the Gospel?"* After conversation and prayer it was solemnly agreed to recognise it as

"the paramount duty of ministers and people to seek it both at home and abroad ... to unite in promoting and recommending it to others ... to commence forthwith contributions for the work" and "to propose to the churches the 1st Monday evening in the month as a season for united missionary prayer" [*Independency in Warwickshire. Sibree and Caston 1855 pl40*].

In 1795 the L.M.S. was formed and in 1814 Rev George Bunder, the Secretary, prepared and published an abridgement of Edwards' '*Humble Attempt*' (It was in that same year, 1814, that John Sutcliffe died. Almost his last words were, "I wish I had prayed more.")

In April 1815, ten days before he died, Fuller wrote in his diary, "We have some who have been giving out of late that if Sutcliffe and some others preached more of Christ and less of Jonathan Edwards, they would have been more useful. If those who talked thus, preached Christ half as much as Jonathan Edwards did, and were half as useful as he was, their usefulness would be double what it is. It is very singular that the mission to the East should have originated with men of these principles, and without pretending to be a prophet, I may say if it ever falls into the hands of men who talk in this strain it will soon come to nothing." [*Fuller's Works pIXXXIV*].

In 1792 the Baptist Missionary Society was formed. "It was this book" (Edwards' *Humble Attempt*) writes Ernest Payne, the Baptist Historian, "that was instrumental in stirring individuals and churches to importunate prayer for revival and the extension of Christ's kingdom. It was the American pamphlet that helped to prepare the way for the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society for the parallel advance in the Northampton Association and for many another movement of the Spirit of God." [*The Prayer Call of 1784. E.A. Payne p5*].

EVANGELICALS AND SOCIAL ACTION -The Place of Exegesis

Rev I.M.Stringer, BA
 (High Wycombe)

"Social Ethics is a growth industry among evangelicals". So observed Alan Gibson in the second issue of *'Foundations'* (p.34). The shelves in our Christian bookshops alone bear witness to this, but there are other signs which confirm this statement. There are organisations such as the Festival of Light, study groups as the Shaftesbury Project and magazines as Third Way. The reaction against the social gospel, if this is a true assessment of why evangelicals retreated into pietism, is over. Some express shame for this pietistic past, but by the swing of the pendulum, a worse danger might confront us, that of an evangelical world view where the Kingdom of God is seen mainly, if not purely, in social terms.

This renewed emphasis on social action has raised certain problems which demand answers. Alan Gibson's article outlined some of these. How is this to be done? In view of our attitude to Scripture, evangelicals should not need to think long over this question. It is through the careful exegesis of the Bible that our whole attitude to social action should be forged. By this way alone can we ensure that our growth industry does not grow into a Frankenstein.

The Evangelical View of the Place of Scripture

The classic evangelical view, as expressed by A.A. Hodge, is that we should *"deduce from the doctrines and precepts of the Bible, rules ... for the guidance of the individual in all the relations of life."* Non-evangelical writers reject this position. N.H.G.Robinson, for instance, considers *"It represents revelation as if it consisted of objective, external, and so far as its*

recipients are concerned, arbitrary truth which is simply set there to be blindly accepted, and of objective, external and similarly arbitrary commands which are likewise set there to be blindly obeyed." [The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p.153]. As we shall see, this is a misunderstanding of the evangelical position, but it indicates that a different view of Scripture will lead to a different view of ethics.

This is not the place to establish the evangelical attitude to Scripture. Once this is accepted, however, it becomes obvious that our ethics should come out of Scripture and we should not read into Scripture what we want to find there. The so called insights of General Ethics cannot help us. It is true that many non-Christians preach Christian values on non-biblical grounds, but that does not mean that there is a Natural Ethic which exists completely independently of revelation. When non-Christians *"do by nature things required by the law, ... they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts."* [Rom.2:14f]. The natural man sees things dimly; the Bible is, to use David Field's phrase, *"God's demister"*. Why should we use the thickly steamed up window of Natural Ethics, when through the Bible things are much clearer?

It must be admitted, however, that we cannot wash ourselves clean of presuppositions when we open the Bible. We are members of a society and have its views fired at us all the time. We mix with particular social groups and incline to different political philosophies. What we should endeavour to do is to recognise these presuppositions, test them by Scripture and amend or perhaps even exchange them.

The Nature of Christian Ethics

The Bible speaks and we must listen. It will soon become clear, however, that the Bible is not an exhaustive directory of social behaviour. We will

look in vain if we expect to find verses explicitly giving instructions on, say, the method of educating our children, the disposal of atomic waste or what to do with micro-processors. It was this characteristic of Scripture which made the Pharisees fill the gaps with their traditions.

A further look will reveal that not every aspect of the Bible's social teaching has the same value. There are the *"weightier matters of the law"* which must be carried out without neglecting the others. This is not simply a league table of priorities, but also a distinction between precepts and principles. The New Testament especially, although it is far from absent in the Old, seeks to get behind the precepts of the law to the principles which produce them. Our Lord's teaching in Matt 5 and the statements that love is the fulfilment of the law are examples of this. Oliver Barclay comments, *"God has given us some rules (e.g. Thou shalt not commit adultery) but a reading of both Old Testament and New Testament soon shows that these are specific applications of wider principles. If it were left at the level of principles many of us would find it hard to apply at all. If it were left at the level of rules we should easily fall into legalism."* [*The Nature of Christian Morality in the symposium, Law, Morality and The Bible, p.142*].

The Biblical ethic, then, includes both precept and principle. The precept illustrates and gives substance to the principle, and the principle explains the precept. This means that an important task of Christian ethics is to find the principles, apply them to the precepts and through this apply them to the modern world. Generally, evangelicals have related these principles to the theme of Creation. This includes the creation ordinances such as marriage, work, subduing the earth; the imitation of the Creator in, for instance, truth, love, faithfulness, justice;

and the spoiling of creation by sin. An example of this last point is our Lord's words on divorce, where the lowering of the creation ideal had to be controlled by legislation (Mark 10:2-9).

Some evangelicals wish to add other themes to that of creation, such as the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom theme is not entirely irrelevant, but it does bring in problems. There can be no doubt that being under Christ's rule affects our attitude to our neighbour, making us more concerned for him. Also, it gives us a stronger commitment to the biblical view of life and enables us to see the fallenness of man much more clearly. On the other hand, if we wish to maintain the distinction between social concern and evangelistic concern, as evangelicals must, then seeing social concern as the imitation of Christ in redeeming the world has obvious dangers. Another consideration is its impact as a major principle. As all men are created and are responsible to their creator whether they accept it or not, Creation Ethics, in the Christian's view, are binding on all men. Non-Christians, however, are not in the Kingdom. It is difficult to see how an ethic based on the Kingdom of God can be related to those who are in the Kingdom of Satan. (For further discussion, see the brief appendix on this subject to A.N. Triton's 'Salt to the World').

Having principles as well as precepts leads to the Biblical Ethic being a reasonable ethic. They are not arbitrary commands, but once the concepts of the Bible are accepted, reasonable ones. As they are built into creation, they can be argued on rational grounds. We do not arrive at our own position by a process of rational argument, the Christian ethic is a revealed ethic, but as God has given the "why" as well as the "what", we are able to hold it together in a logically consistent system which is also compatible with nature.

The question of context must also be taken into

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their textual, biblical and cultural context, then we must agree. This form of proof is hardly exegetical. On the other hand, we must go to the very text of Scripture. Oliver Barclay reports that a respected evangelical leader told him his method was to base his ideas on the general themes of Scripture and not on particular scriptures. He adds this comment: *"The result is a deductive system which can very quickly take off and lose contact with the ways the biblical themes are in fact used."* [Third Way, April 1979, p.31]. It is this thematic approach which seems to be in Bishop Ronald Williams' mind when he says, *"I never find it too easy to prove in so many words from the Bible that pre-marital intercourse is wrong, but I am quite sure that this can be deduced from the whole spirit and message of the Bible"*. [Christian Ethics, 1973 Islington Conference, p.8f]. Is it possible that the Bible as a whole says something that does not arise from the actual text?

We have discussed principles and precepts, but where do we get these principles from? We can easily go astray here and assume that the reason behind certain laws is something akin to modern hygiene or political thinking. Scripture should explain scripture, therefore ethical principles should be demonstrated from the Bible. There is two way traffic here. Exegesis finds the ethical principles and these in turn guide the exegesis of the text.

It is also by careful exegesis that the problem of cultural differences should be met. Some Christians deny that culture should be taken into account at all, considering that it diminishes the authority of the Bible and makes knowledge of ancient social history essential before anyone can understand the Bible. We do not wish to detract from the authority or the clarity of the Bible, but to ignore cultural distance altogether is impossible to do consistently. What it means in practice is that certain passages are ignored or allegorised, which in fact

lowers the authority and clarity of Scripture.

The Bible is a human as well as a divine book. It was written in human languages, which are a part of culture. When originally spoken and written, it was addressed to people with a particular social and cultural background. The Bible itself is aware of cultural differences (e.g. Mark 7:3f). In fact, the Bible can be used as a source book of ancient middle-eastern culture. Most readers of the Bible have some knowledge of biblical culture, much of which is drawn from Scripture itself, but also from other elements including teaching at school and in their churches.

Having said this, it is also true that cultural differences have been overplayed in recent years. The Bible deals with a phenomenon that all cultures know: sin. The various forms that sin takes, such as murder, stealing, lying, pride, oppression, adultery, have not changed. They are all transcultural. Creation Ethics demand that the principles of right and wrong are the same for all cultures, because the one God made all men. The remedy for sin remains the same; the punishment for sin remains the same. What is most important is that the God who reveals himself in the Bible remains the same.

Setting a text in its cultural background does not mean that any of its content can be discarded as untrue to fact, if the standpoint of the text indicates its truth. In the Bible, God speaks to a culture (primarily, not exclusively), not through it. Angels, devils, hell, heaven are not symbols or mythical packing, they are real. There can be no place for radical reconstructions of the biblical message, on the basis that it is an alien culture, to suit the different cultures of today's world. Rather we should apply the biblical theology in its wholeness to our

different cultures to enable us to order ourselves by the biblical standard, and where necessary, to be challenged and changed by it. Modern culture is not the Absolute: Biblical Theology is. The expression of this theology may be different to meet different situations, but the theology itself must remain.

The exegete must identify any cultural context as well as the theological content of the text. The cultural content can then be applied, through the theology behind it, to our own culture. Where, however, the text is transcultural, then it is binding as it stands. Two examples should clarify this. The law on parapets (Deut.22:8) relates to a culture where roofs were flat and people could walk freely on them. The principle is that we are our brother's keeper and are responsible for his safety. Putting parapets on our roofs in Britain would not fulfil this principle, but guards on circular saws and gale warnings to shipping do. On the other hand, laws against bribery are transcultural, *"for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous"* [Lev.23: 8].

Not only the cultural background, but the place in the scheme of Scripture must be clearly seen. We have taken some Mosaic laws as relevant to today, but does this commit us to the food laws or the execution of Sabbath breakers? Unless we have sound principles of interpretation that exegesis can use, we can lead ourselves into dreadful trouble. The effect that the New Testament has on the Old is of relevance here. In the case of the food laws, for instance, it can be seen that our Lord pronounced all foods clean, although we still have to ask what the relevance of Lev.11 is for today. Within the Old Testament itself, we can see historical situations having an effect on the social ethic. We have already mentioned the change that our Lord noted on marriage and divorce. The commands to kill the Sabbath breaker and to wipe

out nations seem to demand setting in their historical contexts. Slightly different is the movement for racial purity in Ezra and Nehemiah. In their proper context, they will not support Apartheid, for it was religious purity that was at stake, as both books state quite clearly.

The whole of Scripture must be taken into account. The principles and precepts can explain each other and counterbalancing themes can have their effect. Not only would the themes of Social Ethics reflect more accurately the Biblical teaching, but also Social Ethics as a whole would take its proper place in the scheme of Christian thought and not take too small or too important a part.

Finally, there is the application of our exegesis to the modern world. Unless the exegete knows today's society, its structure, morality and problems, his Social Ethics will have little practical use. Again, two way traffic is essential. The exegete needs to be aware of the problems of modern society, and Christians in life's thick forest need instruction on how to think through these problems biblically, that is, exegetically.

Exegesis is hard work. There are no valid short cuts. Unless, however, we are content to leave the field to those not committed to this outlook, the hard work must be done.

FORM CRITICISM AND THE GOSPELS

Rev Peter Naylor, M.Th.
(Wellingborough)

Form criticism is basically a method of study of literature both Biblical and extra-Biblical, religious and secular, which attempts to isolate

and classify the alleged original 'forms' which came together to make up the autograph documents, so identifying the processes by which the latter eventually came into being. One of the earliest Biblical form critics was the German Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) who applied the method to the Old Testament. Its application to the New Testament was commenced by Martin Dibelius, K.L. Schmidt and Rudolf Bultmann, amongst others, at about the turn of the century. The name of Bultmann, professor of New Testament studies at Marburg from 1921 to 1951, towers above all others in the realm of form criticism. Accordingly, this paper will try to examine his thinking in some detail.

1. The Philosophical Background to New Testament Form Criticism

Form criticism really needs to be interpreted in the context of a continuum of secular philosophic thought extending from the late 18th century to recent years. There can be little doubt that the flow of philosophical speculation over a period of some one hundred and fifty years has seriously affected critical approaches to Scripture in general and to the Synoptics in particular.

Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) taught that a metaphysical knowledge of God is quite impossible and denied the validity of the traditional proofs for the existence of God. For him faith at best is strictly rational, the moral consciousness being a divine imperative. He conceived religion to be basically a subjective experience deriving in no way from objective revelation.

The idea that reality exists independently of the mind was rejected completely by Georg Hegel (1770-1831). For him genuine experience presupposes the essential unity of the knower and that which is known. While such a unity is explicit in religious experience, it matures in the context of philosophical thinking. Basically pantheistic, Hegel

taught the way of dialecticism - the view that reality is wedded to, rather than appropriated by the self.

Hegel's contemporary, Freidrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), was repelled by the emergent scientific materialism of his day as well as by the earlier philosophic scepticism of Locke and Hume. As a counterbalance he sought to lay the foundations of theology in the emotions and moral imperatives which men possess. Christianity was visualised by him as subjective to the detriment of any objective element, psychology being far more significant than revelation.

The Dane Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) reacted against Hegelian idealism and stressed the infinite gap between this world and the supra-temporal. Such a radical cleavage implied a heavily subjective interpretation of Christianity. Kierkegaard believed that the finite words of men can never express the mind of remote infinity. Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) rejected metaphysics plus those Christian doctrines which could not, in his view, be verified by either history or experience. This led him to posit a radical distinction between the Christ of Christian orthodoxy and the actual Jesus of history.

The flow of thought from Kant to Ritschl laid continual stress upon the subjective aspect of religious experience, notwithstanding the wide divergences of approach between different writers. In more recent times this quasi-religious subjectivism has been accentuated in the existentialist school of thought. An approach to philosophy rather than a doctrinaire credo, existentialism in its secular form flatly denies the existence of God. There have been, nevertheless, existentialists who were nominal Protestants and Catholics, their common denominator

being a disenchantment with external authority and traditional values. Such thinking has exerted a profound influence upon the form-critical process.

2. Liberal Criticism of the Gospels

In the history of Gospel-criticism the key-word is discontinuity, by which is meant a posited disjunction between the teaching and acts of the historic Jesus and the developed theology and kerygma of the primitive Church. Philosophic subjectivism and alleged synoptic discontinuity are the true parents of the mid-20th Century form-critical approach to the Gospels.

Ferdinand Bauer (1762-1860) postulated a clash between primitive Jewish and Hellenistic Christianity. His whole approach was fundamentally anti-supernatural and even anti-theistic. David Strauss (1808-74) was a student of Bauer's at Tübingen and held that the actual life of Christ had become overlaid by the pious fantasies and folk-legend of the early Church. Towards the end of his life he declared that Christianity would finally be superseded by a secular humanitarianism.

Well to the fore theologically by the turn of the century, Adolf Harnack (1851-1930) retained unorthodox views of the miracles and the resurrection, believing that Christian faith is valid quite apart from the historicity of the resurrection.

Following hard upon Harnack came Wilhelm Wrede. Ostensibly repudiating the hard-going liberalism of Harnack he nevertheless upheld the thesis of discontinuity.

Finally, we turn to Albert Schweitzer whose '*Quest of the Historical Jesus*' retained a relatively high view of the historical accuracy of the synoptics, yet rejecting the concept of miracle. Furthermore, he held the remarkable notion that Jesus died with a view to an immediate introduction of the eschatological state but failed to achieve his purpose. Thus, "*The whole history of 'Christianity' down to*

the present day ... is based on the delay of the Parousia ... the abandonment of eschatology ..." Again, there is a fundamental disjunction between Schweitzer's historical Jesus and the Christ of the early kerygma. So emerges his view that *"it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it. Not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from Him ... is that which overcomes the world..."* *"Jesus as a concrete historical personality remains a stranger to our time ..."*

3. Karl Barth

By 1920 the well-established liberal approach to the Synoptics was seen to be highly vulnerable. As R.A. Finlayson remarked, *"the First World War... gave a shattering blow to the theological optimism that was based on the inevitability of human progress. There was also the fact that a new ideology (ie. Communism) had arisen ... and for this the vagaries of Liberalism were no match .."*

Karl Barth brought out his revolutionary exposition of Romans, in 1919. As against the old liberalism, Barth stressed the transcendence of God while at the same time denying the possibility of men knowing God as an objective entity in Himself. Barth divorced Christian faith from objective history and knowledge. For him the Word of God is God speaking personally rather than a book which may be read by all. Thus Scripture becomes a witness, even a divinely ordained witness, to the Word; yet it is not in itself the Word of God. While the theology of divine immanence neglected to emphasise the transcendence of God, Barthian dialectic stressed the latter to the neglect of the former. A consequence is that since revelation is allegedly supra-historical, Scripture becomes divine revelation only when God deigns to confront the Bible-reading individual. Of themselves the Scriptures convey no infallible,

objective knowledge of the wholly-other God.

Barth's protest against the older liberalism brings him full circle back to the subjectivism of traditional philosophy. Subjective experience alone is the arbiter of true religion with no essential submission to any historical revelation. This leads directly to the position where the historical accuracy of the Gospel records becomes arguably irrelevant. Thus the apparent revolt of Barthian dialectic theology can be interpreted as little more than a disguised recrudescence of an older, well-established unorthodoxy. This needs to be borne in mind because Bultmann, the virtual figure-head of form-criticism, emerged under the panoply of Barthian dialecticism.

4. Bultmann - the Revolt against Dialectical Theology

Wrede's thesis concerning the so-called 'Messianic secret' was a major factor in Bultmann's development of the idea that the Gospels are less historical accounts of the life of Jesus and more theologically orientated products of the early Christian communities. Bultmann held that upon close scrutiny the Gospels could be reduced to basic units, or forms, which had grown up in an early, oral stage of the Christian tradition, a sort of tunnel period between the life of Jesus and the eventual production of the Gospels as we now have them. Furthermore, he highlighted those logia of Jesus which, in his terminology, call for 'decision' and felt able to assert that *'The real significance of the 'Kingdom of God' for the message of Jesus lies in any case not in the dramatic events associated with its coming ... It does not interest Jesus at all as a condition, but rather as the transcendent event, which signifies for man the great either-or, which compels man to decision.'* By 'transcendent event' Bultmann means that which is both non-historical and supra-historical. Together with the miraculous he

flatly denies orthodox eschatology.

i) Bultmann and the Liberal Quest for the Historic Jesus.

A principle formative influence in the thinking of Rudolf Bultmann was his reaction against the historic Jesus posited by the older liberal school as represented, for example, by Schweitzer. Bultmann early believed that because investigation into the historicity of the Gospel records is so fraught with uncertainty it is better to pin one's personal faith neither upon the emasculated Jesus of liberal rationalism nor upon the more deeply coloured Jesus of orthodox Christianity. So he claims that *"To believe in the cross of Christ does not mean to concern ourselves with a mythical process wrought outside of us and our world, or with an objective event turned by God to our advantage, but rather to make the cross of Christ our own ... In its redemptive aspect the cross of Christ is ... a permanent historical fact originating in the past historical event which is the crucifixion of Jesus."* In his frustration with liberal scepticism and his despair that we can ever recapture the historical Jesus Bultmann seeks a dynamic faith which becomes ultra-subjective and which is based, in effect, on the by now traditional idea of discontinuity between Jesus as he was and the theologically modelled Christ of the primitive kerygma. So, for instance, he allows himself the devastating view that *"Easter Day ... is nothing else than the rise of faith in the risen Lord, since it was this faith which led to the apostolic preaching. The resurrection itself is not an event of past history."*

ii) Bultmann and existential philosophy

The potentially atheistic existentialism of Martin Heidegger colours Bultmann's approach to the New Testament although Bultmann would have repudiated the charge of atheism. Yet the

influence is there and comes out, for example, in this assertion: *"The essence of history cannot be grasped by 'viewing' it, as we view our natural environment ... When (an individual) turns his attention to history, however, he must admit himself to be a part of history ... He cannot observe this complex objectively ..."*

iii) Bultmann versus Barth

In the earlier years of the 20th Century it seemed as if Bultmann would remain no more than a disciple of Barth. Yet this was not to be. Apart from his reaction against the late-19th Century theology of immanentism, liberal scholarship and a pre-World War 1 optimistic view of human progress, Bultmann was wedded to a view which postulated a cleavage between primitive Judaistic and Hellenistic Christianity. Thus his commentary upon John's Gospel suggested the latter's dependence upon Gnostic belief. Although he agreed with Barth in reacting against the way in which liberals sifted hopefully through the Gospels in order to recover some fragments of the authentic words and deeds of Jesus and although they were at one in asserting that Jesus of Nazareth does not provide a truly historical foundation for that kerygma which sinners need so much and which compels us to decision about the Saviour, Bultmann exceeded Barth in claiming that the early-Church kerygma was not concerned with the historicity of the Gospel accounts. Barth never went quite that far.

A prime reason for the formal divorce between historicity and kerygma was the view that a historically based Gospel must be incredible for modern man, scientifically conditioned as the latter is. Ancient mythical cosmology will not stand the test of 20th Century scientific discrimination. So, in his *'Kerygma and Myth'* [ET 1953], Bultmann writes that *"a sacrifice of the intellect ... could have only one result - a curious form of schizophrenia and insincerity ... It is impossible to use*

electric lights and the wireless ... and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles."

Eventually there was something of a break between the two men, Bultmann teaching his pupils (not without reason) that Barth had only dealt in a partial fashion with the underlying dialectical existentialism of his own theology and that his own (ie. Bultmann's) was more thorough-going. In fact by 1932 Barth had made a somewhat hollow rejection of existentialism. Bultmannianism, triumphant in the post-2nd World War period, was effectively an amalgam of the old liberalism and a Christianised existentialism, a perfectly understandable union between discontinuity and subjectivism.

iv. Bultmann's historiography

Bultmann's understanding of the nature of history needs to be noted because, as a senior patriarch of form criticism, he retained certain definite views of history when approaching documents which claim to be historically accurate.

For Bultmann history was a bypath leading away from the dominant concept of existential encounter and mutual adaptation between oneself and the kerygma.

He insisted that our relationship to history is quite different from our relationship to nature. While man is not a part of nature, which he can view objectively, he is a part of the flow of history, the examination of which involves existential dialogue or interpenetration. To quote Bultmann, the only form of history is to regard Jesus "*as a part of the history in which we have our being, or in which by critical conflict we achieve being*".

He denied the propriety of making value judgments about alleged historic events, claiming that "*The dialogue (with history) does not come*

as a conclusion, as a kind of evaluation of history, after one has learned the objective facts. On the contrary, the actual encounter with history takes place only in the dialogue."

With regard to Jesus, Bultmann finds it impossible to know whether Jesus held himself to be the Messiah or not and considers that the question of Messianic self-consciousness is unimportant. Like that of any other man, the work of Jesus is to be defined as *"the end they really sought, and it is in connection with their purpose that they are the proper objects of historical investigation."* Yet how can we define the end which Jesus sought if we cannot discover whether or not He believed Himself to be the Messiah? But such questions would not worry Bultmann unduly. Indeed, for him historicity can be dangerous because preoccupation in this area can come between the believer and the Christ of the kerygma: *"God withholds Himself from view and observation. We can believe in God only in spite of experience, just as we can accept justification only in spite of conscience. Indeed, de-mythologizing is a task parallel to that performed by Paul and Luther in their doctrine of justification by faith alone without the works of law."*

5. Assumptions of Form Criticism

The various influences underlying the form-critical approach to the Gospels work themselves out in a series of logical, inter-related propositions, some of which seem to be as follows:-

i. Between the lifetime of Jesus and the completion of the Gospels as they now exist there was a quite distinct period of oral transmission of material concerning the life and times of Jesus.

ii. That with the notable exception of the Passion narratives and certain other accounts, these oral 'packets' circulated in the primitive

Church as self-contained and not necessarily related units.

iii. That these units may be classified in various literary patterns. Bultmann himself identified the following separate forms, which collectively tell us a great deal about the original life-settings or Sitz im Leben of the early Christians:

Miracle stories - miracles without teaching material attached.

Apothegms - brief narratives ending with a saying of Jesus.

Legends - because the early Christians were interested in other people as well as Jesus they formed legends about them (eg. Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration.)

Myths - by which Bultmann means the expression of spiritual reality in terms of human experience (eg. the descending dove). While myth is not necessarily unhistorical, it is normally accepted as such.

The sayings of Jesus - wisdom words, 'I' words, prophetic and apocalyptic sayings, law words, rules and parables.

In most of these sayings of Jesus any surviving logia may be recognised principally where a call to decision is to be discerned (such as in the parables) and where it is felt by the critic that there was no need for the early community to create fresh material in its own interests. All in all, Bultmann accepts some forty sayings only as genuine. Yet, for philosophical reasons, this paucity does not matter very much to him.

iv. That the practical interests of the primitive Christian communities produced these forms.

Dibelius held that missionary enterprise in the early Church was, in fact, the dominant influence in the structuring of the forms. The needs of the early kerygma demanded authenticating narrative for use by three allegedly separate types of Christian worker - preachers, teachers and narrators. While Dibelius held that interpretative material was produced by the Church to faithfully represent the teaching of Jesus, Bultmann went much further and ascribed a purely inventive genius to the communities. So for him the plucking of the ears of corn is basically a product of the post-Easter Church in defence of a relaxed attitude to the Jewish Sabbath.

v. That the initial forms which underly the Gospels may be recovered by dint of critical examination. This means that the extant material less original forms roughly approximates to the authentic teaching of Jesus.

vi. For Bultmann and other radical form-critics it has been axiomatic that these traditional forms have no chronological or geographical value. Thus the historicity of the Gospels is even further impoverished.

vii. That the authenticity of apparent 'eye-witness' material in the Gospels is to be largely discounted, being a product of the theological creativity of the early Church.

viii. That the developed Christology of the New Testament does not find its roots in the teaching of Jesus. Bultmann's denial of the historical resurrection, already mentioned, demonstrates this clearly.

ix. In keeping with the idea of early-Church creativity, Bultmann upheld the old liberal notion of a cleavage between Hellenistic and Jewish Christianity. Thus he writes concerning Matthew 5:17-19 that it "*records the attitude of the conservative Palestinian community in*

contrast to that of the Hellenists."

6. Form Criticism Criticised

Writing in 1966 Carl Henry commented that "Today the search is under way for an alternative to Bultmann ... We can chart this search for an alternative to Bultmann in three steps: first, the revolt of Bultmann's disciples against Bultmann; second, the sharp disagreement among the post-Bultmannians themselves; third, the growing vitality of the anti-Bultmannians."

Ernst Kasemann criticised Bultmann's existential approach initially in the early fifties by asserting that although it is not possible to produce a psychological and chronological reconstruction of the life of Jesus, a total or near-complete rejection of Gospel historicity opens the existential critic to the charge of Docetism, the early heresy which divorced Christian faith from the historic God-man of the four Gospels. Accordingly, Christianity becomes in effect a Gnostic redemption-myth. Kasemann was not alone, and thus has arisen in very recent times the European Heilsgeschichte School of New Testament scholarship, usually referred to in England as the 'New Quest of the Historical Jesus', the title of a 1959 publication by J.M. Robinson. Such names as Pannenberg, Cullmann, Nygren and Thielicke are prominent among researchers of a somewhat less liberal viewpoint. As R.A. Finlayson expresses it: "*The claim made by Form Criticism that the New Testament does not provide a reliable report of the historical Jesus is now weakening before a recognition of the continuity of the teaching of the primitive Church with that of Jesus and the apostles.*"

We may summarise certain criticisms which must be faced by the form-critical approach to the Gospels:

- i. The alleged dichotomy between oral and

written transmission of authentic material is arguably unproven, unjustified and unnecessary. While material must have been handed down verbally (eg. Galatians 1:18), the deeds and dicta of Jesus would have been committed to writing at a very early date (eg. Luke 1:1f). The accuracy of recorded eye-witness testimony cannot be discounted.

ii. The whole Bultmannian concept of early-Church creativity is entirely vulnerable. If the primitive communities did not derive their refined Christology from the life, deeds, death and resurrection of the historical Jesus, from what source did it come? It must have come from somewhere. Equally, why should the early Church have built a developed Christology and a virtually systematised form of religion upon a man who, as alleged by Bultmann, did not really know whether or not he was the Messiah. These related questions of derivation and motivation must be answered. D. Guthrie pertinently asks if the early martyrs would have suffered and died for a Saviour born of community-inspiration. This is an entirely proper query. Form critical assumptions lose credibility when, for example, we read the early martyrologies.

iii. Recent historical research, and especially the discovery of the Qumran literature, has helped to close or even cancel the alleged gap between early Jewish and Hellenistic Christianity, thus weakening the idea of discontinuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the kerygma.

iv. The ethics of a supposed primitive Church theological inventiveness are disreputable, yet an examination of this issue does not, it would seem, loom large in the usual form-critical expositions. If invention/false attribution is the same thing as perversion, does not form-criticism lose much of its credibility?

v. Form-criticism was born of a dissatisfaction with the late 19th Century liberal approach to the

historic Jesus and with various open-ended documentary source hypotheses. Yet form-criticism has been no more successful than they in solving the question of Gospel origins.

vi. Bultmannian historiography will not bear criticism. He separates science and history without adequate grounds, at the same time requiring a presuppositionless approach to history while accepting a sort of subjective competence in the approach. When this is worked out it means that the observer will lecture history rather than history lecture the observer. In either case there can hardly be any question of the give and take of dialogue. Further, existential philosophy, divorced from historicity, is meaningless and void. If a Christian dialogue with history is principally submission to the teaching and lordship of the man Christ Jesus, then let us by all means pursue such a dialogue. If, on the other hand, we cannot treat with the historic Jesus then the achievement of being by dialogue is nonsensical phraseology. Whatever can it mean? A kerygma, even an apostolic kerygma, not based squarely upon historical realities is incredible for us. Not only do we not know how and why the kerygma was developed originally, we fail to see why we should respond to it today in terms of repentance and faith.

vii. It is true that the post-Easter Church developed its theology. Yet this was under the direction of the glorified Christ and was based on the factuality of the incarnation and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (eg. John 14:25, Acts 1:1 et al.) Development means continuity, not disjunction. Not only do the Gospels compel us to gaze upon and believe in a man amongst men, the letters, Acts and Revelation drive us even further in our interpretation and application of all that He did and said. If there is nothing static in the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus,

neither is there anything staccato. Moreover, the New Testament calls us to faith and then speaks to the faithful. Conversion ('decision' in the Bultmannian vernacular) is not the only theme.

viii. The form-critical approach comes from a school of thought which was far from unbiased in its approach to the Gospels. This paper has tried to point out the essential continuum connecting rationalistic criticism and speculative philosophy over a large number of years. The neo-Biblicism of Barthian theology and the reassuring phrases coming from post-Bultmannian developments should not veil the fact that, historically, much liberal criticism has been and is offered by writers who have seemed to possess an entirely inadequate conception of God. The vocabulary of Barthian crisis theology and existential 'reality' relates far more to old fashioned secular subjectivism (ie. unbelief) than to evangelical Christianity. It is no surprise that the message of this philosophy is discontinuity, the notion that the theology of 'Acts' onwards plus the alleged accretions which have found their way into the Gospels cannot be an inscripturated and inspired revelation from the transcendent yet immanent God of all grace. To the Christianised existentialist there can be no such God. He would wish to reason that the kerygma, not coming from the Jesus of history, must have been produced by the Church without supernatural interposition and was so produced for the purposes of self-justification and expansion. This is the rationale beneath form-criticism in its most accentuated presentations. It asks us to bravely confront the contrived and unhistorical Christ of the kerygma and then seems to tell us that we can and even should rediscover a more or less authentic, demythologised, Jesus. Where do we stand? What or whom do we want? What is our need? In the final analysis Bultmannian form-criticism is irresolute. All is uncertain.

ix. Finally, Bultmann is on record as denying the physical resurrection of the Lord. It seems such a pity that so many scholarly writings about the New Testament apparently consider him as a constructive and helpful authority always to be referred to in the realm of Gospel origins, a subject as truly fascinating as it is important. Take account of his views and those of his school we must, yet at the same time we bear in mind some relevant apostolic advice: *"For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you"* [1 Corinthians 11:19].

BOOK REVIEWS

The Evangelical Succession in the Church of

England edited by D.N.Samuel. Published by James Clarke £2.75

'The Evangelical Succession' comprises seven addresses given in 1977 at the Lincoln conference of the Protestant Reformation Society. According to the Introduction the purpose of the conference was to go back to the roots of evangelicalism and reformed teaching in the Church of England in order, firstly, to give evangelicals in the C of E a sense of identity at a time when there is an element of uncertainty about the distinctive marks of evangelicalism, and secondly, to give a sense of continuity with those in the past who held the same biblical doctrines and thirdly, to give encouragement by the remembrance of the triumph of God's truth in previous days.

The fundamental argument of the book is stated by Rev D.N.Samuel in the Introduction: *"What we recognize in the Reformers is the teaching of the Church of England."* The Church may have lost

sight of that teaching many times; in fact it is obviously in eclipse at the present time. But just as in the eighteenth century the Evangelical Awakening brought those same doctrines to clear light again, so today evangelical Anglicans must commit themselves to the *"upholding and promoting of them in the life of the Church"*, and pray for God to grant revival to the Church of England to-day.

In the opening essay, Mr D.A. Scales of Cambridge pinpoints excellently three crucial Reformation doctrines which evangelicals must maintain. The first is the infallibility, inerrancy and supremacy of Scripture in matters of faith. Tradition and reason must submit to Scripture, which is both divine in its origin and perfectly clear in its fundamental doctrines. The second is the doctrine of the Atonement and the Lord's Supper. The Reformers proclaimed a substitutionary atonement and a clear doctrine of justification by faith alone. This was basic to all liturgical statements in the Prayer Book, where the essential emphasis was on God speaking to man. By contrast, in the Series 3 Communion Service any statement of the substitutionary atonement is absent, and the emphasis has moved away from God's Word to man to man's offering to God. Moreover, as the Reformers emphasised, faith in the heart of the recipient is crucial to the whole service, whereas in Series 3 the emphasis falls on the elements themselves and their inherent virtue rather than on the state of the recipient. It is not surprising that the impression is given in Series 3 that the communion service is the main meeting of the week, and that baptised children are allowed to the table. The third emphasis of Mr Scale's paper is on preaching. He suggests that the decline in the Church of England is directly related to the decline of preaching and that even evangelicals may have lost their nerve at this point.

He concludes with some searching and timely comments about the modern reluctance to define 'evangelical' in terms of doctrine; the modern danger of confusing worship with entertainment; and the modern ecumenical tendency to seek involvement with those who deviate from the biblical faith. He urges *"those who have an earnest conviction of the truth of the Biblical Gospel to stand fast and bear witness, not being distracted by half truths and compromise"*.

The Rev B.G.Felce of Preston has written an interesting article summarizing Toplady's *'Historical Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England'* (1774). Toplady lamented the fact that the majority of the members of the Church of England in his day had departed from these doctrines; although in theory the Church possessed them, in practice it denied them. *"In the desk we are verbal Calvinists ... but no sooner do we ascend a few steps above the desk we forget ... and tag the performance with a few minutes entertainment from Pelagius and Arminius ... not to say by Arius, Socinus and others ..."*

There is a helpful paper by Rev P.H.Buss of Fulham entitled: *'From Laud to Waterland'*. Mr Buss evaluates the important seventeenth century, arguing that despite the many deviations from the Reformers, the restored Church of the 1660s saw the reinstatement of the Protestant heritage so that *"it is not evangelicals who have been subsequently embarrassed by the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal, the Homilies and the Articles"*.

A valuable chapter on the nineteenth century is written by Rev D.S.Allister of Hyde. It highlights the significant fact that there were a large number of evangelicals within the Church of England during the last century, from evangelical bishops to prominent laymen. Conditions seemed as favourable as they could be for

evangelicalism to dominate. But in fact it went into serious decline for several reasons, including an absence of deep theological initiative, a tendency towards pragmatism, and, of course, the rise of Tractarianism. This is a salutary historical corrective to the somewhat naive contemporary assumption that the Church of England is becoming increasingly evangelical.

David Samuel's stimulating chapter, *'The Challenge of the Twentieth Century'* argues that the real problem confronting evangelicals within the Church of England today has its roots in the Oxford Movement, when doctrinal contradictions were allowed to remain in the Church. By now, they co-exist within the Church. External unity has been bought at the expense of truth. Tractarianism introduced a new form of comprehensiveness - no longer that of a basic Reformation doctrinal position allowing generosity of interpretation and charity over things indifferent, but that of the juxtaposition of contradictory views. The struggle was now between popery and Protestantism - a struggle which made real union impossible.

The Church of England, therefore, refused to exercise discipline over Tractarianism. Similarly, it has refused to discipline liberalism. It was "*drawn into doctrinal compromise and confusion*". The policy was that of appeasement and expediency. Before Tractarianism there had been a consensus of doctrine for 300 years - with differing schools of interpretation. But now diametrically opposite views were held together in tension, and given the euphemistic label "*differing insights*".

Moreover, whereas a previous generation of evangelicals affirmed their firm opposition to doctrinal deviations from the norm, many modern evangelicals have abandoned the old historical moorings in the Articles and Prayer Book. They assent to them in theory, but deny them in practice. Mr Samuel quotes from the Nottingham

Statement: "we are concerned lest any revision should give greater weight to the concepts of petition for the departed, eucharistic sacrifice or permanent reservation of the elements", and comments "but no concern is expressed for their removal!" Neo-evangelicals have adopted a new policy, that of co-operation with all traditions.

He concludes by arguing for the primacy of doctrine, for a true understanding of comprehensiveness, and for a firm commitment to the Protestant character which, he argues, the Church of England still possesses.

The final article is by Rev Roger Beckwith of Oxford and is called 'Keele, Nottingham and the future'. He suggests that many evangelicals no longer believe that theirs is the true theology of the Church of England, but merely a permitted insight. A generation of "young activists of unconventional views" has tended to dominate Keele and Nottingham, and some of "them have ceased to be conservative even on the Bible". At Nottingham evangelical essentials were largely taken for granted when it had become urgent for them to be reaffirmed. Nottingham concentrated almost wholly on other matters, and the Nottingham Statement must rank as an appendix to the Keele Statement, and "an appendix of doubtful value at many points".

Mr Beckwith's lucid article concludes with three grounds for reassurance. (1) The 39 Articles remain, with a subscription requirement "not significantly different in meaning from the old declaration". (2) The Prayer Book of 1662 holds precedence over subsequent revised services. And (3) since the failure of the Anglican-Methodist scheme of union and the admitting of Free Churchmen to the Lord's Table in the Church of England, union with other Churches is unlikely. Therefore the Church of England will continue to remain a distinct body characterised by its Reformation

marks of being a) reformed and biblical, b) liturgical, c) national and established, d) paedobaptist, e) parochially organized, and f) episcopal.

There is a great deal in these articles to admire and applaud. Not least is David Samuel's magnificent sermon on the reformation under Asa, recorded in 2 Chronicles 15. That reformation began with a sermon. There follows a stirring plea for the primacy of preaching. That reformation was carried on with courage. We need to be men of principle and not expediency. That reformation restored true worship. True religion is marked by inwardness, God-centredness, and spiritual vitality. That reformation led to others being converted when they heard what was happening in Judah. *"Let us seek a genuine work of God in the Church, and the outreach will take care of itself."* Finally, in that reformation the people began to seek God with all their heart. They wanted to know God as a living reality, and sought Him until they found Him. The book is worth buying for this sermon alone.

Equally heartening is the strong emphasis given to the great doctrines of the Reformation and the need to apply them throughout the life of the Church. *"We deplore those who speak of the Reformation as a tragedy."* *"The oneness we value is oneness in the truth."* It is encouraging to know that there are men in the Church of England who think biblically and theologically, and who are unashamed to argue and act on doctrines such as the inerrancy of Scripture and the substitutionary atonement, and who stand out for preaching, seriousness of attitude and revival. Here are men who are prepared not only to affirm the great positives of the faith but who are also prepared to oppose denials of that faith.

'The Evangelical Succession' is also a very honest book. It faces squarely the present trends among

neo-evangelicals, and is anxious to call them back to foundations. It freely admits the lack of discipline within the Church of England, a Church which despite its clear doctrinal basis nevertheless allows men to remain within it although they openly profess views which contradict that basis.

In fact this is the crucial issue: discipline. Roger Beckwith states that the Church of England is "*a reformed, biblical Church (but suffering, like other churches, from a lack of discipline)*". In other words there is a serious disparity between what the Church says and what it does. It says it believes in the substitutionary atoning death of our Lord, in His absolute deity, in justification by faith alone, but it refuses to do anything about those who deny these truths. It is not surprising then, that people ask whether the Church really does believe these doctrines. The way a Church applies its beliefs will demonstrate whether or not it is really committed to them. Toplady said that a man can be Calvinistic at his desk but Pelagian in his practice. If the Church of England, or any other Church for that matter, allows views which are diametrically opposed to its doctrinal position, we are surely justified in wondering whether its commitment to that position is anything more than a paper commitment.

One has every sympathy with the authors of '*The Evangelical Succession*' in their courageous efforts to make the Church in practice what it claims to be in theory. But we also wonder, in the light of history and present developments, how long Anglo-Catholicism, Liberalism, and Evangelicalism can continue to co-exist, and the Church still call itself "*a Protestant Church*".

Mr Buss in his paper on the seventeenth century makes the observation that "*the numbers of true evangelicals in spirit, active evangelicals with*

an apostolic enthusiasm, the true heirs of Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Bilney, and their ilk, were to be found increasingly outside the Church of England." That was because they wanted a thorough reformation of the Church in practice as well as in doctrine, believing that the Bible was infallible not only in matters of faith, but also in matters of Church order. When it became clear to them that such a thorough reformation was not going to occur they sadly withdrew from the Church. Mr Scales writes: *"We find true unity and fellowship more with those who share with us the great doctrines of the Scriptures and the Reformation, whatever their denomination, than with members of our own Church who reject these doctrines."* Yet he also says: *"we are fully committed to the Church of England - as she is by her formularies delineated and as she ought to be, not to the de facto deviations of the day."* Here is a clear statement of the dilemma confronting many of our evangelical brethren within the Church of England. They need our prayers and our encouragement. May God continue to give them courage and conviction, enabling them to follow through the implications of their biblical stand.

Rev Andrew Davies, MA
(Chessington)

A History of Christian Doctrine edited by

Herbert Cunliffe Jones, assisted by
Benjamin Drewery. T & T Clark Ltd
Edinburgh 1978 601 pages £11.80

This book, published in the International Theological Library Series, aims to replace G.P. Fisher's *'History of Christian Doctrine'* and follows the broad lines of Fisher's work. The subject is treated in close relationship to General History as well as the faith and life of the Church. The general tone of the book may be gathered from the introduction which discusses

the possibility and the formulation of theological doctrine, its developments and upheavals and particularly its relation to sociology and philosophy for *"there seems no escape from the fact that the philosopher has the right to judge whether or not the terms that the theologian is asking is meaningful."* [p.19]

Apart from the editorial introduction there are ten contributors. Thus, it is held, Fisher's comprehensiveness is avoided and students encouraged to consult the texts. Further, a multiple approach is designed to *"do justice to all standpoints of Christian tradition"*, besides, *"history is essentially fact plus interpretation and where interpretations differ widely there may well be different opinions about what the facts actually are."*

G.W.H.Lampe gives a clear and competent discussion of the Patristic Period in about 160 pages. His statements are well documented and while much of the material is, necessarily, not new, some of the Fathers - at least for your Reviewer - have fresh light cast on them. Origen's Logos doctrine and his view of salvation receive close attention. In the Post Nicean period Athanasius and his working out of Trinitarian theology is dealt with in some detail. Difficulty in reconciling the Logos with the weakness and suffering of the flesh brings the Christology of Athanasius to where it *"clearly verges on the dectic."*

Augustine's theology is discussed and compared with the views of Pelagius and others. Following a chapter on the Christological Controversies we have a chapter on salvation, sin and grace which goes into a long historical background of the contending views of Augustine and Pelagius. Some discussion of Augustine's own presuppositions might have been helpful here: that faith precedes knowledge and is the key to knowledge; also where he placed authority, *"to the canonical*

scriptures alone I owe agreement without any dissent."

A short chapter on the '*Church and Sacraments*' leans heavily on the views of Cyprian and Augustine.

The second section pp 183-225 entitled '*Christian Theology in the East. 6000 to 1453 by Kallistos Ware*' makes most interesting reading. Byzantine Theology, with its marked reverence for tradition, seemed set in a "*theology of repetition*" developing into formalism. Our author claims that mysticism is necessary to dogma, or it becomes a mere mental exercise, and mysticism must become theological or be heretical. The iconoclast controversy should not be seen as a question of Christian art but as raising questions about God's creation and man's place in it. Separation from Rome is considered from the viewpoint of the Eastern Church and 1204 rather than 1054 should date the schism. The exclusion of the filioque is, of course, defended with an interesting addendum: "*From the Orthodox point of view, the Reformers went wrong in this as in a number of other matters, not because they were too radical, but because they were not radical enough.*"

The Middle Ages (604-1350) passes in 60 pages from the death of Pope Gregory I to the death of William of Ockham. After writing on the Monothelite, the Spanish Adoptionist and the Filioque controversies, the doctrine of Penance and Indulgences Anselm, Abelard and Bernard are studied as representatives of "*the age of revival and reform*". For "*the golden age of scholasticism*" the teachings of Bonaventure and, in greater detail, Aquinas are reviewed. Thomas' views of God, the Incarnation, sin and grace are severally treated in the light of his philosophic background which we are told needed "*a complete and ordered system of rational thought as a foundation and instrument for subsequent theological construction*"

p.271. Aquinas' emphasis on the contemplative and active side of individual life, with its far-reaching influence on the Christian Church merits special notice by the student of history.

E.Gordon Rupp has a section on '*Christian Doctrine from 1350 to the eve of the Reformation*'. He gleans from the history of men like Wyclif, Hus, Biel and particularly Erasmus, "*the greatest figure of the northern Renaissance.*"

Benjamin Drewery introduces us to the Reformers with a clear and sympathetically written statement of Luther's theology; first his theology in the making and then in its matured form. Students will be interested in following a discussion of Luther's Sola Fide that says, "*The decisive point is that here, par excellence, Luther is thinking coram Deo. Sola Fide is not an item in a doctrinal series ... it is rather the setting of the whole enquiry in a divine context.*"

Luther's thought on God, man, law, the knowledge of God and human reason are examined. The pages on the '*Two Kingdoms*' merit careful reading; while a more extended discussion of Church and Sacraments and the use of references would have been helpful.

Basil Hall gives 17 pages on Zwingli where he traces differences from Luther as stemming from distinct patristic traditions plus "*a more thorough-going Erasmianism.*" The Reformer's doctrine of scripture and of the sacraments are stated and their influence noted. E.Gordon Rupp adds a short chapter on Melancthon and Bucer with attention drawn to Bucer's apologetical work.

T.H.L.Parker in 12 pages on Calvin sets out to "*expound briefly the 1559 'Institutio'.*"

H.F.Woodhouse has a chapter on '*Sixteenth-Century Anglican Theology*' that indicates the

thought then given to the doctrine of the church.

R. Buick Knox follows with the '*History of Doctrine in the seventeenth century*' where he reviews developments from Trent, Dort, Arminius, the Caroline Divines, the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration to 'Rational Theology' and the Latitudinarians. The chapter is well referenced.

The concluding chapter, '*Christian Theology in the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*' by John H. S. Kent (130 pages) begins with the statement that the period was one in which the church was on the defensive "*against wave after wave of criticism from both inside and outside organised Christianity.*" Special attention is given to the doctrine of the church and social theology in the whole period. "*Religion had to be recast and the first step toward that was an understanding that the language of the gospels was fluid, passing and literary.*" Revelation gives place to reason. In a section on the doctrine of the church in the whole period a variety of conflicting ideas appear: Newman's authoritarian supernatural society, Kirkegaard's individualism, Bultmann's notion of the church as an eschatological phenomenon which might possess time visibility and the "*growing feeling ... that new forms of the ecclesia must be allowed to manifest themselves as society transformed itself.*"

An interesting and informative section on social theology in the period notes the distinct motivations of Christian Socialism and Communism, the place of the family, violence in society and the general outworking of the Christian ethic. In bringing the history of doctrine up to the present day it appears that Troeltsch's view of what is tolerable to "*the educated mind*" seems to be the structuring principle. Tennent's efforts to bring religion and science are considered. Tillich's existentialism, Barth's reaction against liberal Protestantism, Bultmann's demythologizing approach

to the New Testament together with the general secularization of the West leads to the unhappy conclusion that *"pure theology had only an ecclesiastical environment, it had no other social roots by the 1970s."*

This is a serious academic work and the student will find it valuable, particularly for the study of the Patristic and Pre-Reformation history of doctrine. Of the Reformers Luther comes off best. Your reviewer found the chapter on Calvin disappointing. In a book that is at pains to set theological statement in a cultural nexus Calvin's distinctives in social teaching, so long influential in the west, would appear worthy of notice. While agreeing that individual points of view cannot all be considered one could expect reference to the work of more conservative writers, particularly on the doctrine of Scripture which is possibly more a symbol of division in our times than social considerations. In spite of what the editor says in his preface concerning the value of the multiple approach the book is uneven. The indices appear short and a new edition should correct about a dozen misprints in the second half. It is a good book for classwork along with Fisher.

Professor James Mackintosh
(Glasgow)

Wrestling with Romans by J.A.T. Robinson.
Published by S.C.M. Press
pp.147 £1.95 p/b

This book is not a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans but the written-up lectures on the Epistle which were given by Dr Robinson in Cambridge in the 50's and early 70's. As such it provides an extremely useful critical introduction together with a summary of the message, 'wrestling' at greater length with the crucial areas of interpretation. The major textual

problems are helpfully discussed in some detail (see e.g. Romans 8:28 on p.104-5; 8:33 on p.107-8 and 9:5 on p.111). The reviewer found the format adopted very helpful since it prevented one from getting bogged down and unable to see the wood from the trees - we could do with more such books. In view of this the book could be useful to the student who has to specialise in the study of Romans (especially within a critical context) since it provides both a basic orientation to Romans and, probably, a useful pre-examination refresher course.

While, however, there are some extremely helpful discussions of particular subjects e.g. the relationship between Revelation and natural theology (p.22) and the problem of Romans 7; and, while Dr Robinson would appear to go no further than John Murray in his rejection of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin in chapter 5, yet the whole book follows, broadly, those lines mapped out by modern liberal orthodoxy and assumes most of the 'assured results' of modern criticism.

On Scripture the documentary hypothesis of the pentateuch, together with the tripartite division of Isaiah is assumed. This is, apparently supported by a mythical view of the early chapters of Genesis. The 'Book of Wisdom', often and usefully cited for parallels in thought, is, however, seen as 'Biblical'.

Of the virgin birth, Dr Robinson says, "*At one level Jesus was genuinely the product of the process of heredity and environment (which he takes to equal 'physical generation')*" (p.14)

The Gospel message seems to be "*accept that you are accepted*" within a universalistic framework and wrath is the experience of love while in a position of alienation. Consequently, propitiation, penal substitution and satisfaction are dismissed as the doctrines of "*distortion and polarisation*" (p.48) of Scripture "*now happily healed*"! Moreover "*Without*

baptism nothing that has been done for us would have any effect in our lives, for it is only here that it is done in us" (p.70)

While some might agree that Paul's use of Scripture is often "*by our standards misuse*" (p.15) and share Robinson's antipathy toward double predestination (p.120), his subsequent denial of irresistible grace and his assertion that Jesus was identified with a fallen human nature would appear unacceptable (see p.128 and 94).

Conclusion

This volume is an irritating combination of good and bad. As such its usefulness is probably limited to the student situation mentioned above and to those who wish for a readable introduction to the conclusions of liberal criticism on this Epistle.

Rev Stephen Dray, BA
(Brockley)

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