

Foundations

A Theological Journal
published by the
British Evangelical
Council

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



Psalm 11:3

ISSUE NO. 7

Price £1.25

November, 1981

C O N T E N T S

HOLY SPIRIT AND HOLY BIBLE Rev Hywel R.Jones MA	p.1
HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ENGLISH HYPER-CALVINISM Rev Robert Oliver BA BD	p.8
THE CHURCH MEETING Rev Derek Swann BA BD	p.18
TRANSLATING SCRIPTURE - AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (2) Rev Philip H.Eveson MA MTh	p.26
BOOK REVIEWS	p.38

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
U.K. 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

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 £1.25
post free.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND

THE HOLY BIBLE

Rev Hywel R. Jones MA (Wrexham)

The writer is Pastor of Borrass Park Evangelical Church, Wrexham in North East Wales and was previously in pastoral charge of Grove Chapel, Camberwell, London. Mr Jones is also an Associate Editor of this Journal.

Maintaining the inerrancy of Scripture as well as its infallibility is likely to cause an old question to be re-asked and with great vigour. That question is "How do you know the Bible is the Word of God?" While being able to make a worthy reply will not of itself convince the gainsayer or the honest enquirer, it is important that we should be able to make one for uncertainty about this point of our knowledge touches the vitals of our confidence in and our response to the things of God. This article is concerned with the content and character of our reply and our ability to make it rather than with any effect which, in the grace of God, our reply may have on others.

Of late two lines have been followed by evangelicals in making a reply. Each is correct and has its place, but both of them together are inadequate. A third - and the chief - element needs to be added which binds these two features and lifts up the whole reply to a higher level. This article concentrates on that extra, and neglected feature, but the inadequate replies will be briefly touched upon first.

1. The Features of the Bible.

The rich story of the Bible's composition, compilation, preservation, transmission and translation provides abundant evidence of its uniqueness. As a library of sixty-six books in three languages, spanning some two thousand years and set against several cultures, composed by various authors and in different literary styles, its harmony and unity of content is truly amazing. This factor is explained and enforced by three crucially important statements in the New Testament, viz. John 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:16; and 2 Peter 1:

20 & 21. In addition to these data the great message of the Bible puts it into a class of its own. What can be shown to be without human parallel can be said, presumptively at least, to be divine.

2. The Force of the Bible.

The intensity with which men and women have sought for and died for the Bible (or even a page of it) is only matched by the intensity with which others have sought to destroy it. Its effect on thought and conduct in Western society is on the wane, but so is that society which has rejected it. However the chief and intended effect of the Bible is to present the gospel of Christ and this multitudes from all over the world have believed and lived by. The literature it has spawned is incalculable; the lives it has transformed innumerable. Once more its uplifting and transforming influence indicates a superhuman origin and character.

So far we have proceeded with what accords with a section of the Westminster Confession of 1643 which speaks of the following as "arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God", ¹viz

"the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof." ¹

However the Confession goes further not only to include but to emphasise the other element which has been somewhat neglected. It says that the authority of Scripture rests upon God its author and on neither man nor Church and then says:

"We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and revered esteem of the Holy Scripture ... yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." ¹

Clearly the testimony of the Church and the features of the Bible are put in a different category from the internal testimony of the

Spirit in the matter of certainty concerning the Bible's being the Word of God. It is this testimonium we are to consider. We shall do so by concentrating on Calvin's Institutes because of the clarity of his exposition and the historical situation in which he presented it.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE TESTIMONIUM

In presenting this Calvin strikes three notes which are basic to his entire theological outlook. They are the clarity of God's revelation in Nature and Scripture, the blindness and perversity of the fallen human mind and heart, and the consequent necessity of the working of the Holy Spirit if anything of God or ourselves is to be savingly known.

He writes:

"A simple external manifestation of the word ought to be amply sufficient to produce faith, did not our blindness and perverseness prevent. But such is the proneness of our mind to vanity, that it can never adhere to the truth of God, and such its dullness, that it is always blind even in his light. Hence without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect."²

Calvin uses various forms of three words to depict the character of this work of the Holy Spirit, namely illumination, witness or testimony, and persuasion. The significance of each of these terms and all of them together must be understood for the character of the testimonium to be appreciated.

Using each of these terms in its primary sense yields the following result. The testimonium is the Holy Spirit enlightening, affirming, and persuading. Enlightening, He gives light to enable us to see, and we behold. Affirming, He avowedly declares so that we know and we learn. Persuading, He dispels doubt and denial so that we are convinced. The Holy Spirit therefore gives heavenly light concerning truth to which the response is unconquerable faith.

From this it will be seen that the Holy Spirit does something internally with reference to something which is external. He conveys and increases faith in the Truth.

a) The Testimonium and Faith

Faith is submission not assent. To believe is to bow and not to nod. Therefore the testimonium is related to a submission to God in a reception of His Word. The internal testimony is not a credal subscription. The Bible cannot be truly believed without God being adored and served and the Redeemer being trusted. Calvin writes:

"The first step in true knowledge is taken when we reverently embrace the testimonium which God has been pleased therein (i.e. in Scripture) to give of himself. For not only does faith, full and perfect faith, but all correct knowledge of God, originate in obedience."³

The testimonium is intimately bound up with our reception of the gospel, our relationship to God, and these are inseparable from our reception of Scripture as God's Word. (The fact that some claim to know God in Christ and yet do not hold an orthodox view of Scripture is not to the point. The point is that none who make such a claim reject Scripture as God's Word in whatever sense they construe it to be so).

b) The Testimonium and the Truth

The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Truth. His testifying activity is truthful and therefore reliable and He testifies to God's Truth, i.e. His self-revelation which centres in Christ as He is presented in Scripture. The Spirit's ministry is to enable people to perceive, believe and appreciatively respond to the Word of God. So His testimony comes "by and with the Word". This occurs by the effectual call in preaching as

"By the internal illumination of the Spirit he causes the preached word to take deep root in their hearts."⁴

This has an inevitable link with the Bible for it is there in the written Word of God that the preached word can be found and read.

"The Word is the instrument by which the illumination of the Spirit is dispensed. They know of no other Spirit than the one who dwelt and spake in the apostles - the Spirit by whose oracles they are daily invited to the hearing of the Word."⁵

In this quotation Calvin is dealing with one of the religious

movements of his time against which he found it necessary to contend, viz the wilder Anabaptists. He also opposes the Roman Catholic Church and his opposition to both is crystallised in his teaching on the Testimonium.

His chapter on Roman Catholicism is entitled "The Testimony of the Spirit Necessary To Give Full Authority To Scripture. The Impiety Of Pretending That The Credibility Of Scripture Depends On The Judgment Of The Church." ⁶ With regard to the wilder Anabaptists he entitles a chapter "All The Principles Of Piety Subverted By Fanatics, Who Substitute Revelations For Scripture."⁷ It is Calvin's claim that in the former the Church supplants the Spirit, and in the latter the Spirit (or rather some other spirit) supplants the Scripture.

The relevance of all this to us today should be immediately clear. The supremacy of Scripture is challenged by the supremacy of either the Church or the Spirit. With regard to the former it is not merely Roman Catholicism which presents this threat, but the Orthodox Churches and Protestantism, all of which are now placing an increasing, though varied, emphasis on Tradition in the Tradition-Scripture inter-relationship. The two strands of Calvin's teaching, viz the plainness of God's revelation which yields the conclusion that Scripture does not need the authentication of the Church, and the testimony of the Spirit which results in recognition by the Church of what is inherently authoritative is still the abiding valid answer today.

With regard to the latter, whom Calvin calls Libertines, what Calvin says applies to the cults and world religions if for Spirit we read the Absolute or Ultimate, and to Liberalism if for Spirit we read reason or spirit or feeling. It is also issuing a warning against the Neo-Pentecostal movement. Calvin's position is based on the claim that the Libertines are "tearing asunder 'what has been joined' in indissoluble union." "The author of Scripture cannot vary and change his likeness" is his basic principle. His conclusion is:

"The Lord has so knit together the certainty of his Word and his Spirit that our minds are duly imbued with reverence for the word when the Spirit shining upon it enables us there to behold the face of God; and, on the other hand, we embrace the

Spirit with no danger of delusion when we recognise him in his image, that is, in his word." ⁸

The testimonium therefore internalises the genuineness of an objective reality, i.e. the written word of God and so correlates to it the state of mind and heart which results from His activity. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is the inner teacher of divinely revealed and recorded truth. This refutes an unverifiable and vacillating subjectivism of either Reason or Feeling and also a blind submission to some external authority like philosophical enquiry, ecclesiastical tradition, or existential crisis. The Holy Spirit and the Holy Bible are signposts to each other.

Calvin writes gloriously:

"Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, does not submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. For though in its own majesty it has enough to command reverence, nevertheless, it then begins truly to touch us when it is sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Enlightened by him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but, in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured - as much so as if we beheld the divine image visibly impressed on it - that it comes to us by the instrumentality, from the very mouth of God. We ask not for proofs or probabilities on which to rest our judgment, but we subject our intellect and judgment to it as too transcendent for us to estimate ... We have a thorough conviction that ... we hold unassailable truth ... because we feel a divine energy living and breathing in it - an energy by which we are drawn and animated to obey it, willingly indeed, and knowingly, but more vividly and effectually than could be done by human will or knowledge... Such, then, is a conviction which asks not for reasons; such, a knowledge which accords with the highest reason, namely knowledge in which the mind rests more firmly and securely than in any reasons; such, in fine, the conviction which revelation from heaven alone can produce. I say nothing more than every believer experiences in himself though my words fall far short

of the reality." 9

Therefore we ought to reflect on how we regard our belief in the nature of Scripture. Remembering that it does not authorize Scripture as the Word of God, but authenticates it as such to and within us, we ought to ask whether our view has become too cerebral or/and too cautious. In our thinking are we putting scholarship or apologetics in the place of the Holy Spirit's internal testimony? Or are we afraid of saying we are sure about Scripture's nature and status because we know that this will appear to others as some psychological state? Let us cease grieving the Spirit in our thinking and not only feel we can sing "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," but also "The Bible is God's word, I know for the Spirit tells me so".

References

1. Westminster Confession. Chapter I, Sections 4 & 5
2. Institutes. Book III. Chapter II, Section 33.
3. Institutes. Book I. Chapter VI, Section 2.
4. Institutes. Book III. Chapter XXIV, Section 8.
5. Institutes. Book I. Chapter IX, Section 3.
6. Institutes. Book I. Chapter VII.
7. Institutes. Book I. Chapter IX.
8. Institutes. Book I. Chapter IX, Section 5.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ENGLISH

HYPER-CALVINISM

Rev Robert Oliver BA BD
(Bradford-on-Avon)

The term, Hyper-Calvinism, has come to be used as a description of the system of theology, which couples a belief in the Five Points of Calvinism with a denial of the doctrine of the free offer of the Gospel. The Hyper-Calvinist does not believe that indiscriminate exhortations to faith and repentance should be addressed to the unregenerate. He may have a deep concern for men's salvation, but certain deductions from Christian doctrine lead him to his position. Because of man's total inability, he believes that

it is futile to exhort the unregenerate to believe, since the natural man is unable to exercise faith, apart from the grace of God. As well as being useless, such entreaty is dangerous. The unbeliever is deluded into believing that he can respond and may in fact make a response, which is simply the self-interested expression of his unregenerate heart. Further, to call upon the unbeliever to believe is to ask him to believe a lie, if he is not elect. The Hyper-Calvinist teaches that saving faith is to believe the proposition, "Christ died for me". Such knowledge is only received as faith is super-naturally communicated. The Gospel invitations to the thirsty and the labouring are taken to apply to those under conviction of sin and who are longing for Christ.

While certain tendencies towards Hyper-Calvinism may have been present in the seventeenth century, it only developed as a system in the eighteenth century, when it made considerable advances among the English Independents and Particular Baptists. It was ably challenged by Andrew Fuller and his associates at the end of the

'Hyper-Calvinism' is a term frequently used today but do we understand its doctrinal and historical significance? Here the writer, Pastor of a Baptist Church in Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire, provides us with a useful historical perspective to the subject. The writer is engaged in a long-term research project on early nineteenth century church history.

In the next issue we intend to publish an article on the Doctrinal Background and Significance of Hyper-Calvinism by Pastor Bob Sheehan.

century, but gained a new lease of life in the nineteenth century and has often been regarded as Calvinist orthodoxy in the present century.

The Development of Hyper-Calvinism

The first systematic exposition of Hyper-Calvinism appeared in 1707. It was a treatise, entitled, "God's Operations of Grace, but No Offers of Grace", by Joseph Hussey of Cambridge.¹ Joseph Hussey was born in 1660 and after training at the Newington Green Academy, entered the Presbyterian ministry, being called in 1691 to a church in Cambridge. He subsequently adopted congregational principles and persuaded the church to do likewise. At the same time he began an extensive review of his beliefs, reading widely in English and European theology. Increasingly he came to reject the bulk of the theological writing of his own and earlier ages.

"What ignorance is there in our Systems of Divinity! What defects in our Catechisms and Confessions! What barren heaps in our Librarys!"²

Hussey modified his thinking in the areas of Christology and soteriology as well as ecclesiology. It is with the matter of preaching the Gospel that this article is concerned. In 1693 he had taught the free offer of the Gospel in his book, "The Gospel Feast Opened". By 1707 he had completely rejected the indiscriminate offer and published his conclusions in "God's Operations of Grace".³

Hussey began by reviewing the Scriptural expressions used for preaching the Gospel and pointed out that the word, 'offer', is not one of these. He then considered the various theologies, which used the term offer, asking about those, who believe in election,

"Why then do they propound salvation, which is a spiritual good, and requires a spiritual act of the soul to apprehend it, whereas they do not insist upon the necessity of a new nature being previously imparted, nor upon the work of the Spirit to bring home this salvation?"⁴

He went on to argue that,

1. To offer Christ to sinners, is not to preach him to sinners.
2. To propound the Gospel offer is no means of the Spirit's working

an internal ability in sinners to close with that offer.

3. An offer of grace is no gift of grace.

The book then moves on to examine the way in which the Gospel should be preached without offers. This in fact constitutes the bulk of the work. He wrote,

"We must preach the doctrine of salvation to all sinners in general within hearing; and must preach salvation included in the doctrine, which is the gift of God, to the elect alone who are hid among them." ⁵

He believed that by this method the elect would be discovered by the powerful application of the truth.

"The chosen generation have ever been found out by the preaching of the Gospel as they have lain hid among the pots." ⁶

Hussey was convinced that his scheme honoured God and humbled the sinner.

"We are to preach the Gospel with confidence in Christ, and fear as to ourselves that we do not lay any stress upon the creature. But offers are presumptuous. They rob the Gospel of its properties, privileges and glory. They usurp Christ's authority and prerogative, affecting to say to dead Lazarus come forth ... Our work is to sow the seed and leave it in Christ's hand to bring it forth in His time." ⁷

Hussey continued to propound his new doctrines in Cambridge until his removal to London, where he became pastor of the Petticoat Lane Church in 1719. His influence among the Independents was continued by Samuel Stockell and Lewis Wayman. Stockell, at one time member of the Petticoat Lane Church under Hussey, was pastor of the church at Red Cross Street London from 1728 to 1750. Wayman, pastor at Kimbolton, Hunts from 1718 to 1764, had made a close study of Hussey's writings and adopted his teachings.

Hyper-Calvinism among the Particular Baptists.

One of Joseph Hussey's converts at Cambridge was John Skepp.⁸ Skepp became a Baptist, but took with him his pastor's teaching on preaching the Gospel. In the second decade of the eighteenth century he became pastor of the important Particular Baptist Church at

Curriers' Hall, Cripplegate, London. Although he lacked formal training, Skepp was a diligent student and with the help of a Jewish teacher made good progress in the study of Hebrew, in which he encouraged the young John Gill. Skepp died in 1721. In the following year his only work, "The Divine Energy" was published. Its theme was the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling and conversion, but he too rejected invitations to the unconverted, calling such appeals, "Arminian dialect".

In 1719 the church at Horsleydown, Southwark, called John Gill, a member of the church at Kettering, to be its pastor. Gill⁹ was a gifted young man, although his education had been cut short by his nonconformity. He was a diligent student with a love of languages and this may well have drawn him to Skepp, who participated in his ordination in 1720. By the time of his death in 1771, Gill had become the leader of the London Particular Baptists, while his writings had secured his reputation among Baptists throughout the kingdom. Gill's 'magnum opus' was his "Exposition of the Old and New Testaments", but he was also an active controversialist, defending the divinity of Christ and also the doctrines of grace. His abhorrence of Arminianism led him into controversy with John Wesley. Over against the Arminianism, which he feared so much, he asserted a strong Hyper-Calvinism. In 1751 he republished Skepp's "Divine Energy" and took the opportunity to pay his personal tribute to its writer. In his tract on Predestination, he made clear his opinion on the preaching of the Gospel.

"That there are universal offers of grace and salvation made to all men, I utterly deny; nay I deny that they are made to any; no not to God's elect; grace and salvation are provided for them in the everlasting covenant, procured for them by Christ, published and revealed in the gospel and applied by the Spirit." ¹⁰

Another writer, who defended Hyper-Calvinism among the Particular Baptists was John Brine.¹¹ Brine a prolific writer was pastor of the Curriers' Hall Church, London from 1729 to 1765. In the light of later Hyper-Calvinist intolerance it is interesting to note that in 1754 Brine published a pamphlet, "Motives to Love and Unity among Calvinists". In this he urged unity amongst those, who differed on the question of the free offer of the Gospel.

While the London Particular Baptist churches were largely under the

influence of the theology of Gill and Brine, it is not surprising that they experienced a decline. The Baptist historian Joseph Ivimey was to point out that while London was enjoying the blessings of the Great Awakening, God was working "by means which these good men thought unnecessary, by instruments whom they thought but babes in the knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, by the influence of principles they considered to be erroneous, and by a kind of preaching which they called an "Arminian dialect", and "Semi-pelagian addresses".¹²

The picture must not be overpainted. The victory of Hyper-Calvinism among the Particular Baptists was not complete. In London, Andrew Gifford, isolated from his brethren, maintained a close association with George Whitefield. In the provinces, Benjamin Beddome of Bourton on the Water and Daniel Turner of Abingdon were two men, who did not succumb to the prevailing fashion of preaching.

The Assault on Hyper-Calvinism.

By the 1780s a number of men were beginning to question the dominant Hyper-Calvinism. In 1781 the veteran preacher, Robert Hall, senior, of Arnesby, published "A Help to Zion's Travellers". This was a sermon urging a freer presentation of the Gospel. More influential was Andrew Fuller's "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation",¹³ which appeared in 1784. This was the result of Fuller's deep and painful struggle with the Hyper-Calvinism in which he had been nurtured. Although the book aroused a storm of controversy, which continued throughout Fuller's life, its influence steadily grew. An evangelistic Calvinism spread through the land and helped to provide the theological impetus for the work of William Carey and his associates.

In 1796 Abraham Booth, who had emerged as the leading Particular Baptist theologian in London, after the death of John Gill, published his "Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners or the Genuine Gospel a Complete Warrant to believe in Jesus".¹⁴ This was a plea for the free offer of the Gospel. There were, however, differences between Booth and Fuller. Although both men opposed Hyper-Calvinism, Booth believed that Fuller had weakened in his adherence to the doctrine of Particular Redemption. This charge Fuller repudiated. Booth was also concerned about Fuller's understanding of the doctrine of

Christ's substitution. To counteract what he considered to be Fuller's weakness at this point, Booth published "Divine Justice essential to the Divine Character" in 1803. Although relations between Booth and Fuller were on occasions strained, the combined influence of these two men had gone far to break the dominance of the Hyper-Calvinism of the Hussey-Gill type by 1800. The men who led the Baptist Missionary Society and who were to promote the Baptist Union in 1813 were generally Calvinists, who accepted the free offer of the Gospel. Hyper-Calvinism was not, however, extinct and it was to receive a new stimulus from a movement rooted in the eighteenth century revival.

The Resurgence of Hyper-Calvinism

The pioneer of this new movement was the eccentric London minister, William Huntington (1745-1813).¹⁵ Huntington was converted in the early 1770s. At first an ardent Anglican, he came under the influence of the Calvinistic Methodists and was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1776 by Torial Joss, the former associate of George Whitefield. From 1782 until his death in 1813 he was pastor of a London Independent Church, which steadily grew until he was regularly preaching to congregations of 2000. With his London pastorate he combined frequent preaching tours throughout England. He first came into collision with his fellow evangelicals because he taught that the Moral Law is not the Christian's rule of life. With this doctrinal Antinomianism he combined a Hyper-Calvinist theology. He wrote to John Ryland, junior,

"You set the law before the believer, as his only law of life and conduct; and the gospel is set before the unconverted as their only rule of duty. The carnal man has got an evangelical law and the heir of promise has got a legal one; the life giving commandment is palmed upon the congregation of the dead, and the ministration of death is saddled upon the children of the resurrection; the believers are all sent to Moses, and the unconverted are all sent to Jesus; Moses is to have the legitimate sons and Christ is to have the bastards."¹⁶

Not only were Huntington's frequent travels reminiscent of the Methodists, but so was his insistence upon a deep personal experience. Although he did not exhort sinners, his experimental preaching was used to convict men and to stimulate Christians to seek a deeper

and more personal knowledge of God. Although very few ministers would associate with him, his immense following in London and throughout the country meant that he could not be ignored. Through Huntington's influence a number of Independent churches sprang up in the London area, the Midlands and especially in the county of Sussex.

Huntington had his admirers in the Church of England. Amongst ministers these included Robert Hawker of Plymouth, David Doudney, sometime editor of the "Gospel Magazine" and Samuel Adams, vicar of Thornton, Leicestershire. Robert Hawker (1753-1827) was probably the best known of the Anglican Hyper-Calvinists. Ministering at Charles, Plymouth from 1778 to 1827, he was a prolific writer and an able preacher, who always attracted crowds on his visits to London. His works included "The Poor Man's Commentary on the Bible" and a set of daily readings and meditations. He ridiculed the free offer of the Gospel

"The preachers of it are continually holding forth a motley religion which they call the gospel, made up of law and gospel, faith and good works. Were it not for the awfulness of the subject, a man might smile to hear what very wooing and winning words are made use of by them to gain upon the hearts of their hearers by human persuasion." ¹⁷

He also declared, "it never was in the plan of Christ's preaching to make "general offers to sinners indiscriminately". ¹⁸

The influence of William Huntington among the Baptists can be seen in the life and ministry of William Gadsby, who embraced Huntington's teaching on the Law and the Gospel. From 1805 until 1844 Gadsby was pastor of the old Particular Baptist Church in Manchester, which became a centre for evangelistic Hyper-Calvinism in Lancashire. Like Huntington, Gadsby combined a prosperous pastorate with an extensive itinerant ministry. Under his influence over forty new churches came into existence, mainly in the growing industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Gadsby emphasised the need for conviction of sin, the substitutionary work of Christ and of assurance granted by a direct work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul. One of his contemporaries, Robert Halley, principal of New College, London, wrote of Gadsby, "He seemed a preacher made on purpose for the working classes. The common people heard him gladly."¹⁹Comparing

Gadsby with other preachers, he went on, "they might have made better Christians of Mr Gadsby's converts, if they had been the agents of their conversion; but could they have influenced in any way the men and women who listened with intense interest around the pulpit of William Gadsby?"

Gadsby's preaching helped to create a reading public for the "Gospel Standard", a magazine commenced by his son, John, in 1835. From about 1840 until 1869 the "Gospel Standard" was edited by Joseph Charles Philpot, a former fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, and like Gadsby a great admirer of Huntington.

The "Gospel Standard" group was not the only section of Baptists to oppose Fuller's teaching. In 1803 there appeared from the press "A Help for the True Disciples of Immanuel" by John Stevens.²⁰ This was a reply to Fuller's "Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation". In 1811 Stevens became pastor of a London church and gathered a considerable following. He rejected the teaching of Huntington on the Law and also denied the orthodox doctrine of the eternal sonship of Christ. Like so many of the early nineteenth century Hyper-Calvinists, Stevens was a self taught man of considerable ability. By preaching tours and through the men, who went into the ministry from his church, his influence grew in London, the East Midlands and East Anglia.

Men similar to Stevens and possibly greater preachers were John Foreman of Hill Street, London, (1791-1872)²¹ and James Wells of the Surrey Tabernacle, (1803-1872).²² Wells was a pioneer, who began preaching in the streets of Westminster and was eventually preaching to congregations of over 2000 only half a mile away from the Metropolitan Tabernacle, where C.H.Spurgeon was exercising his powerful ministry. Wells was one of Spurgeon's sternest critics, when the latter first arrived in London. It is pleasing to note that the two men came to respect each other, while differing theologically.

The group represented by John Stevens and James Wells were as opposed to moderate Calvinism as were Gadsby and his friends. In fact they often seemed more outspoken in their opposition to it. Wells declared, "You might as well give me heathenism as give me Arminianism; you might as well give me popery as give me duty-

faithism." ²³ Nevertheless Steven's followers came to differ from Huntington's in that they developed a concern for missionary endeavour. Huntington had opposed the early missionary movement. Stevens had been suspicious, but came to see that Hyper-Calvinists needed to preach the Gospel doctrinally to every creature even if they did not exhort all men indiscriminately. Thus amongst his followers there came into being a missionary society, whose doctrinal basis included the statement, "saving faith is not a legal duty, but the sovereign and gracious gift of God".

J.C.Philpot, editor of the "Gospel Standard", opposed missionary societies. He asked,

"What scriptural precept or precedent there is for a number of ministers forming an association of this nature? The Lord indeed sent out the seventy, two and two; (Luke x.1); Paul and Barnabas are separated by the Holy Ghost to labour together in the work to which he had called them, (Acts xiii.2); and the apostle speaks of his 'fellow labourers', and 'fellow helpers;' (1 Thess.iii.2; Phil.iv.3; 2 Cor.viii.23). But these co-labourers widely differed from a body of associated ministers furnished with a committee, a president, a chairman, &c. Such associations, therefore, having no precept nor precedent for their formation, in the word of God, we are bound to reject them as unscriptural." ²⁴

Although Philpot may have intended to distinguish between missionary societies and individual missionaries, it is significant that the churches with which he was associated were not noted for missionary activity during his life time or later.

Philpot died in 1869. It is evident that in the years after his death there was unease amongst the churches represented by the "Gospel Standard" about the preaching of the Gospel. Eventually in 1878, under pressure from John Gadsby, additional articles of faith were added to those upon which the magazine was run and which were adopted by many of its supporting churches. These included the statement,

"We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain

special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely-different circumstances." ²⁵

During the decline of Evangelicalism of the early twentieth century, Biblical Calvinism disappeared almost completely in England. Hyper-Calvinism survived amongst various groups of Christians and by default came to pass as genuine Calvinism. Many of its adherents were men and women of genuine piety, conscious of the greatness and glory of God, the evil of sin and the wonder of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Some were deeply introspective and lacked assurance. Others became less conscious of doctrine and more concerned with methods of evangelism. Few were really examining the Biblical basis of their teaching. Not until after the Second World War did some Hyper-Calvinists begin to see that their theology needed to be modified in the light of Scripture and in order to challenge the thinking of the age. By that time a new Biblical Calvinism was beginning to spread across the land and to capture former Arminians and Hyper-Calvinists alike. Old traditions were challenged. There was a concern to be doctrinal and evangelistic, but above all Biblical. It was clear that a new situation had developed in English Evangelicalism.

Notes

1. For fuller details of Hussey see P.Troon, Hyper-Calvinism, London, 1967, pp. 70 ff.
2. Quoted, Ibid, p.74
3. J.Hussey, God's Operations of Grace, London, 1851 ed.
4. Ibid, p.4
5. Ibid, p.34
6. Ibid, p.39
7. Ibid, p.104
8. For further details of Skepp see J.Ivimey, History of the English Baptists, III, London, 1823, pp.363 ff.
9. Ibid, for details of Gill, pp.430 ff.
10. J.Gill, Sermons and Tracts, III, p.271
11. Ivimey, Op.cit. for Brine, pp.366 ff.
12. Ibid, p.280
13. J.Ryland, Life of Andrew Fuller, London, 1818.
A.Fuller, Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation, Northampton, 1784.

- Various reprints of the second and revised edition (1801) have appeared.
14. A.Booth, Works; London, 1813, 3 vols. Vol.1 includes memoir.
 15. T.Wright, Life of William Huntington, London, 1909.
A detailed life but weak on doctrinal issues.
 16. W.Huntington, Works, XI, London, 1811, p.151
 17. R.Hawker, Works, IX, London, 1831, p.474
 18. Ibid, p.489
 19. R.Halley, Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity, II, Manchester, 1869, pp.484f. For further details of Gadsby see J.Gadsby, Memoir of Wm.Gadsby, Manchester, 1847.
 20. Anon. Memoir of Mr J.Stevens, London, 1848
 21. For details of Foreman see obituary in Earthen Vessel 1872, pp.72 ff.
 22. For details of James Wells see R.W.Oliver, The Dangers of a Successful Ministry, London, 1969.
 23. James Wells, Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit, London, 1863, p.10
 24. Quoted by W.Palmer, A Plain Statement, London, 1847, p.7
 25. Articles of Faith and Rules, published by the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society, London, n.d., Article XXXII.

THE CHURCH MEETING

Rev Derek Swann, BA BD
(Ashford, Middlesex)

Mr Swann pastors the Congregational Church in Ashford and his article will be relevant to many of our church situations

At the annual lecture of the Congregational Historical Society, delivered on May 12th 1970 on the subject 'The Survival of the Church Meeting 1691', John H.Taylor began by saying "For more than seventy years these lectures have come and gone and this year we begin the 21st volume of Transactions (the Journal of the C.H.S), yet in all that time there has never been a contribution on the church meeting."¹ Considering the centrality of the Church Meeting to Congregationalism this is an astonishing fact. In 1952 the Life and Work Department of the Congregational Union of England and Wales

published a pamphlet entitled 'The Church Meeting' which states, "Nothing is more distinctive of Congregationalism. Nothing can take its place. For us the Church Meeting is vital"² and again "... if Congregationalism is to survive and if it is to make the contribution it should to the whole Church of Christ, the Church Meeting must come into its own".³ Yet for the past 150 years there has been no significant work of scholarship on the Church Meeting and even the popular booklet has appeared but spasmodically.

Those of us who have been brought up in Congregationalism are not surprised. For example, in 1871, R.W.Dale of Carr's Lane, Birmingham, spoke of Church Meetings as "meetings for the transaction of formal business in which no rational man can feel any intense interest."⁴ The above mentioned pamphlet, 'The Church Meeting' laments "Yet, as all of us know, it is often poorly attended and sadly ineffectual. Many of our members, otherwise splendidly loyal in their support of the church, regard the Church Meeting as dull and unimportant. They rarely attend, unless some special business has to be done. Some never attend. One result is that new members are quickly discouraged. They too stay away. We are caught in a vicious circle."⁵

In our own day the Church Meeting has certainly fallen from grace; in fact in many instances it has become a disgrace. In some cases it is only a business meeting or a debating society. Occasionally it resembles a political assembly and not infrequently a boxing match. Often those who never attend a Bible Study or a Prayer Meeting make a point of never missing it and taking part in it.

The question is, "Can anything be done to restore the Church Meeting to its original spiritual position?" Dale was critical of the Church Meeting in 1871, but in 1886 he delivered an address to a Joint Assembly of the Baptist and Congregational Unions in which he spoke ecstatically of it: "and so, to be at a Church Meeting - apart from any prayer that is offered, any hymn that is sung, any words that are spoken, is for me one of the chief means of grace. To know that I am surrounded by men and women who dwell in God, who have received the Holy Ghost, with whom I am to share eternal righteousness and eternal rapture of the great life to come, this is blessedness. I breathe a diviner air." Can the Church Meeting become again "one of the chief means of grace"? In order to answer

that question we must know what position it has held in Congregationalism.

The Church Meeting as Independents know it, as a special meeting, held monthly or quarterly, was not in the minds of the founders of Congregationalism. The Church Meeting as we know it was part of a gathering of the Church. Our forefathers thought much more in terms of a meeting of the church than of a Church Meeting. At Rothwell, in Northamptonshire, business meetings of the church were held on the Sabbath. This was also true of Nightingale Lane Church, London and John Cotton's congregation in New England. We know that at Castle Gate Congregational Church, Nottingham, there were quarterly Church Meetings until 1843 when they became monthly, and that such meetings were held "after public worship on the Wednesday evening before the first Sabbath of the month." ⁶ At Bury Street, in Isaac Watts' time, they were held on a Friday: "on the Friday in the afternoon, before the Lord's Supper there is generally a sermon preached on some evangelical subject, and if any church affairs require it, as the admission, the dismissal or the seclusion of any members, or any other matter of importance that relates to the spiritual or temporal concerns of the church, the members are desired to tarry a little for that purpose." ⁷

Church Meetings as such were part of the meeting of the church for prayer, preaching, worship and the Lord's Supper and all business was conducted in a spiritual context. Consequently, the modern distinction between spiritual and business meetings is meaningless.

We need to raise the spiritual tone of our Church Meetings. They should begin with a short act of worship which should then pervade the whole meeting. Some churches have made a point, for example, when missionary matters are being discussed, of concluding with a time of congregational prayer for the blessing of God on the preaching of the Gospel world-wide. At almost any point on the agenda of a Church Meeting prayer can be called for and if it cannot the matter has no right to be on the agenda.

How did the founders of Congregationalism see the future of the Church Meeting? "A church", writes Isaac Chauncey, "is impowered by commission from Christ to choose its own ministerial officers, and if they are one or more belonging to other churches, or non-

members, they can receive them members. Likewise they can admit other members that desire to join them. Lastly it has power to admonish or reject any scandalous or any offending member and that before such a church has Elders or Deacons. These are plain from the nature of a body corporate."⁸ Election of officers, reception and excommunication of members were the main concerns of the "meeting church". Such matters, Chauncey affirms, should be dealt with "by the hands of the Brethren; for though each sister is a true member of this corporation and accordingly upon that ground should vote, yet Christ having made a particular exception upon that account that women may not speak or exercise authority in the church, therefore whatever passeth in the Church by the majority of the Brethren is a church act, so that it be done in a congregation, the sisters present, otherwise it is no Church Meeting."⁹

John H. Taylor in his article on the Church Meeting notes that up until 1872 women were not allowed to vote at Carr's Lane Congregational Church, Birmingham, and that in fact the men sat on the right and the women on the left hand of the chair. I believe that our own Church Meetings would greatly benefit if in fact men took a more leading role. This is not a popular thing to say in a feminist age, but as we are not to be governed by the spirit of the age it needs to be said. In a husband and wife partnership where only one can be present at a Church Meeting, it should always be the husband.

Regarding the admission of members Chauncey writes that after a candidate has been examined by the pastor or elders "he is in a Church Meeting to be propounded to the Church and a competent time (should be) allotted to the Church for converse with the said person and enquiry after his Christian deportment, that all the members of the congregation may be satisfied in a person whom they admit to so holy a communion with them, which time being expired and nothing objected against the said person, the elders bring him before the Church to give the reasons of his hope either by word of mouth or by writing (if bashfulness hinders him or her from speaking)."¹⁰

We need to observe the closeness and warmth of those early fellowships' "so holy a communion". The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, 1658, says "In the carrying on of church-administrations, no person ought to be added to the church but by the consent of the

church itself; that so love (without dissimulation) may be preserved between all the members thereof." ¹¹ The preservation of love was, and is still important. The Congregational Church at Ipswich formed in 1686 bound themselves together in the form of a covenant (signed by the seventeen who formed the church) and "related to each other what God had done for their souls, embodied together as a Church of Christ, giving themselves to the Lord and to one another to work together as a Church of Christ in all God's holy ordinances according to the rules of the Gospel, to the glory of God and their mutual edification and love." The church formed at Woodbridge in 1651 made a similar covenant: "We freely and cheerfully give up ourselves to the other to become one lump and stick in the Lord's hand and will, the Lord assisting us, submit ourselves to one another in the fear of God, watch over one another, bear one another's burdens taking the same care one for another and doing all things becoming those of the same body and whose heart is one and way is one in the Lord."

We need to remember the words of P.I.Forsyth that salvation is personal, but not individual. We are saved into the community of the local church and as such we have both the responsibility and the privilege of caring for each other. The Church Meeting ought to be one of the places where such care is demonstrated.

The admission of members into the fellowship of the local church was always a happy but serious matter. Take the church at Manchester under William Roby, one of the "fathers and founders" of the London Missionary Society. Dr Gordon Robinson in his life of Roby writes, "Much of the life of the church centred in the Church Meeting held regularly at monthly intervals ... New members, especially those who came on profession of faith were proposed for membership at the Church Meetings and were then visited by two deacons, or other persons, appointed by the church. After this visit, candidates appeared before the Church Meeting and read a written statement of their religious experience and of their desire to be united to the church." ¹² There is a good example of this method belonging to the period of the ministry in Grosvenor Street, preserved in the pamphlet "The Converted Atheist", published by Roby in 1820, which gives the statement presented in 1817 by a "reclaimed infidel" who was a candidate for membership ... Not all the statements of candidates can have been as full and eventful as this, and sometimes candidates were hard put to it to express themselves. But the statement was

insisted upon, and after the vote of the Church Meeting had been taken, and if "the evidences of his religious character and experience" were considered satisfactory, the new member was admitted to the fellowship".¹³

Baptists make use of the service of Believer's Baptism to encourage the giving of testimonies. Would it be enriching to Congregational churches if prospective members were encouraged to give testimonies at the Church Meeting?

Regarding discipline the "Savoy Declaration" has this to say, "Every church hath power in itself to exercise and execute all those censures appointed by him (the Lord Jesus Christ) in the way and order prescribed in the gospel. The censures so appointed by Christ are admonition and excommunication ... in the case of non-amendment upon private admonition, the offence being related to the church, and the offender not manifesting his repentance, he is to be duly admonished in the name of Christ by the whole church, by the ministry of the elders of the church, and if this censure prevail not for his repentance, then he is to be cast out by excommunication with the consent of the church."¹⁴

We can see this illustrated in 1776 at Castle Gate Congregational Church, Nottingham: "A still more interesting case is that of a woman who made very serious charges against a fellow member of the church. She, however, declined to attend a meeting of the Church to substantiate or retract the charges. A deputation was appointed to go and hear the charges in presence of the accused. She declined to receive the deputation. This was taken as proof that she had been guilty of making accusations which she was unable to confirm and would not retract, and she was separated from the Church." A letter was sent to her in which was written, "No one can be continued in any society who refuses to submit to its discipline and its rulers of government. The Church has thought it its duty to separate you from its communion and prays that you may be convinced that you have sinned and that you may be led to exercise true and sincere repentance."¹⁵ The woman, in this case, was restored to the Church eight years later.

At Rothwell, under the ministry of Richard Davis, discipline was very severe. The records give the following cases:

"Richard Gam for injustice about hiring a horse.
Bridget Rowlett for sloth in business.
Sarah Kirk for idleness and rebellion against her parents.
Sister Hollick for her pride.
John Cussens for threatening to knock his brother's brains out.
Brother Campion for professing love to a sister, when engaged to another."

Of Roby's church at Manchester, Dr Robinson writes, "Great care was to be taken to avoid uncharitableness, censoriousness and provocation, so that 'it may evidently appear that (the Church) hath no other aim but the glory of God and the good of the brother reproved'. If there was no amendment by the offender, the Church Meeting specially called proceeded to censure him or to cut him off. But first the pastor prayed for 'a blessing on the ordinance' (of discipline), confessed the offender's sin, spoke on the gravity of the offence, and then put the question. Henceforward the offender was 'to be reckoned amongst the ungodly, and his conversation to be avoided so far as it may be without any violation of natural or civil bonds ...' When a member was to be suspended Roby addressed the church as its pastor and reminded them that one of the duties incumbent upon members was to watch over each other, to warn the unruly and to put away those who 'walked disorderly'. However painful the process it must be attended with partiality. This must be done, he continued, for the glory of God (who would be dishonoured by its neglect), for the safety and prosperity of the church and for the good of disorderly brethren ... When a suspended or excluded member was received back again, it was Roby's custom (as indeed it was the custom of all Independent ministers) to hear a statement from the offender and then, after the vote had been taken, to address the church to which the offender was now reunited. He used the opportunity to 'improve' the occasion and to reflect on human liability to sin, on the sad effects of sin and declension in religion, on the faithfulness of God and the gratitude men owe Him for forgiveness and restoration, and on the human need of dependence upon God and of prayer." ¹⁶

There is nothing that is more likely to show up the true spiritual state of our Congregational churches than the question of discipline. Let a pastor try to execute discipline and he will quickly discover, I suspect, that his normally docile, loving fellowship

will show marks of pride, arrogance and self-righteousness. I have always held to the view that the true spiritual state of our churches is not to be gauged by either public worship or prayer meetings, but by the Church Meeting. What we are there, and how we behave there, is the true test of our spiritual state.

Nothing shows up the desperate need for revival more than the present state of Church Meetings, and while we can do much to restore the Church Meeting to its former spiritual state, our labours will not be attended with a great degree of success unless we beseech God in His grace and mercy to pour out His Spirit upon our languishing fellowships. May God soon bring us to the place where with R.W.Dale we can say in all honesty that the Church Meeting is where we "breathe a diviner air".

References

1. Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, Volume XXI, No.2, December 1971
2. p3
3. p4
4. Essays and Addresses, p141
5. Op cit, p3
6. History of Castle Gate Congregational Church, Nottingham, 1655-1905 A.R.Henderson
7. Bury Street Church Records, C.H.S. Transactions, VI, 336
8. The Divine Institution of Congregational Churches, 1697, p49
9. idem, p105
10. idem, p109
11. Evangelical Press edition, p45
12. William Roby 1766-1830, W.Gordon Robinson, p76
13. idem, p77
14. sections 18 & 19, p46
15. Op cit, p98
16. Op cit, pp77-79

TRANSLATING SCRIPTURE -

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (2)

Rev Philip H. Eveson, MA MTh (London)

THE ARAMAIC TARGUMS

During the post-exilic period Hebrew gradually ceased to be spoken by the ordinary people and Aramaic took over. While Aramaic had become the official written language of the western part of the Persian Empire, Hebrew was still understood by many particularly among the intellectuals but it became increasingly necessary for the Jewish community to have translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic. Certainly before the coming of Christ, whenever the Scriptures were read in the synagogues, interpreters were appointed to translate into Aramaic. Jewish tradition associates this custom with Ezra in Neh.8:8. These translations were always given orally in the public worship. They were never allowed to be read alongside the reading of the original text. In this way the Jews emphasised the difference between the Hebrew Scriptures and the translation. But the translations or targums were written down and we have evidence of two main versions - those revised in Babylon and those which represent Palestinian tradition.

These targums are more important in the field of the history of Jewish exegesis rather than their witness to the underlying Hebrew text. Their purpose was not merely to translate but to interpret and edify the people and in places they become almost mini-sermons.

One of the features of the Targums is the reverential attitude when

In his first article Mr Eveson suggested reasons why it is helpful to approach the subject of Bible translation from an historical standpoint, more especially the transmitting and translating of the Old Testament. He then discussed the Hebrew, Greek and Latin versions of the Old Testament text.

In this article he considers the LXX, the views of some early church fathers and finally the issue of the Septuagint versus the LXX.

The writer is Principal of the Kensit Memorial Bible College and Resident Tutor at the London Theological Seminary.

referring to God. They shied away from making God the direct subject or object and they also removed anthropomorphisms. On Gen.1:4 the Palestinian Targum (Neofiti) reads: "And it was manifest before the Lord that the light was good". Instead of saying directly "God said", the Aramaic memra ('word') is often used, e.g. Gen.1:3: "The Word of the Lord said". In this connection rabbi Judah ben Ilai's principles of translation are of interest: "He who translates a verse quite literally is a liar while he who adds anything thereto is a blasphemer". Thus he comments on the verse in Ex.24:10 that the literal translation of the Hebrew "they saw the God of Israel" is false. To put "angel" would be adding to the text. Therefore he supports the Targum reading, "they saw the glory of the God of Israel".

THE SEPTUAGINT (LXX)

We turn now to the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language and, in passing, to comment on the Greek of the New Testament.

In most of its details the Letter of Aristeas is quite unhistorical as a witness to the history of the LXX. It is generally accepted today that the Greek version had its origin among the Jewish community which settled in Alexandria. The Pentateuch was the first part to be translated c.250 B.C. and the whole Old Testament was probably translated over a period of a hundred years. It is quite clear that there have been different translators at work and different methods of translating. Some books like the Pentateuch are fairly literal while others such as Job, Proverbs and Daniel are quite free and have become paraphrases.

What Hebrew text did the translators use? It would seem that the Hebrew text type used differed from that transmitted by the Massorettes. In fact, it appears that the different translators of the Hebrew Bible used MSS of varying editions, so that it is difficult to describe the LXX as a single work. It is really a collection of translations made by various writers who for their particular books used different editions of the Hebrew text. For instance, the Greek translation of Jeremiah lacks some 2,700 words found in our Hebrew text and the order of the text differs too so that in evaluating the worth of this Greek version it is necessary to bear these

facts in mind. In addition, as we do not have the original autographs of this version the problems of textual criticism apply to this as to the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New.

Like the Aramaic Targums, the LXX tends to avoid the anthropomorphic expressions of the Hebrew. In Ex.19:3 Moses does not ascend to God but to the "mountain" of God; and in Ex.24:10 the elders do not see the God of Israel, but "the place where the God of Israel stood".

For all the Greek-speaking Jews of Palestine and the Diaspora it was now possible to read the Old Testament in their own tongue. In addition, the Gentile Greek world were able to study the Jewish Scriptures for themselves and many of them became interested in the Jewish religion through this means. The LXX is also a very important introduction to the writing of the New Testament and to the spreading of the Christian message. It is from the LXX that many of the New Testament quotations of the Old are taken and the LXX became the Old Testament version of the Church in the early centuries. Our best witnesses to the LXX are from MSS containing both the Old and New Testament texts: codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrianus and papyri texts like Chester Beatty. Fragments of the Greek Bible from Jewish circles have turned up like papyrus 458 dating from the middle of the second century B.C., and Greek texts from the Qumran community.

The Greek of the LXX is what is termed Koine ('common') or Hellenistic Greek - the general form of the Greek language used in the post-classical era. Strictly speaking the term 'koine' applies mainly to spoken Greek but it has come to be used to describe the literary Greek of the period. This literary Greek is an amalgam of the spoken Koine and the old literary language. We must go on to say, however, that the language and style of the Greek Old Testament has been coloured by the Semitic original. There is a Semitic cast to this Greek for the very reason that it follows, for the most part, fairly literally the original Hebrew. What is more, the Greek-speaking Jews familiar with the LXX developed a kind of Jewish Greek, and it is this type of Greek which we find in the New Testament.

It is often said that the Greek of the New Testament is the ordinary common language of the people in the market-places throughout the

28.

Greek-speaking world of the first century AD, the language of the soldiers, etc. But this needs qualification. English is a widely spoken and written language throughout the world today but there are differences between the spoken English of the barrack-room and public house and literary English. Again, there is a journalistic-style English, business-letter English and legal English. In the same way there are variations in Koine Greek. Too much has been made of the similarity between the Greek of the papyri found in Egypt which is akin to the unliterary spoken Koine of the day and New Testament Greek. It is true that these papyri documents have helped to a certain degree in our understanding of the New Testament language, but it is certainly not the whole story. What seems more probable is that there were different types of vernacular Koine Greek and that the Greek of the New Testament is what can only be termed Jewish Greek. Nigel Turner claims that biblical Greek as a whole "is a unique language with a unity and character of its own".¹

After showing instances of the unique character of biblical Greek Turner remarks: "I do not wish to prove too much by these examples, but the strongly Semitic character of biblical Greek and therefore its remarkable unity within itself, do seem to me to have contemporary significance at a time when many are finding their way back to the Bible as a living book and perhaps are pondering afresh the old question of a 'Holy Ghost language'. The lapse of half a century was needed to assess the discoveries of Deissman and Moulton and put them in right perspective. We now have to concede that not only is the subject matter of the Scriptures unique but so also is the language in which they came to be written or translated."²

Matthew Black maintains that the influence of the LXX has been profound on the writers of the New Testament in Hebraic concepts like 'justification', 'propitiation', etc; and has left its mark on the style and idiom of the New Testament. Bearing in mind what has been said earlier concerning the Hebrew of the Old Testament, Black's summary statement is of great interest, "this language, like the Hebrew of the Old Testament which moulded it, was a language apart from the beginning; biblical Greek is a peculiar language, the language of a peculiar people".³

Translators of the Scripture today despite all their scientific

linguistic know-how should bear in mind such points as these for they confirm the Rev Hywel R.Jones' statement that "A translation of the Scriptures should remind readers of the uniqueness of the Scriptures".⁴

OTHER GREEK VERSIONS

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the clear separation of the Jewish community from the Christian, the LXX became an acute embarrassment to the Jews. Though produced by Jews before the time of Christ and held in honour by them, the Christian attitude to it and the manner in which they used it placed the Jews in an embarrassing position. The Christians would appeal to the LXX, just as the Apostles did, to show the truth of the Christian message (cf. Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho). Jewish exegetes criticised the LXX for being too free a translation or of being inaccurate as in the case of Is.7:14. As the LXX was also based on an edition of the Hebrew text which was not regarded by the rabbis as standard, eventually the Jews rejected and condemned the version which they once prized so highly. On the other hand, the Christians continued to use and highly esteem the LXX regarding it as the authoritative version in the Church.

Among the Jewish attempts to replace the LXX with a different Greek text was Aquila's version produced c.130 AD. It is a very literal translation, sometimes going to the extent of using Greek words with similar sounds to the Hebrew. It is so literal that the meaning of the text often suffers and sounds quite un-Greek. But it did command a great deal of respect among the Jews. Symmachus produced a new version in 170 AD, which managed to combine a literal translation with good Greek idiom. A little later Theodotian revised an already existing Greek version with the Hebrew text alongside him. From Origen we learn of three other Greek versions found among the Jews of that time. It would appear that the Jews of the Greek-speaking world of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD had to contend with the same problem of a multiplicity of Greek versions as we do today. Having lost the old, well-established LXX (their 'AV'), there was nothing comparable to put in its place.

THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

We shall examine briefly the views of three men as they relate to
30.

the Old Testament text and Bible translation work.

Origen He sought to make contact with the Jews and to discuss the Christian Faith with them. Their starting point and basis of discussion was, of course, the Old Testament. However, by this time the problem of the right text and the right Bible was a major stumbling-block. The general view in the Church was that the LXX was the true version and the differences in the Jewish version must be due to deliberate falsification of the text by the rabbis. It should also be noted that there were those in the Church, Origen among them, who accepted certain books which the Jews regarded as apocrypha - Judith, Tobit, Wisdom, etc. The LXX version used by the Church included these books although it is not at all clear that the Jews of Alexandria accepted these books as Scripture. Certainly Rabbinic Judaism did not, and the apocryphal books are not found in the Massoretic tradition.

On scholarly grounds Origen came to the conclusion that the Hebrew text accepted by the Jews of his day was the best and saw that if he was to have fruitful discussions with the Jews then that was the text he must use. In pursuit of this aim Origen produced one of his greatest works, the Hexapla, as it is called, which was a comparison of the various Greek versions with the Hebrew consonantal text. He was among the very few Christian scholars of his day who made it his business to learn Hebrew and though he did not know it very well he was able to consult Jewish scholars. With this basic knowledge he set about arranging the various texts in six parallel columns from left to right in the following order: (1) Hebrew, (2) transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek letters, (3) Aquila version, (4) Symmachus version, (5) LXX, (6) Theodotian version. For the Psalms Eusebius tells us that Origen added three other versions. It was a mammoth undertaking and is estimated to have covered 6,500 pages. In his commentary on Matthew he tells us his method of working: "With the help of God's grace I have tried to repair the disagreements in the copies of the Old Testament on the basis of the other versions. When I was uncertain of the Septuagint reading because the various copies did not tally, I settled the issue by consulting the other versions and retaining what was in agreement with them. Some passages did not appear in the Hebrew; these I marked with an obelus as I did not dare to leave them out altogether. Other passages I marked with an asterisk to show that

they were not in the Septuagint but that I had added them from the other versions in agreement with the Hebrew text. Whoever wished may accept them; anyone who is offended by this procedure may accept or reject them as he chooses".

In his preaching Origen naturally made use of his textual studies. But he did not ride roughshod over the feelings of his congregation. He read and preached from the Old Testament LXX version knowing it to be as he put it the one "familiar and current in the churches". But as occasion arose, he would point to alternative readings from the Hebrew and expound these also and Origen's attitude and method was the same over the variant readings in the New Testament.

Jerome Greek was the lingua franca of the Roman empire from Italy eastward. But in the south of Gaul and in North Africa, Latin was the dominant language and it is in these areas that we first find Latin texts of the Bible c.150 AD. Tertullian and Cyprian used such texts. The Old Latin versions of the Old Testament were translated from the LXX, and they bear witness to the LXX before its later recessions (when more Christian additions to the text were made).

The Latin-speaking Church in the 4th century found itself, then, with a wide variety of Latin versions and it seems there were those in high circles who felt the need for a uniform and reliable text for theological discussion and liturgical use. So in 382 AD pope Damasus commissioned Jerome to produce such a text. Jerome was certainly qualified for the task having learnt Hebrew from a Jewish Christian and being a scholar in Latin and Greek.

Damasus' first concern was for Jerome to produce a revision of the Old Latin Gospels. Having accomplished this Jerome then went on to revise the Psalter and perhaps other Old Testament books. In this work he became more and more dissatisfied with the LXX and eventually decided in favour of a completely fresh translation based on the Hebrew text. This is Jerome's real achievement, which he undertook during the years 390-405. As for the apocryphal books which he did not believe to be inspired, these only took him a few months to translate!

Only Jerome's translation of the Gospels was widely accepted during

his lifetime - no doubt because it was but a revision of the familiar Old Latin and not a fresh translation. His translation of the Old Testament was severely criticised at the time and it took centuries for the version to gain general acceptance. The criticisms raised against it included: a) that it was tainted with Judaism; b) that it was a forgery; c) that it undermined the truth of the inspired Scriptures of the LXX.

It would seem that the Hebrew text he used was substantially the same as the Massoretic text we possess. As his Hebrew MSS bore witness to one tradition, he assumed that the LXX MSS in his possession had in the process of copying strayed from this original text.

On the question of technique in translating, Jerome discusses the principles and problems in the preface to his translation of Eusebius' Chronicles. He finds the translator's task almost an impossible one due to the idiomatic phrases and variations in word order from one language to another. He must wrestle with the choice between a word for word, literal rendering and a freer more elegant translation. In his letters Jerome continues to discuss the subject, pointing out that the New Testament writers themselves often used much freedom when quoting from another language. Jerome's general rule was that the translator should render sense for sense and not word for word.

Having said all this, however, he made one very notable exception - "except for the Holy Scriptures, where even word-order is a mystery". In this way he made a sharp distinction between translating the Classics and translating the Scriptures. The Latin of his new version can only be described as a special 'Biblical Latin' coloured by the Hebrew original. There was a time when Jerome would have regarded such a production as barbarous and uncouth in the same way as Tatian had felt when he first read the Greek of the LXX. Jerome's Latin version like the LXX before it was not set in a style that belonged to a past literary glory. This Latin text does have its weaknesses, varying in quality and style from passage to passage, even allowing New Testament understanding to come through in an unjustifiable way. An obvious example is Hab.3:18 where "I will joy in the God of my salvation" is rendered "I will joy in God my Jesus".

Augustine It may be of comfort and encouragement to many readers to know that this great man was no good at languages! He knew little or nothing of the original languages of the Bible but he saw the need of an authoritative Latin version, deploring the multiplicity of translations circulating in North Africa. Now while he respected Jerome as a great biblical scholar and came to use his revision of the New Testament Gospels, he was not at all happy that in his translation of the Old Testament Jerome had set aside the LXX in favour of a Hebrew text which few in the Church could understand. For Augustine, the Old Testament Latin text based on the Greek Septuagint was the authoritative one. He felt that the translators of the LXX had been given a peculiar understanding of the text. He writes: "There were other translators out of the Hebrew into the Greek, as Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and that nameless interpreter whose translation is called the fifth edition. But the Church has received that of the LXX, as if there were no other, and it has been used by the Greek Christians most of whom do not know that there is any other. Our Latin translation has been made from this one also. However, Jerome, a learned presbyter, and a great linguist, has translated the same Scriptures from the Hebrew into Latin. But although the Jews affirm his learned labour to be all truth and avouch the LXX to have erred often, yet the Churches of Christ hold no one man to be preferred before the many who produced the LXX".⁵

On the pastoral side Augustine feared that this dependence on the Hebrew would lead to a division between the Greek and Latin churches, because he sensed that the Greek church would continue to use the LXX. He also took into account the feelings of the people who were used to the Latin wording based on the LXX but he was not averse to using other translations in his discourses and preaching. He sometimes appealed to different renderings of a passage without making any attempt to judge between them. G. Bonner comments: "so far as he is concerned, one form is as good as another for the purposes of preaching".⁶

THE SEPTUAGINT versus THE MASSORETIC TEXT

One of the criticisms raised against the LXX by the rabbis, as we have stated earlier, was that it was based on an inferior text. Were they right in so thinking or was it simply the result of antagonism

toward Christianity? Likewise we need to ask on what grounds has the Western Church come to accept the Massoretic text in place of the Septuagint tradition? If the text underlying the LXX was good enough for the New Testament apostles and regarded by the Early Church as a kind of Received Text why should the Church now be committed in any way to the authority of the Massoretic text when such a text was approved and transmitted within a rabbinic, anti-christian tradition?

It would appear that within Jewish circles a standardization of the Hebrew text had taken place by the end of the 1st century or early 2nd century AD but we cannot say that the standardized text is identical with the Massoretic text we possess today. No text of the whole Hebrew Bible from that time is on our possession yet we do have a Hebrew text that has certainly been very carefully transmitted and guarded by the Massoretic scribes. They have not only given us the printed text but the whole system of guarding the text. Every letter and word of the Bible has been counted and the half-way letter and word carefully noted.

The earliest extant MSS of the entire Old Testament preserving the Massoretic text date from c.10th century AD. Fragments of the Hebrew Bible found in an old Cairo synagogue dating from 6th to 8th centuries are in the same textual tradition; so, too, are texts recently found at Murabba'at and Masada in the Judean desert, which were used by orthodox rabbis and date from the bar Kochba rising of 132-135 AD. Rabbi Aqiba who according to tradition was deeply involved in the standardization of the Hebrew text was a leader in that revolt. These latter texts would confirm that by the early part of the 2nd century AD the Hebrew text was standardized and in general agreement with our Massoretic text.

Other earlier Hebrew texts from Qumran dating back to pre-Christian times have given us a complete text of Isaiah, Habakkuk 1-2 and fragments of every other book of the Bible except Esther. The Isaiah scroll has a text which generally supports the Massoretic but it does also offer a great number of variant readings. Incidentally, the Massorettes themselves offer textual variants by their use of special points and marginal notes but they did not emend the consonantal text which they held to be inviolable.

We have mentioned earlier that it was from about the middle of the 2nd century that the difference between the Jewish Hebrew Bible and the Christian Greek Bible became a point of contention. It would appear that the 1st century Christians, as B.Childs notes, "made no claims of having a better text of Scripture as did, for example, the Samaritans" and that "they continued to use whatever texts were current among their Jewish contemporaries".⁷ Certainly, from the New Testament documents, we find considerable freedom in the use of Old Testament quotations, many of them reflecting the LXX version. All this changed as a result of the Jewish activity at the end of the 1st century.

The question remains, why did the rabbis after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD select for their use and future transmission that text type which was to be the ancestor of the Massoretic text? Sadly the question cannot be answered with certainty on our present knowledge. Scholars are however less inclined now to believe that the rabbis met in council to survey all the possibilities and arbitrarily pronounced in favour of a text which shewed no affinities with the text underlying the LXX. It is far more likely that they accepted a textual tradition which had a long history of use in worship and instruction within mainline Judaism. What is more, recent finds and scholarly research has upheld the wisdom of the rabbis. The multiplicity of Hebrew MSS at Qumran and the other places further to the south have exhibited a wide range of text-types including those which underly the LXX, the Samaritan Pentateuch and the later Massoretic version. Compared with the other text types that which lies behind the Massoretic tradition shows fewer signs of later interpretation and harmonistic additions.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

1. It has become increasingly clear that in the Providence of God the ancient rabbis have preserved a text that is superior to the texts which lie behind such versions as the LXX. This ancestor to the Massoretic text shows all the signs of being of great age and reliable. What is more, the Massoretic scribes have preserved it for hundreds of years in a most excellent form. One modern textual critic writes: "The Massoretic Text itself deserves very high respect and should be changed only with great caution."⁸

2. The LXX can be of some assistance where the Hebrew text has been

poorly transmitted but its greatest value lies in the area of Old Testament interpretation. Despite protests to the contrary, under the Providence of God it gives the correct sense in such crucial passages as Is.7:14.

3. While we should aim to obtain the best possible Hebrew text and a translation that is of the highest accuracy (for we believe in verbal inspiration), we should not get into the position where Christians divide among themselves over such issues. Let the New Testament Church be an example to us. They made good use of the best they had and used what their opponents in the Greek-speaking world were accustomed to; in a different age Origen and Jerome did the same.

4. We have been reminded over and over again that a translation of the Scriptures should always convey the uniqueness of the Biblical Writings. Even the Biblical languages are distinctive and this should be conveyed in the translation.

References

1. Moulton's Grammar, Vol.III, p4
2. idem, p9
3. Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol.I
4. Tregelles, Evangelical Library Lecture, p18
5. The City of God, XVIII, 43
6. Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol.I, p546
7. Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, p99
8. Textual Criticism of the Old Testament, R.W.Klein, p74

BOOK REVIEWS

'THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF MAN'

Edited by Sir Alister Hardy. O.U.P. 1980 £6.95

This book has already attracted a good deal of attention, having been mentioned on TV and then Bernard Levin devoted two articles in 'The Times' to it, and this elicited comment in the correspondence columns of that newspaper. It is a book ministers should read, and no doubt most libraries will obtain it on request, as did mine in West Sussex. It is a book of encouragements and discouragements. The former because it gives evidence for our Biblical doctrine of man, showing he has a spiritual nature, being made in the likeness of God in order to commune with and worship Him. However, and here is the discouraging part, the book does not draw this conclusion, but explains the phenomenon in terms of humanistic evolution!

The author, Sir Alister Hardy, began to collect material as long ago as 1925, although his Religious Experience Research Unit was not set up until 1969. Books based on the researches have already appeared, but this is the fullest so far, reporting the findings from three out of the four thousand contributions received from the general public. These have been classified and categorized, and we are given statistics as to how many fall into each category, with examples from the actual accounts received. The classification is done very much on psychological lines, using the terminology of that discipline. In fact the author regards his work as a development of the work of the pioneers of the psychology of religion such as James and Starbuck. Experiences are classified as "Sensory and Behavioural" or "Cognitive and Effective". This simply means that some people have experiences through seeing visions, feeling touches, hearing voices, etc., whereas others feel an inward sense of joy, peace, awe, love, hope and so on. The causes that trigger off these experiences are also examined, and these cover an astonishingly wide range - from prayer and participation in worship, via music, drama, art and literature, to such things as sexual relations and childbirth! The place of drugs as a stimulant is also examined.

Some of the statistics which emerge are interesting and even surprising. Out of the 3000 replies no less than 544 claimed some kind of visual experience, and 431 heard voices, which included certain forms of tongue-speaking. A questionnaire seeking to discover how many have ever had a sense of a "supernatural presence" revealed 65%. This questionnaire was separate from the 3000 voluntary contributions and was done on a group of students. But when it came to the circumstances of this awareness only 13% connected it with prayer and only 12% experienced it in a church service. There would seem here to be some sort of challenge to our present evangelical public and private devotion, and one is caused to wonder whether these have become mechanical and devoid of almost all truly spiritual experience.

But the biggest challenge comes from the philosophy underlying this whole research programme. Although a scientist, the author is critical of the trends in modern science which seek to explain everything in terms of molecular biology and ignore the whole realm of consciousness, especially in relation to religious experience.

"Without this being taken into consideration, there is a danger of man falling into a fantasy equal to the one he has escaped of mediaeval theology based on Adam, the Fall, the Devil and Hell" (p15).

He believes passionately in recovering a recognition of the reality of religious experience, lest the scientific revolution should lead to a situation in which the last stage is worse than the first:

"The bringing of the elements of religion into the realm of scientific thought may prove to be a vital issue: unless this can be done, religion as a moral force may disappear and we cannot be sure that our civilization will survive without it" (p8).

Unfortunately, what he regards as "mediaeval" is in essence if not in detail also Biblical - the ideas of "Adam and his Fall, a personal devil and a localized hell".

The alternative explanation of man's religious nature which he offers us is in fact worse than the one he rejects. For instead of

querying the whole basis of humanistic evolution he actually applies its methods to religious experience! There is a kind of natural selection, he holds, in the spiritual evolution of man. This is not explicable in purely biological terms, for DNA only controls physical evolution. But there is a mental evolution in which non-genetical factors play a part. Ideas are handed on from one generation to another (termed "memes" as opposed to "genes"!) some of which have better "survival value" than others. Thus the idea of God has persisted and developed because of its "great psychological appeal". It answers the deepest questions of existence - how injustices in this world are corrected in the next, and idea which is "none the less effective for being imaginary" (!). These ideas affect behaviour which itself affects physical evolution.

With this apologetic in the introduction we are the less surprised to find at the end his answer to the question "What is spirituality?" It is not apparently what you and I thought - a divine gift, a built-in faculty which after the Fall remains in a weakened form, but can be recovered through faith. It is part of our evolutionary development and appears most strongly in childhood. Later experiences are the afterglow of our childhood visions. We can cultivate these by attending more to our inner psychology. For this is the source of it all. There is no such thing as "answered prayer" in the old evangelical sense. The answer to our problems lies within our own selves. When we pray it is simply a way of probing the depths until the answer emerges.

Thus what we are presented with here is an array of evidence on which to base a plea for a fresh development in science. He admits that scientific theories are always changing - including those connected with Darwinianism. The next change must be to accommodate human spirituality within the theory of evolution. We have here then a great challenge. The evidence favours Biblical theology, but is interpreted in such a way as to deny that theology in support of humanistic evolution. But who among us will answer this challenge? Here is a modern Goliath defying the armies of the living God. But where is the David who walks so closely with his God and so trusts the God he serves that he knows how to overthrow him? What has happened to genuine Biblical religious experience? Biblical theology is obviously not enough.

Rev G.Eric Lane MA (Chichester, West Sussex)

THEOLOGICAL WORDBOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Edited by R.Larrd Harris,
Gleason L.Archer Jr., and Bruce K.Waltke
Published in two volumes by Moody Press.
Vol.I Aleph - Mem, Pages 1-538. Vol.II Nun - Tan, Pages 539-1124

These two volumes provide a monumental and excellent dictionary of O.T. words. The forty-six contributors include such respected scholars as the late J.Bartom Payne, Walter C.Kaiser, E.A.Martens, D.J.Wiseman and Edwin Yamauchi, producing a thoroughly conservative evangelical work.

As the titles indicate the work is based on Hebrew words and articles are arranged by Hebrew roots, analogously to the Brown, Driver and Briggs Lexicon. However, each Hebrew vocable is cited in alphabetical order (as in Koehler - Baumgartner) and indexed by means of a numerical system which facilitates the finding of references. All words are given a basic definition and the more significant are given an article varying from a few sentences to several thousand words. An Aramaic lexicon and brief notes are provided at the end of each work together with an extensive numerical index which codes each reference to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. This last feature enables usage by the student without Hebrew, although an elementary knowledge of Hebrew Grammar would be decidedly useful in order to understand reference to e.g. Qal, Niphal, Infinitive Absolute. Each article is followed by a Bibliography which in places is very inadequate but especially useful are the many (usually) English journal articles which are appended.

Evaluation of such a work is not easy. However, the combination of evangelical piety and scholarship has produced a work which ought to be of immense value to the student and especially the hard-pressed Pastor. The Introduction says (p.iv) "The contributors were asked to study their words from the viewpoint of biblical usage, etymological background, comparison with cognate languages, translations in the ancient versions, synonyms, antonyms, and theological significance. Also they were to consider the use of their words in passages of special difficulty." The editors add, "Naturally, not all of those items were applicable to every word. And the writers felt the pressure of fitting their study into the narrow limitation

of a two-volume book of this nature. Many things they would like to include could not be worked in." There is considerable variation as to the success of the respective authors in meeting these requirements. Many succeed admirably; of special note (in addition to those already named) are the excellent contributions of Victor Hamilton, John Hartley and John Oswalt. Larrd Harris' studies on the various Hebrew 'death' words are stimulating. However, especially in some of the earlier contributions there is a failure to deal with "theological significance" and this is particularly apparent in words which have an eschatological importance.

Finally, it might be asked whether "Theological Wordbook" is an adequate title. In fact, the work is more extensive than the title suggests and is really an Old Testament Dictionary involving as it does studies on places, things etc., without 'theological' significance, e.g. the first article is on 'barley'.

Altogether to be highly recommended.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA by M.H.Woudstra

The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
(Eerdmans) 396pp

JUDGES by J.Alberto Soggin

S.C.M. O.T. Library, 305pp £8.50 (limp)

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH by J.A.Thompson

The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
(Eerdmans) 819pp

The O.T. is currently a "growth industry" in theological circles and nowhere is this better illustrated than in the two commentary series whose newest volumes are under review here. Such a development is especially encouraging to the preacher when it is the "neglected" books of the O.T. canon which are being commented on, as here, since there is an urgent need to be brought up to date on modern archaeological and philological studies. Only when this has been done to illuminate the text can the preacher be confident that he has begun to grasp the heart of God's message in these books of Holy Scripture.

It is the purpose of this review to begin by reviewing together the books by Woudstra and Soggin since Joshua and Judges are so

intimately related to one another and a useful comparison between the approaches of the respective commentators can be helpfully outlined. Both volumes share the following procedures: i) they are exegetical studies. They are therefore an attempt to tell us what the text actually says (not what the student thinks they ought to say!). Consequently, Soggin (Professor of Old Testament Theology at the Waldensian Faculty in Rome and Lecturer at the University of Rome) divides each section of commentary on the text into three: His own translation from the Hebrew; textual and philological comments and, finally, theological and critical discussion on the basis of the foregoing textual work. Similarly Woudstra, who is Professor of O.T. Studies at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, also provides his own translation which is followed by a commentary incorporating the features of Soggin's final two sections. Woudstra tends to be the more thorough and extensive of the two but each provide much valuable exegetical material. ii) both commentators are concerned to uncover the underlying "editorial" purpose of the human authors of these two books in the Divine Library. They share, therefore, a conviction that the narrative portions of O.T. literature provide a theologically interpreted presentation of the material they are dealing with. O.T. history is not mere chronicling. Each commentator draws attention, therefore, to the main theological themes that are discernible in the respective books - the real, if partial, fulfilment of the patriarchal promises in Joshua and the "Deuteronomic" framework of blessing and curse in response to obedience and disobedience in Judges. These themes are traced, with others, in their development. Such material gives clear guidance to the expositor.

The major difference between the two volumes, however, lies in the radically different approaches to Hebrew historiography. Both authors are aware of some of the most characteristic features of O.T. narrative as we have it - notably, the repetitive duplication of material and the unchronological nature of some of the accounts. However, Woudstra is able to show that these features can often be explained by seeing them as summaries which are often expanded, or (where there are parallel accounts) as different and complimentary interpretations of the same event. In addition, he is able to show that to take the text as we have it does not leave the reader with a hopelessly contradictory story. Rather, he suggests, the book of Joshua shows evidence of remarkable accuracy and was probably

written shortly after the events that it recounts. In fact it is a real pleasure to read the thoroughly conservative comments of Woudstra. By way of contrast Soggin's work assumes that the only valid approach to the text of Judges is that which depends on the methods of literary and form criticism. As he understands it, this requires the assumption of contradictory elements and discernible "seams" in the text and the likelihood that a long period between event and the final editing of Judges has left us with little certainty as to what actually took place during Israel's early history. Interestingly, when Soggin refers to a recent study by computer which suggests a 99% probability that the main body of Judges is by one author (a fact which raises questions about the possibility of being, therefore, able to discern all the different elements in the text required by Soggin's methodology) he can only conclude that "they show us how thoroughly Dtr. not only collected but also reworked his sources" (p6 footnote 8). The importance of our comments at this point lies in the fact that liberal scholars, like Soggin, seem to be still unaware that there are alternative methodologies to the ones they adopt as fact; that these alternatives are quite as scholarly yet able to treat the text as true until proved otherwise and seem largely free of the alleged contradictions and "problems" raised by liberal methodologies. These alternative approaches must be taken account of in any scholarly work.

Since much of Soggin's work is occupied with discussion of the critical problems thrown up by his own methodology its value is, consequently, reduced for those who do not share those same views. Nevertheless, especially in the present absence of textual and exegetical commentaries on the book of Judges (Cundall excepted) these features of Soggin's work will make this a useful addition to the library of the more scholarly Pastor.

Finally, to return to Woudstra: if his book is to be faulted amid its general excellence it is in his frequent failure to indicate the direction of Christian application in the text. Although there are excellent hints throughout the work they are not as clearly developed as in Wenham's commentary in this same series (see Foundations No.6), nor as regular as the incisive comments so much a characteristic of Derek Kidner's O.T. commentaries. Clearer explanation would have been valuable, not only to aid the Pastor hard-

pressed for time and thought but also since it is surely the responsibility of the Christian exegete to show how an O.T. book acts as authoritative literature in the N.T. community - the Church. Nevertheless, this blemish but little undermines the certainty that Woudstra's commentary will rightly be seen for some time as the standard conservative work on the Book of Joshua, providing a reliable guide through the story of Israel's entry into the Land.

At this point we turn to a consideration of Thompson's work.

This volume is a worthy addition to the NICOT series of commentaries - a series which promises to provide Old Testament commentaries of the highest standard of scholarship from a, basically, conservative theological position. The strength of Thompson's work are both those of the earlier volumes (e.g. the thoroughness of the exegetical work) and others which are special to 'Jeremiah'. The latter includes an extensive discussion of literary critical problems. Moreover the writing of the commentary has clearly been a labour of love in a part of God's Word which is the especial delight of the author. This makes the study always interesting and readable and Thompson seems to bring us unerringly to the heart of both Jeremiah and his message - we feel we stand where Jeremiah stood and we are touched by his anguish of soul in proclaiming God's message of judgement. Finally, there is an apologetic strength to the work as is witnessed by the defence of the authenticity of many passages.

The structure of the commentary is similar to the earlier volumes. An extensive introduction (p 1-136) includes discussions on Jeremiah's relation to the other prophets; an essay on the historical setting of his ministry; the compilation of the book and a discussion of the main exegetical issues in Jeremiah. Of these latter we would mention, the date of Jeremiah's call; the first and second scrolls; Jeremiah and the Covenant; the prophet and the cult; symbolic actions etc. Included in the introductory material is also a section on the message of Jeremiah, on the text (the Septuagint being preferred in the most knotty textual problems in the whole of the Bible) and on the poetic forms of the book. Discussion is often a dialogue with recent studies such as those of E.W.Nicholson. The readability of Thompson's work extends to this introductory material - seldom has the reviewer enjoyed introductory essays in commentaries but this book is a definite exception.

While it will not have escaped the readers' attention that the reviewer found the reading of this book an enjoyable task, nevertheless there are several points of criticism to make in closing: i) there is a tendency to wordiness in places; ii) the incisive contemporary applications of e.g. Leslie Allen in the commentary on Micah are absent. Thompson presumably regards his task as that of an exegete rather than an interpreter. While this is not a serious weakness in a prophetic book help would, nevertheless, have been welcome and its absence will reduce the value of the volume for the busy Pastor; iii) the apologetic purpose of the work has led (as so often with modern conservative studies) to an over-indulgent view of modern, negative criticism. In this respect one sometimes feels that Thompson's insistence that Jeremiah was not a literary prophet is overplayed. If it is an undoubtedly eirenic spirit (which is much appreciated) which was behind this approach it has, at times, led to compromise.

ESSAYS ON THE PATRIARCHAL NARRATIVES

Edited by A.R.Millard and D.J.Wiseman

Published by the Inter-Varsity Press. Hardback £6.95

PLOT AND PURPOSE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT by E.A.Martens

Published by Inter-Varsity Press, Paperback £4.95

also published in America by Baker Book House under the title, 'GOD'S DESIGN: A FOCUS ON OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY'

Inter-Varsity Press are to be congratulated for the publication of these two excellent volumes in the field of O.T. studies.

Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives is, as the title suggests, a collection of papers written by members of the Tyndale Fellowship's O.T. studies group to meet the need for an up-to-date appraisal of recent developments in Patriarchal studies. In particular, they constitute a response to the contemporary swing back to a more sceptical attitude toward the historical existence of the Patriarchs or, at least, much that is said about them. These essays, therefore, are especially concerned to evaluate the two recent studies which mark this shift, viz. T.L.Thompson: "The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives" and John van Seters: "Abraham in History and

Tradition". However, they are of more general usefulness in that they wrestle with the problem, which all theological students are aware of, concerning the relationship between faith and history - a problem which is at its acutest in the Patriarchal narratives.

Seven essays are offered to the reader. The first, entitled "The Patriarchs in Scripture and History" is by John Goldingay and is a study of the theological structure of both the Patriarchal narratives themselves and the wider O.T. narrative structure of which these stories form a part. Goldingay's emphasis is that these stories are to be regarded as "stories" rather than "history". This is indeed a proper emphasis, if we understand this to mean that the Patriarchal narratives are interpretative accounts within a theological structure of events that actually took place in history rather than mere chronicling of those events. However, there is just a hint in Goldingay's paper that he is prepared to be agnostic about the historical reliability of some of the Patriarchal material - either this, or he is too philosophical by half! It is somewhat alarming to find an "evangelical" scholar at least permitting such an interpretation of his words and, in fact, this touches upon the major weakness of the volume. Although it is by no means true of all the contributors to this volume some of the essayists (both in this volume and elsewhere) seem to be prepared to ally a basic conservatism with an uncertain doctrine of Scripture which has led to many concessions being made, in the name of scholarship, to viewpoints which are contrary to the Scripture's own view of itself. Gordon Wenham's essay on "The Religion of the Patriarchs" illustrates this. A useful study is flawed by far too high a regard for the documentary hypothesis which lies behind most O.T. studies of the Pentateuch today. In this vital area, where young students need much help, it is, sadly, the Theological Students Fellowship not the Tyndale Fellowship that is giving the lead.

However, there is much of real value in the book. Millard's essay on "Methods of studying the Patriarchal Narratives as Ancient Texts" is a brilliant expose of the bias found in O.T. studies in the evaluation of the reliability of the Biblical material over against other ancient texts. Consistently, the O.T. Scriptures are treated as incorrect unless proved otherwise in much modern study and Millard shows the hypocrisy of such an attitude allied, as it so often is with the ready acceptance of other material of comparable

antiquity. A student fresh to the debate is given real orientation here!

The middle three essays are by J.J.Bimson, M.J.Selman and D.J.Wiseman and are discussions of the use to which archaeology and comparative anthropology may be made in Patriarchal studies. Pitfalls that conservative students are liable to fall into are outlined (e.g. a too ready identification between extra-biblical and biblical material where it seems to suit, without adequate assessment of the respective data; the assumption that archaeology can prove the Patriarchal narratives correct which is seldom, if ever, possible). However, on the positive side, not only are contemporary sceptical approaches exposed but Bimson's excellent article is able to argue that the narratives are at least at home amid the customs and archaeology of the early second millenium B.C. Wiseman's contribution also provides some useful and thought-provoking material on the question as to whether Abraham was a nomad or not in Canaan. Wiseman concludes that he was not and this leads to some interesting possibilities in the reinterpretation of the Abraham story.

The final essay, which follows that of Wenham, mentioned above, is a rather technical contribution by D.W.Baker entitled, "Diversity and Unity in the literary structure of Genesis". He concludes that Genesis is a well structured literary document which shows no evidence of being an amalgam of originally separate sources and this leads him to make a call for a thorough re-examination of the theory of source documents as advanced in the JEDP schema.

Concluding remarks The student of the early material of the Bible, and Genesis 12-50 in particular will find in this book a comprehensive and generally reliable guide to his or her studies. Make sure that your Theology students are aware of its existence!

Plot and Purpose in the Old Testament Evangelical students of the O.T. have long been awaiting a satisfactory O.T. Theology which: i) seeks a self-generating O.T. structure within which to present its material, rather than depending upon a systematic framework usually derived from the N.T. and which tends, therefore, to neglect those features prominent in the O.T. but which have a lesser emphasis in the N.T. ii) Integrates those discoveries of recent

scholarship which are consistent with a high view of Scripture and in a lively way presents a fresh and readable perspective on O.T. religion. In reading this book I felt that this is the nearest that we have yet attained to that goal. Every pastor should purchase and digest a copy!

Eschewing those approaches to the O.T. which look for a single centre, Martens (who is President and Professor of O.T. at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California) suggests, on an exegesis of Exodus 5:22-6:8; Hosea 2:14-23; and Ezekiel 34:17-31, that a fourfold strand (deliverance, community, knowledge of God and land) runs through the O.T. He traces the development of the theology associated with these motifs through the three major sub-divisions of the O.T. which he distinguishes viz. pre-monarchy, monarchy and post-monarchy. Eventually, he observes that these motifs push forward to their fulfilment in the N.T.

Though the fourfold division is itself somewhat synthetic yet nevertheless its use provides a fairly comprehensive coverage of O.T. theology and it is especially encouraging to see the emphasis which is placed on the land.

As was noted above an adequate O.T. theology must begin with the O.T. itself. However, a Christian O.T. theology must then take the further step and relate the material to those N.T. Scriptures that faith believes are the fulfilment of all that was before. At this point the reviewer discovered a weakness in Martens' work, since he spends little time in tracing that relationship or providing such hermeneutical procedures which enable the reader to make the O.T. Scriptures the word of God to the contemporary situation but these matters may have been seen as outside the scope of the work. It would, however, have greatly facilitated the use of his book and without adequate development of this sort the student is driven elsewhere for guidance on the how of application - guidance which is scarce. In fact, the reviewer is left with the feeling that Martens himself is not altogether clear as to how the connection is made since he is hesitant to use typology and tends to be superficial when any attempt at application is made.

These matters apart, (together with a tendency to rather overdo the point that prophets were, above all, preachers to their own

generation) this is an excellent volume which provides not only a basic orientation to O.T. theology for the beginner but also much thought-provoking material for the more experienced student and in a highly readable form.

Rev Stephen P. Dray MA BD (Brockley, London)

Having reviewed Jensen's "Survey of the Old Testament" in Issue No. 5, readers may like to know that his "Survey of the New Testament" has just been published by Moody Press

THE GREAT ACQUITTAL

Justification by Faith and Current Christian Thought

by Tony Baker, George Carey, John Tiller, Tom Wright
Collins, 1980 125pp £1.50

This small paperback merits a review in our Journal for numerous reasons. First of all, it is an attempt by some Evangelical Anglicans to expound and clarify the crucial doctrine of Justification by Faith and for this reason alone the book deserves to be studied by us. The opening section by Tom Wright entitled, "Justification: The Biblical Basis and its Relevance for Contemporary Evangelicalism" is both penetrating and provocative and it is well written. Another reason for drawing attention to the book is that it relates the doctrine of Justification by Faith to the contemporary English situation in the Anglican Church and, at the same time, to the more general situation within Christendom and Evangelicalism so that the book is contemporary and practical. Furthermore, the writers of this book are convinced of the great importance of doctrine and in the existentialist climate of thought now prevailing such a book is invaluable. For example, in the introduction Gavin Reid suggests several reasons why doctrine is so unpopular today.

In recent decades he observes there has been a shift by even intelligent people into emotive rather than descriptive thinking so that we tend to think more in stereotypes and caricatures. The word 'doctrine' also conveys a negative image and tends to be

associated with bigotry and unloving attitudes. In our multi-racial society, too, there are new currents of thought which are challenging not only orthodox doctrines but doctrine itself on the assumption that it is unhelpful to be dogmatic. Doctrinal viewpoints anyway are regarded only as personal opinions which need to be balanced by other opinions. Within the Church of England, also, there have appeared recently 'bureaucratic pressures' intent on organizing and curbing the conflicting traditions within its ranks and the voluntary societies working from clear theological positions so as to "run a tidy ecclesiastical ship" (p9).

Reid's attitude is refreshingly clear and uncompromising. "If doctrine divides then that is a cost that has to be paid. To avoid paying such a price could mean that people are led into erroneous views about God ... To settle for a uniting message that is misleading about God and his will, is not a way open to the Christian ... Doctrine matters and this doctrine (Justification by Faith) matters most ... A Church that ignores doctrine will die. A Church that ignores its central doctrine will die in agony" (p10-11). We applaud this healthy approach to doctrine and the book is likely to make a significant contribution to the contemporary theological scene in England.

In his first section, Tom Wright argues for the 'forensic' view of Justification, defining it as "the declaration that somebody is in the right" (p14); this is more than 'forgiveness' or even 'acquittal' for Justification indicates a positive standing in the right as well as the absence or removal of guilt. After surveying and summarizing the biblical material the writer concludes that Justification is an aspect of a larger subject, namely, God's covenant purposes for his people including Jews and Gentiles. He describes Justification as "essentially a polemical doctrine" (p19) as in Romans and Galatians; "it is not a fiction", he adds, "a pretence or a process; it is God's righteous declaration in the present that the person who believes in the risen Lord Jesus Christ is a member of the covenant family, whose sins have been dealt with on the cross and who is therefore assured of eternal life" (p18). The Roman Catholic failure to distinguish Regeneration from Justification, the wedge driven between Justification and the idea of the historical covenant people of God by Radical Protestantism and the

existentialism even of contemporary Evangelicalism leading to the cult of sincerity over against objective truth and an anti-church attitude are matters briefly touched upon in conclusion. His identification of the Reformed School with Barth and Torrance is unfortunate (pp30 and 117) but his challenge is a powerful one and must be faced by all Evangelicals; "the real test for Evangelicalism today is this; are we prepared to be reformed under the Word of God, as we traditionally insist that everyone else ought to be? Or have our traditional ways of thinking become the norm into which the Bible must be made to fit?" (p34).

The second section deals with the relationship of Justification by Faith to the Sacraments, a subject which bristles with all kinds of contemporary as well as historical and theological questions. The writer, John Tiller, shows the inadequacy of a creation-gospel explanation of this relationship and then stresses that baptism and the Lord's Supper are "inescapably associated with an ATONEMENT-GOSPEL. They are like two great beacons set up to keep the Church living in the light of justification by faith in Christ alone for salvation" (p42). He then proceeds to develop an answer using the basic theological idea underlying baptism and the eucharist, namely, union with Christ. In this context some of his statements are ambiguous and open to misunderstanding. While, for example, he rejects baptismal regeneration, he nevertheless affirms that "it is by means of the sacraments that we are incorporated in Christ ..." (p44) and again he writes, "The New Testament views the sacraments as effectively conveying what God promises in the Gospel" (p45). I am also unhappy with his exegesis and use of passages like Colossians 2 verse 12 and Titus 3 verses 4-7. Furthermore, the question posed on page 45, "are we brought into union with Christ by our faith, or by the sacraments" and his answer "Undoubtedly, St Paul says both" reveals the writers lack of acquaintance or disagreement with the Reformed biblical position at this point. It is neither our faith initially nor the sacraments which bring us into union with Christ. Rather it is by the effectual call of God that the sinner is ushered into fellowship and union with the Lord Jesus Christ (see e.g. I Cor 1 verse 9 and Romans 8 verse 30). In the words of the late Professor John Murray, "the application of redemption begins with the sovereign and efficacious summons by which the people of God are ushered into the fellowship of Christ and union with him to the end that they may become partakers of all the grace and

virtue which reside in him as Redeemer, Saviour and Lord" (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, p94 B.O.T).

Identifying sacramental and justifying faith, he goes on to argue that those who have believed in Christ are immediately qualified and indeed summoned to baptism. Here his position is inconsistent and needs to be thought through even more as he tries to allow for both infant baptism and the participation of some uncommitted as well as the seeking and the committed to the Parish Communion (p58). This section ends with a brief discussion of Faith and Knowledge and The Justified Community, stressing the point that the theological concept of being 'in Christ' is essentially a corporate one. "By extension, therefore, justification by faith is not, as it has sometimes been caricatured, an individualistic doctrine" (p59). My impression is that this is one of the weakest and most disappointing sections in the book and the writer appears to be struggling at times to understand and express this important relationship between justification and the sacraments.

In section Three, George Carey discusses the doctrine of Justification by Faith in Recent Roman Catholic Theology. Over the past 450 years this doctrine has been at the centre of the controversy between Rome and Protestantism and it is refreshing to find Carey writing, "It is the view of the Evangelical Anglican that the doctrine of justification by faith is still the central issue, although to date it has been ignored in recent discussions between Anglicans and Catholics. It is central because it goes to the very heart of the Gospel and how it is made available to man" (p62). I am not sure that all Evangelicals within the Church of England would subscribe to Carey's statement but I am inclined to agree with him that creative dialogue between Rome and Protestantism only began seriously in 1957 with the publication of Hans Kung's doctoral dissertation, "The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection". The questions raised by Barth in his Church Dogmatics were here taken up by Kung. Three questions were raised by Barth.

First of all, does Rome take God seriously in its doctrine of sin because it views sin only as a secondary, though important, 'accident'? Secondly, Barth asks whether Rome takes its doctrine of grace seriously for it views grace as a state rather than God's act in Christ. He finally questioned the relationship between faith

and works in the Roman system where good works are made co-ordinate with faith thus placing human merit as an element within justification.

Kung agreed with Barth that Justification was first of all a forensic declaration of a man's status before God and he argued that there was a great deal of common ground between the two sides. These important questions, however, in Kung's view, "will always remain polemical questions ... unless sufficient consideration is given to differences of expression and the theological cultures in which they are posed" (p64).

Karl Rahner regards Kung's contribution as representing an "important theological breakthrough" but Carey remarks that the doctrine still does not figure prominently in ecumenical debate "and is often treated as somewhat of a theological irrelevancy or embarrassment to modern Christians. However, evangelicals within all churches will contend with both Kung and Barth that this doctrine of justification is of crucial significance for ecumenism. Indeed they will tell other Christians bluntly that there can be no true unity worthy of the name until the heart of faith is shared. 'How is a man saved?' is hardly an abstract, irrelevant question. It is the crucial question which makes a man what he is, and churches what they are" (p66)

Carey proceeds in this section to survey the theological discussion concerning the nature of Justification which has continued in the Roman Church since 1957. The discussion is necessarily brief and sketchy but generally helpful. It is in the doctrine of grace that some of the greatest difficulties between Catholics and Protestants are encountered while Rome has also a defective doctrine of sin and of man's condition as a result of the Fall. Catholic theologians like Karl Rahner and Charles Meyer affirm that the Protestant doctrine of Justification by Faith leaves a man where it found him, namely, in his sin. Rahner writes, "The Catholic doctrine of Justification will always emphasise that we become God's children through God's grace and that in justification the Holy Spirit is given to us ..." (p73). In other words, while Protestants with their forensic view of Justification speak of an 'imputed righteousness', Catholics speak of an 'imparted righteousness' and thus confuse Justification with Sanctification. Other differences such as Assurance, Works, and the Church are touched upon by the writer but I regard his concluding statement with mixed feelings: "Evangelical Anglicans wish

to play a full part in ecumenical discussion; we concede that we have much to learn as well as something to give; we trust that, given the great deal of unity which already exists between Protestant and Catholic, earnest efforts will be made by us all to bring the whole Church into the unity of faith which is the will of God." (p88). There is clearly a renewed commitment on the part of the authors of this book to ecumenism despite the apostasy of many of the churches participating in dialogue.

The final section by Tony Baker tackles the implications of this doctrine of Justification Faith for pastoral and evangelistic ministry. In the context of proclaiming the gospel, the doctrine of Justification by Faith demands that the holiness and righteousness of God as well as the call to repentance be regularly preached. "It is this sort of content", writes Baker, "that paves the way for a clear understanding and awareness of justification. The wonder of acquittal will pass us by if we have known little or nothing about the condemnation we deserve and of personal conviction of sin" (p90) This is an important point and, again, he challengingly asks, "Have Anglican evangelicals of our generation too often given the impression of presenting the Gospel as though its ESSENTIAL purpose were to meet points of personal need such as loneliness, lack of aim in life, etc. rather than to put sinners right with God? Such a presentation is bound to pander to superficial professions and yet we wonder at the high 'drop-out' rate amongst those who profess conversion. Compare the size of so many apparently flourishing youth groups with the number still moving forward spiritually twenty years later" (p91). Again he writes, "It is time to go back to examine the Gospel we proclaim - and the books and booklets we write on evangelism and the training schemes we evolve to help in witness - and ask whether we are preaching it in full biblical proportions. We must preach the biblical categories, but in the setting of the 1980s" (p93). He argues that the doctrine of Justification by Faith also has implications for co-operation in evangelism. Without agreement on this doctrine, he affirms, "to go ahead in mission is surely hypocrisy before God and man, and not something which we can expect the Spirit of God to own. We forget we are limping along spiritually in this country because the Spirit of truth is grieved. Often we have not heeded that which the Spirit has made clear in the Scriptures, his written testimony to the living Christ. Our first concern must, therefore, be to do that which the Spirit will honour. It is not enough to say that all professing Christians are preaching the

Gospel of Christ. The question is: 'What is the Gospel and the nature of our response?' and also 'Who is the Christ and what has he accomplished?'" (p97).

Under the heading of pastoral care, the writer also shows the importance of preaching Justification by Faith for conversion, assurance, edification, suffering, satanic assaults and death. "There is no phase or crisis throughout Christian discipleship where justification by faith is not relevant" (p101). He warns us again, "Neglect this and we shall run round in decreasing circles supporting Christians whose prime need may be for a good dose of the implications of justification!" (p102). This is a most refreshing section and we would do well as Non-Comformists to heed its warnings and challenge.

While the book is written for Anglicans, therefore, and has many inherent weaknesses and inconsistencies yet it is a book with a message for all Churches.

Eryl Davies (Bangor)

MATTHEW by David Dickson

Banner of Truth 416pp £5.95

Many of our readers will already be familiar with the author's commentaries on the Psalms (reprinted in 1959) and Hebrews which was re-published alongside Ferguson's 'Epistles of Paul' in 1978 by the Banner. Surprisingly enough, this is the first reprint of his commentary on Matthew since 1651 and we are again indebted to the Banner for providing us with another valuable classic. Spurgeon described this commentary as "a perfect gem" and claimed "it is more suggestive of sermons than almost any other we have met with" and after reading the commentary, I could not disagree with Spurgeon!

Dickson's aim in writing the commentary is stated clearly in the Introduction: "some have written large commentaries upon sundry books and parcels of Scripture, others have translated out of Latin the commentaries of others. But of those worthy men's labours only such as have much leisure and patience to read can make use. Others have written short paraphrases of harder places; others, expositions of hard words; others have minded herewith some sweet notes and

observations, all of them contributing one with another unto the common good ... Yet ... these dangerous times call for such an explanation of the whole Bible as might not only show the scope of each book and chapter ... but also propone the special heads of doctrine in each place, whereby people might see the whole grounds of religion in the text and be guarded against all damnable errors ... and all this to be in such brevity and clearness that men in their daily set reading of the Lord's Word might in the space of half an hour peruse a competent portion of Scripture thus explained"(p.vi).

What is so refreshing about this commentary is the clarity and simplicity with which biblical truth is faithfully expressed and applied. After a brief explanation he proceeds to draw out the doctrine from each verse in a most helpful way. Commenting on chapter 4 verses 23-25 he speaks, for example, of the diligence of the Lord in his office "with the great power of the Godhead manifesting itself"(p41). Dickson then proceeds to apply eight points of doctrine from the three verses and in application of verses 17-18 in chapter 16 another nine points of doctrine are underlined briefly and practically.

The style of the book is readable, warm and practical. Pastors can recommend this book to their churches for use, not only in the Church library but for the purpose of aiding believers in their personal and daily reading of the Bible. Alongside Hendrikson and Calvin, Dickson's commentary provides a rich and balanced source of help for the preacher. The book is reasonably priced and deserves to be widely used both by Pastors and members of our churches.

Eryl Davies (Bangor)

GOD'S PEOPLE IN GOD'S WORLD

Biblical motives for social involvement

by John Gladwin

Published by IVP 191pp £2.95

The author of this book is currently Director of the Shaftesbury Project, who commissioned him to write it. Mr Gladwin is very much aware of, and involved in contemporary thinking about Christian involvement in the social and political realms. The book reflects

his consciousness of the wider world situation, as well as the challenges facing Christians in the Western world.

Despite the rather wordy style of long and complex sentences, (including one sentence I noticed of 80 words) the book presents a clear challenge to Christians to think out their position in this subject. Mr Gladwin writes with warmth and firm convictions. He is plain and outspoken in some of his statements. For example, "Failure to enter political commitments, due to fear, is the compromise of disobedience."(p123) And, "It is only the naive who think of social compassion without seeking to understand the political demands of such action."(p185) These quotations also illustrate his insistence that true social concern and action must be political in nature, though he believes that politics cannot offer final solutions or bring in the kingdom of God.

On the cover the book is described as "a wide-ranging discussion of the relevance of the doctrines of revelation, creation and the kingdom; the nature of man in a fallen world; the implications of Jesus' incarnation and crucifixion; Christian and Marxist visions of society; church-state relationships; and the place of God's law in present-day life." This is a good summary of the chapter divisions and subjects.

The book needs to be read with discernment. In many ways Mr Gladwin holds to clear biblical principles, and applies them in a helpful and instructive way. However, he also explains and applies some biblical teaching in a way which needs to be carefully examined. His general method is to develop themes such as 'incarnation' in a fairly free way which seems to sometimes strain legitimate principles of biblical interpretation. For example, "He (Jesus) came to reconcile and redeem the whole world for God. He represents the destruction of the old fallen order and the beginning of the new re-created order. That could only be achieved through his identification with the world, its guilt and condemnation, so that in him the world might be transformed and restored to a living, worshipping relationship with God."(p109) There is a great need to establish clear principles of biblical interpretation in the field of social and political action.

Mr Gladwin also avoids a clear statement on biblical authority. In

one frustrating paragraph he writes, "The Word of God is complete and has reached its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. This unique Word of God coming to us in human life and thought and history, centring on the living Word in Jesus Christ, is kept for us in Scripture. The Bible is the God-given and trustworthy witness to the Good News of what God has done for us and said to us. Because the Bible is about what God and said and done, it lives and speaks to man for all time. Because it leads to Jesus Christ as the perfect meeting-place of God and man, it is a Word which speaks to us as human beings caught in the dimensions of time and space. We find our human living addressed by God's Word and led to freedom in the Good News which it brings."(p41) Whilst there is much that is true in this, one is left with the impression that he is trying to avoid something.

His views of salvation, the church, and the kingdom of God also deserve careful scrutiny. What is the church's message and task in the world? What is the present implication of the kingdom? Mr Gladwin says, "Christian salvation into the kingdom is not about how 'souls' are saved out of the world of human life. It is about how people are brought to know God as King in Jesus and how their human living is changed and renewed as it is brought into the experience of the rule of God in God's kingdom."(p108)

Though there may be grounds for critically assessing the biblical and doctrinal grounds for some of Mr Gladwin's contentions we need to beware of feeling satisfied with that, and avoiding the need to positively state our own convictions on the grounds of scripture. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power."

We need to face the challenges in the field of social responsibility seriously. Mr Gladwin is right when he says, "The debate about the relationship between evangelism and social action is an important one. Faith and works, theology and ethics, can never be torn asunder. For this reason, evangelism and Christian life, the proclamation of the Good News and the loving action for our neighbour in the world, must never be separated. A church which is busy in evangelism, without any concern or desire to respond to the social pressures upon human life in society, is a church which has misunderstood the life-transforming thrust of the gospel itself. For the church, evangelism and social action are not in tension with

each other; they actually feed each other."(p181)

Rev Peter Milsom BD (Deeside)

INERRANCY

Readers may not be aware of the fact that the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy publish a quarterly newsletter entitled 'UPDATE' which includes news items, book reviews, brief articles and an exposition of the Council's Articles of Faith.

The Spring '81 number, for example, included a review of Stephen Davis's book, 'The Debate about the Bible' in which he defends his acceptance of infallibility without inerrancy. He describes Warfield's doctrine of inerrancy as 'divisible sectarianism' and also criticises the positions of Harold Lindsell and Francis Schaeffer for implying that a true evangelical always believes in inerrancy.

The reviewer, Dr Norman Geisler of Dallas Theological Seminary, accuses Davis of frequently attacking straw men and failing at times to reason logically. He also fails to make important distinctions in some crucial instances. Davis's most fundamental mistake, in the view of Geisler, "is not understanding that the Bible does claim to be wholly true and without falsehood because God uttered it". Geisler insists that "Inerrancy does follow logically from inspiration as follows: (1) The Bible is the utterance of God; (2) God cannot utter any falsehood; (3) therefore the Bible is free from all falsehood or error." The reviewer also accuses Davis of sidestepping the strength of the historical argument for inerrancy for it was believed by Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Luther and virtually all the great theologians till modern times. One positive use of the book is that it clarifies the logic of a number of arguments used by some defenders of inerrancy and makes some valid points in places. The book was published in 1977.

The address of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy is P.O.Box 13261, OAKLAND, CA 94661, U.S.A.

*Within the context of the B.E.C.
doctrinal basis, writers are
free to expound and apply
Scripture but the personal
views expressed are not
necessarily endorsed by the B.E.C.*

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 MA) at 21 Woodstock Road North, St.Albans, Herts
AL1 4QB Telephone: (0727) 55655

ISSN 0144-378X