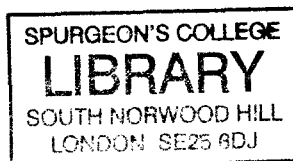


Foundations



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

Psalm 11:3

A graphic of an open book with a decorative, wavy border. The text "Psalm 11:3" is centered on the right page of the open book.

FOUNDATIONS is published in November and May; its aim is to acquaint readers, especially Pastors and Elders, with contemporary theological issues and provide stimulating articles and reviews in the areas of biblical theology, exegesis, church history, preaching and pastoralia. We seek to combine sound scholarship with the practical and relevant needs of churches.

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 Professor A.C.Boyd MA BD (Edinburgh)
Rev Stephen Dray MA BD (London)
Rev Brian Edwards BD (Surbiton)
Rev Hywel R.Jones MA (Wrexham)

All orders for this Journal should be sent to

FOUNDATIONS
B.E.C.
113 VICTORIA STREET, ST ALBANS
AL1 3TJ

Please make out cheques to the British Evangelical Council in £ sterling. The price per issue is £1.25 post free.

The personal views of writers are not
necessarily endorsed by the B.E.C.

Those wanting more information about the B.E.C.
should write to the General Secretary,
Rev Alan Gibson BD
113 Victoria Street,
ST. ALBANS
AL1 3TJ

The next issue will include the following articles:
Justification by Faith: Rev Professor Douglas MacMillan
Luther Today: Rev Geraint Morgan
The Biblical Languages: Their Use and Abuse in the
Ministry (Part Two): Rev Philip Eveson
The New Hermeneutic (Part Two): The Editor
Review of Theological Journals 1982/83: The Editor

ISSN 0144-378 X

ISSUE No.10

Price £1.25

May, 1983

C O N T E N T S

THE BIBLICAL LANGUAGES:

THEIR USE AND ABUSE IN THE MINISTRY
(Part 1)

p.1

Rev Philip H.Eveson MA MTh

THE FINAL REPORT OF THE ANGLICAN - ROMAN
CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

p.7

Rev Graham Harrison MA BLitt

THE FIRSTBORN AND THE PASSOVER

p.21

Rev Tom Holland BD

ADVICE TO READERS

p.45

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones

BOOK REVIEWS

p.48

THE BIBLICAL LANGUAGES:

THEIR USE AND ABUSE IN THE MINISTRY (Part 1)

Rev Philip H. Eveson MA MTh (London)

JOHN NEWTON, IN A LETTER to a divinity student, warns against the danger of being puffed up with knowledge: 'I have seen many instances of young men who have been much hurt by what they expected to reap advantage from. They have gone to the academy, humble, peaceable, spiritual and lively; but have come out selfwise, dogmatical, censorious and full of a prudence founded upon the false maxims of the world'. While he appreciates the importance of acquiring useful knowledge, Newton is anxious to encourage the student to look for that something extra in order to complete his fitness for the ministry which men and books cannot possibly give. He continues, 'The chief means for attaining wisdom and suitable gifts for the ministry are the Holy Scriptures and prayer. The one is the fountain of living water, the other the bucket with which we are to draw ... Next to these, and derived from them, is meditation'.¹ The learning of the original languages of the Bible, Newton places in a secondary and subordinate category for achieving wisdom.

The writer is minister of Kensit Evangelical Church, Finchley and also Resident Tutor of the London Theological Seminary.

Someone is bound to raise an objection at this point on the ground that you cannot read the Holy Scriptures properly or meditate upon them unless you read them in the original. Only in the original languages can you really read and hear the Word of God accurately. This is what Gresham Machen said in his address at the opening of the Westminster Seminary, USA in 1929: 'You cannot read the Bible for yourself unless you know the languages in which it was written ... if we want to know the Scriptures, to the study of Greek and Hebrew we must go'.²

Dr Lloyd-Jones in his inaugural address at the opening of the London Theological Seminary in 1977 made this remark by way of reply: 'To say that a man cannot preach and cannot even read his Bible if he does not know Greek and Hebrew, I am afraid must be categorised as sheer nonsense'.³ He went on to say that it is doubtful whether all the apostles had knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures in the original. Some of the greatest preachers of the Christian Church have been

ignorant of either Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic or even of all three. It is of fundamental importance to be assured that the Bible in translation is as much the Word of God as in the original tongues. When anyone takes up an English Bible, for instance, (whatever version it might be) is it the Word of God they are reading or is it something else? Warfield quotes Lyford, 'Divine Truth in English is as truly the Word of God as the same Scriptures delivered in the original Hebrew or Greek; yet with this difference, that the same is perfectly, immediately and most absolutely in the original Hebrew and Greek, in other translations, as the vessels wherein it is presented unto us and as far forth as they do agree with the original'.⁴ At the time of the Reformation, the reason that translations of the Scriptures were made into the languages of the peoples of Europe was the conviction that even the peasants and non-academics might be able to read the Word of God for themselves. Thus Tyndale said to one learned gentleman, 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost'.⁵

Those words of Tyndale remind us of a very basic truth emphasised by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor.2:11-16, namely, that the things of God are spiritually discerned. 'The key to the understanding of the Bible', said Dr Lloyd-Jones, 'is not a knowledge of the original languages. You can have such knowledge and still be ignorant of the message'.⁶ The Bible in translation has been read, memorised and its message understood and received by countless thousands of humble, believing souls, putting to shame the ignorance of academic clerics and College professors. John Newton gives us a final warning on this subject after mentioning the benefits of acquiring the original languages: 'Only be upon your guard, lest you should be tempted to think, that because you are master of the grammatical construction, and can tell the several acceptations of the words in the best authors, you are therefore and thereby masters of the spiritual sense likewise. This you must derive from your experiential knowledge, and the influence and teaching of the Spirit of God.'⁷

The emphasis so far has been on the importance of spiritual mind and heart in the approach to the Scriptures. We must now move on to consider the place and value of the languages, particularly in the minister's sermon preparation. There is no excuse for slovenly, ill-prepared material and no one could accuse Dr Lloyd-Jones of not making use of all the aids necessary for accuracy in exegesis. The same could also be said of John Newton. The purpose of this article is to

encourage those preparing for the ministry and those already in the ministry not to despise or depreciate the learning of the biblical languages but to acquire as much knowledge as they can and to use it profitably in the work of preaching and teaching God's Word. On the other hand, there are dangers and pitfalls to be avoided, the most subtle and easily forgotten of which has already been stressed. It will be necessary to warn aspiring linguists to beware of some of the more glaring abuses.

There is, however, a more pressing matter that needs to be attended to at this juncture. Barricades have been erected in the minds of many sincere, spiritually-minded men against the learning and use of the biblical languages which need to be removed. What are these barriers? Here are some of the most well known:

- a) No good at languages
- b) learning a strange alphabet
- c) No time, or time better spent on other things
- d) Never going to be expert
- e) Danger of becoming dry and academic
- f) Disillusioned through the experience of others who have abused the knowledge
- g) Experience at College
- h) Poor presentation of material

Any one of these reasons is enough to turn people off the study of Hebrew and Greek so it is essential that we tackle these issues at the outset. It is to be remembered that we have in mind throughout, not the person with a flair for languages who takes up such study as a hobby, nor the recluse who loves to bury himself in his study from morning until night, but the busy pastor.

The Goal

Any book dealing with the principles of language learning will tell you how important it is to have a goal in view. What is more, that goal must be an attainable one and not some impossible ideal. Leslie Sloat, Lecturer in New Testament Greek at Westminster Seminary recalls someone saying that it was Machen's view that the study of Greek in seminary

was not per se intended to produce Greek scholars. That work belongs to the universities. Mr Sloat says that their programme is designed 'to provide students with a sufficient proficiency in the language so that they will be able to read commentaries intelligently and, with the help of grammars and lexicons, carry out responsible exegesis'.⁸ Dr Lloyd-Jones uses similar words concerning the training at the London Theological Seminary, 'What is needed by preachers today is a sufficient knowledge of Greek and Hebrew to enable them to use their commentaries, and to read the many translations available in an intelligent manner, to be able to follow the argumentation of the authorities for one view rather than another'.⁹ If this aim is clearly in mind no one should become disillusioned because they do not feel expert enough. It takes years of intense study to become expert and the vast majority of us are never going to be proficient in any one of the languages like the authorities, no matter what College or Seminary we attended.

Breaking Psychological Barriers

It follows from what has been said above, that it is not beyond the possibility of any person of average intelligence to attain the end in view. Granted some have that ability to lap up new languages with the greatest of ease while others are much slower, nevertheless, the excuse about being no good at languages is ruled out of court. It is a weak-willed person who is put off at the sight of something new or unfamiliar. Yes, Greek and, more especially, Hebrew characters are difficult and awkward when first encountered. Accept it as a challenge. Grasp it firmly. Do not be disheartened at the first difficulty, but press on. Take no notice of those who, having fallen by the wayside in learning the basic grammar, make it their life's ambition to dissuade others from achieving the goal with depressing tales of woe. Instead of looking on the negative side, consider the subject in a positive way and remember the good purpose. It can be helpful to work closely with someone else who is tackling the same language. In this way the one encourages the other.

One can well understand the feelings of those who have heard the self-opinionated exhibit their learning in public only to reveal their ignorance in the use they make of the biblical languages. It is most obnoxious and should warn us of the danger of becoming heady and high-minded; a little knowledge can be dangerous. But this is no reason for going to the other extreme of abandoning the discipline. Christianity has its charlatans but this does not mean that we turn our backs on

the true way.

Many confess that while at college or university they have passed their Greek and Hebrew by learning off by heart whole chunks of the English Bible with just enough knowledge of the languages to recognise where they are to begin and end. They have looked upon the whole exercise as an easy way to pick up marks in examinations and since leaving college they hardly ever refer to the Greek or Hebrew text. If this is your experience I hope to encourage you not to lose what you have learned and to refer to the original more often than you do and to stimulate you to refresh what knowledge you have with more worthy motives in mind.

There is some bite to the criticism that many of the grammars used in the teaching of the languages do not present the material in a very attractive or appealing form. In addition, the bewildered student is also faced with a barrage of grammatical expressions to which he is unaccustomed. The result is that the poor student is lost before he begins with such terms as palatal sibilants, proclitic and enclitic particles, declensions and conjugations. Are we to continue to bemoan the fact that English grammar is no longer taught as it once was, or do we move forward into an era where language learning does not have to contend with these hurdles, at least in the early stages of development? There are new, interesting books on the market which are a vast improvement on the old grammars and we shall list them later. Of course, as in all disciplines, there is necessary jargon to be learned but for beginners it can be kept to a minimum.

The Time Factor

The question of time is an old chestnut. When we consider the preachers and missionaries of the past, the amount of work they accomplished and yet they still had time to study the Bible in the original tongues, it should make us ashamed. Very often we make excuses and try to salve our consciences by diminishing the challenge of our forefathers with such remarks as 'they didn't live in the hectic world of the late 20th century'. If we are honest with ourselves most of us make time for doing the things we want to do or like doing. If we are convinced there is a place for some knowledge of the original languages then we will make time to learn them and to use them in our study and preparation for preaching. It is a false piety which would suggest there is something unspiritual about the whole enterprise. Indeed, we can make a

superior spirituality a cover for laziness.

A Spiritual Exercise

As for the fear of becoming dry and academic in the study and pulpit, it must be stressed that this is not the fault of the languages, nor should the reading of the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible encourage such a spirit. Any theological subject studied can become dry to you. It all depends on your whole approach. Warfield, speaking on 'The Religious Life of Theological Students', urges them to 'make all your theological studies "religious exercises" ... Put your heart into your studies; do not merely occupy your mind with them, but put your heart into them'. ¹⁰ In another address he has this to say, 'Let nothing pass by you without sucking the honey from it. If you learn a Hebrew word, let not the merely philological interest absorb your attention, remember that it is a word which occurs in God's Holy Book, recall the passages in which it stands, remind yourselves what great religious truths it has been given to have a part in recording for the saving health of men. Every Biblical text whose meaning you investigate treat as a Biblical text, a part of God's Holy Word, before which you should stand in awe. It is wonderful how even the strictest grammatical study can be informed with reverence... And when done with grammar, we begin to weigh the meaning, O let us remember what meaning it has to us! Apply every word to your own souls as you go on, and never rest satisfied until you feel as well as understand.' ¹¹

In the next issue we shall seek to stimulate your interest and inspire you to take seriously the study of the biblical languages by discussing the subject from four angles: the theological, historical, biographical and practical.

References

1. Works of John Newton, Letter II pp39f, Nelson, 1845.
2. Studying the New Testament Today, pp162f, Ed J.H.Skilton, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974.
3. Inaugural Address, p11, London Theological Seminary, 1978.
4. Selected Shorter Writings Vol.2, p569, Ed. J.E.Meeter, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973.
5. Quoted by F.F.Bruce in History of the English Bible, p29.
6. op cit p12
7. op cit p40
8. The New Testament Student at Work, p201, Ed. J.H.Skilton,

Presbyterian & Reformed, 1975.

9. op cit pl2
10. Selected Shorter Writings Vol.1, p416.
11. Selected Shorter Writings Vol.2, pp478f.

A R C I C

THE FINAL REPORT of the Anglican-Roman Catholic
International Commission
(CTS/SPCK, 1982, 122pp, £1.95)

A Review-Article by Rev Graham Harrison MA BLitt
(Newport)

Mr Harrison is Minister of Emmanuel Evangelical Church (Baptist), Newport, Gwent and also Tutor in Christian Doctrine at the London Theological Seminary.

IN MARCH 1966 the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsay, met with Pope Paul VI in Rome. One of the outcomes of their meeting was a decision to set up an Anglican-Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission. ARCIC (the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission)

is the heir and successor of that ecumenical initiative. It met a number of times between January 1970 and September 1981. The Final Report brings together in convenient form the series of Statements and Elucidations thereof issued by ARCIC as the result of its deliberations during that period. It was published last year amidst the euphoria being built up around the visit of Pope John Paul II to Britain. True, there was evidence of delaying tactics, not to say disapproval, on the part of the more conservative elements in the Vatican. But its publication was hailed widely as signifying an agreement in principle to the not-too-ultimate reunification of the Church of England and the Church of Rome. Only a few years ago such a possibility would have been dismissed as idle Anglo-Catholic day-dreams. But now, so it seems, Rome and Canterbury can see more than a glimmer of light at the end of their particular ecumenical tunnel. Certainly the Report sounds at times like those peculiar cooing noises made by starry-eyed lovers in the early stages of the great romance. If only the Holy Father would give his unequivocal consent to a real marriage instead of a protracted courtship Canterbury would be waiting at the altar eager for the nuptials to commence.

Before we consider the Report (referred to subsequently by its now commonly recognised abbreviation ARCIC) in detail, certain points of a more general nature should be made.

1. He who expects little shall not be disappointed.

2. The Commission was composed of an equal number of Anglican and Roman Catholic delegates plus various Consultants, Secretaries and a WCC Observer. Of the nine Anglican delegates, one lays claim to the description 'Evangelical'. Sad to say, there are no indications of a positive nature that he had any significant influence on the course taken by the Commission. It may be that bad as things are they would have been a thousand times worse without his presence. But that would be a judgement of charity and an argument from silence. Certainly ARCIC displays no evidence of pungent and incisive criticisms from an evangelical perspective. At no point is there a minority dissenting voice raised, and we are told almost ad nauseam that ARCIC received the unanimous approval of all members of the Commission. Some evangelical Anglican commentators (eg. Roger Beckwith and Gerald Bray) have offered some radical criticisms of ARCIC, but none of the 'big guns' has fired. It is a sad reflection on how far Anglican evangelicalism has drifted from its previous moorings. Indeed, Dr Bray's suggestion that perhaps the evangelical Anglican Delegate would be better suited to parish work than to the role of evangelical flag-bearer in high-powered theological discussions has brought a veritable deluge of wrath and indignation upon his head.

3. Then there is the habit, beloved by ecumenical commissions of all shapes and sizes, of dignifying their arguments by transliterating rather than translating certain words that they then proceed to use profusely. The two particularly in question here are koinonia and episcopate. The reviewer lost count of the number of times these terms are used. One asks, Why? The effect is to put the argument into the realm of the slightly mysterious. The terms are never precisely (or, for that matter, imprecisely) defined, but they become the verbal keys that unlock all sorts of doors. Or, to change the metaphor, they become the two notes that are sounded to silence all opposition. It is almost as if ARCIC's rubric contained advice to the effect that whenever they sensed their argument to be flagging they should use either episcopate or koinonia, or, better still, both. For example, when arguing for the Primacy of the Roman see, ARCIC says, '... visible unity requires the realisation of a "general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of episcopate" in ther service of the universal

"koinonia of the churches"' (p77). A verbal smokescreen if ever there was one!

4. More disturbing than this trick of the ecumenical trade is the difficulty that arises in seeking to answer the question, Just what is ARCIC saying? That it is saying more than any self-respecting, biblically alert, evangelical Anglican would agree to in any 'Agreed Statement' with Rome should be plain for all to see - as we shall endeavour to show. But to pin it down to precise statements and definitions is exceedingly difficult. It bears at times an uncanny resemblance to soap in the bath. When you think you have it, you don't! And the more firmly you clasp it the more slippery and elusive it seems to become!

5. One other matter of a preliminary nature should disturb any evangelical Anglican reading ARCIC. It is the fact that the whole ethos of the discussion is catholic - and by that we mean Roman Catholic. Its terminology, its conceptual framework, its assumptions about Rome, etc., - all breathe forth this atmosphere. Nowhere - and that is not an exaggeration - is there to be found a virile statement that is pressed home in the way it should be of, say, the strictures passed by the Reformers on the Church of Rome. That, evidently, was an historical interlude played out by ignorant men who were but children of their age. But now the time for such theological antics is past. Or, to put it plainly, the Reformation might as well never have happened so far as ARCIC is concerned. The Reformers' criticisms of Rome were of a transient nature and, in any case, were concerned with a passing aberration in the long and varied history of 'the Church'. Of course, this is one of the most common pieces of contemporary wisdom on the ecumenical scene. The pity is that its assumption is so complete as not to need explicit notice. It was the great message of the Pope's visit. The media and the vast majority of welcoming 'Protestants' obviously looked upon the whole episode as the visit to these shores of the human head of the church. To query this was, as some of us discovered, to be consigned to outer darkness where, in the company of Ian Paisley and his ilk, we could gnash our bigotted teeth! Such at least was the impression given.

Finally by way of preamble let it be noted that there are several points at which one can only conclude that the Commission has taken leave of its historical senses. Take just one instance. '... the Commission sees (the Primacy of the see of Rome) as a necessary link

between all those exercising episcopate within the koinonia' (the reader will pardon the language, but we are quoting) 'All ministers of the Gospel ... need to be united in the apostolic faith. Primacy, as a focus within the koinonia, is an assurance that what they teach and do is in accordance with the faith of the apostles.' (p7). How are we to understand such an assertion? Plainly, it is historical nonsense. Is it then the language of pious optimism (ie. how we would like things to be in an ideal world)? If so, how does it relate to the real world in which even ARCIC lives? Was there nobody on the Commission with the logical, not to say theological, sense to query such nonsense? But let us come to the substance of the Report itself.

Introduction

The opening paragraph of the Introduction is revealing. 'Many bonds still unite us: we confess the same faith in the one true God; we have received the same Spirit; we have been baptized with the same baptism; and we preach the same Christ.' (p5) - question-begging assumptions if ever there were.

They go on to indicate that they will seek to deal with three areas of controversy between Rome and Canterbury: (i) the Eucharist, (ii) the meaning and function of the ordained ministry, and (iii) the nature and exercise of authority in the Church. These issues constitute the substance of the chapters that follow. It is their unanimous and considered conclusion that 'substantive agreement on these decisive issues is now possible' (p5). Historically, and one might argue, theologically, to limit the matter thus is to be guilty of the most grave omissions. Why, for instance, is there no treatment of justification by grace alone and through faith alone? Justification's only (and then it is a passing) reference comes in the Introduction (p8). Even there it is a non-theological use of the term, judged at least by New Testament usage.

Eucharistic Doctrine

Let us now turn to the first of the three great issues on which they focus their discussion - Eucharistic Doctrine. Their thoughts on this comprise 'The Statement (1971)' and 'Elucidation (1979)'. They state that 'we have reached agreement on essential points of eucharistic doctrine ... nothing essential has been omitted' (p11). What then do they say?

To begin with there is the unspoken but inherent assumption of the supreme importance of the eucharist. That, we would have thought, is something that needs to be proved before it can be assumed - but we cannot stay with that point. More significant is the fact that by a neat terminological sleight of hand they convey the impression that whatever term we use we are all talking about the same thing. 'Eucharist' ('the most universally accepted term') is the preferred description, but 'various names have become customary as descriptions of the eucharist: Lord's Supper, liturgy, holy mysteries, synaxis, mass, holy communion' (p12).

Is not this to beg the question? Can you, for example, read for 'the Lord's Supper', 'the mass', and simply account for the terminological difference in terms of your ecclesiastical cultural environment? (Actually, it is one of their techniques not to use 'the mass' as a term, although its substance is spelled out in some detail). They invoke the notion of memorial (anamnesis) as opening the way to a clearer understanding of the relationship between Christ's sacrifice and the eucharist. But if you know anything about the theological stable from which this comes you will not be deceived. They continue, 'in the eucharistic prayer the church continues to make a perpetual memorial of Christ's death, and his members ... enter into the movement of his self-offering' (p14). 'It is the same Lord who ... through his minister presides at that table, and who gives himself sacramentally in the body and blood of his paschal sacrifice ... Christ's body and blood become really present and are really given' (p15). 'Before the eucharistic prayer, to the question: "What is that?", the believer answers: "It is bread". After the eucharistic prayer, to the same question he answers: "It is truly the body of Christ, the Bread of Life"' (p21).

Is this New Testament sacramental theology? Surely at this point Calvin is a safer and more biblical guide: 'He has given us a Table at which to feast, not an altar upon which to offer a victim; he has not consecrated priests to offer sacrifice, but ministers to distribute the sacred banquet' (Institutes, IV.xviii.12). Such language is plain and its thrust unequivocally scriptural. Not so the language of the so-called Elucidation in which they deal with the questions of the 'movement' in the sacrament, reservation and adoration. They end with what is surely one of the most glaring self-contradictions of all that they utilize. 'Differences of theology and practice may well co-exist with a real consensus on the essentials of eucharistic faith - as in fact

they do within each of our communions' (p24, our underlining). It would seem that in the strange logic of ecumenese there exists no law of contradiction (ie. A is not non-A). For only on such an assumption can 'sense' be made of such a statement - unless 'theology' and 'faith' exist in two separate water-tight compartments in the minds of ARCIC!

Ministry and Ordination

'Ministry and Ordination' are the themes of the next 'Statement (1973)' and its 'Elucidation (1979)'. Anyone familiar with Anglican-Roman Catholic polemics of a former generation will know that this covers contentious ground. But relax. Once again, all is sweet reasonableness. Everybody agrees with the resultant statement which does the impossible and bridges the uncrossable. Of course, it is all done by verbal magic that uses such words as 'priest', 'sacrifice', 'episcope', but never bothers to define them.

Now it is interesting to observe how the Commission slides over the first, and to our mind calamitous, gap in their argument, viz. the leap of faith involved in the transition from the church-order of the New Testament to the three-fold order of bishops, priests and deacons which both Roman Catholic and Anglican maintain to be absolutely necessary. Wisely - at least from a historical point of view - they make no attempt to ground the three-fold ministry in the New Testament. They speak of a 'considerable diversity in the structure of pastoral ministry' in the New Testament (p32). 'The terms "bishop" and "presbyter" could be applied to the same men or to men with identical or very similar functions.' (ibid). There follows a passage that at once shows both the 'catholic' cast of thought of the Commission and its ecclesiastical arrogance: 'Just as the formation of the canon of the New Testament was a process incomplete until the second half of the second century, so also the full emergence of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon required a longer period than the apostolic age. Thereafter this threefold structure became universal in the Church.' (ibid, our underlining). The parallel they draw exists only in the grammatical structure of the sentence they have composed. It most certainly is absent from any presumed theological justification of the threefold ministry. The Church recognized, but did not create, canonicity, whereas the threefold ministry is quite simply the creation of the Church.

But just what is 'the Ordained Ministry'? Here again they begin with

a preamble that is really a smokescreen of verbiage which speaks of 'the priesthood of all the faithful' (p33) which the ordained ministry serves. However, lest the unwary presume that this is the only priesthood shared by the ordained ministry ARCIC explicitly states: '...their ministry is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit' (p36). Ordination thus becomes a 'sacramental act' (p37) qualifying the priest to preside at 'the central act of worship, the eucharist ...' (p35) and to pronounce absolution (p34).

Ignatius is as far back as they can get in their proof of this. But even an unbiased observer might be pardoned for thinking that Ignatius was the original episcopal axe-grinder with a vested interest in winning the case he was arguing. They round off their case with a re-affirmation of the myth of apostolic succession - 'the historical continuity of this church with the apostolic Church and of its bishop with the original apostolic ministry' (p38).

Their Elucidation which ostensibly is a response to certain criticisms of their Statement merely compounds the already existing errors and resorts to confusion and ambiguity rather than giving straightforward answers to simple criticisms. For example, when responding to criticism of their treatment of the origins of the ordained ministry they write: 'while the evidence leaves ground for differences of interpretation, it is enough for our purpose to recall that, from the beginning of the Christian Church, there existed episcope in the community, however its various responsibilities were distributed and described, and whatever the names given to those who exercise it' (p42f). The logical consequence of this would surely be to say that the threefold ministry can be held to be only one of several legitimate options. But not so. As everyone knows, incorporation into this threefold ministry by episcopal ordination is the sine qua non for ministerial recognition by both Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. When, we wonder, will we have a contemporary Anglican evangelical of the calibre of the late Alan Stibbs affirming loud and clear that it matters not what the Fathers thought and said but what they should have thought and should have said?

Authority in the Church

The final part of the Commission's work concerned 'Authority in the Church'. Their conclusions find expression in two Statements, 'I (1976

with an Elucidation, 1981)' and 'II (1981)'.

In this whole section the Commission bears a marked resemblance to one of those circus acts in which a rider stands astride two galloping steeds and skilfully guides them around the ring to the rapturous wonder of children who marvel that such feats are possible to mere mortals. The names of the steeds in question are 'Papal Supremacy' and 'Collegiality' (otherwise known as 'Conciliarity'). ARCIC manfully does its best but the steeds are not well balanced. Predictably, koinonia and episcopate are summoned to help out - but to little avail.

It is in this section that the concept (although not the word) of hierarchy emerges most clearly. '... pastoral authority belongs primarily to the bishop' (p54). 'The unity of local communities under one bishop constitutes what is commonly meant in our two communions by 'a local church' ... The bishop expresses this unity of his church ...' (p55). The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) is used as the justification of post-apostolic gatherings by which '... the Church ... formulates its rule of faith and orders its life ... decisions are authoritative when they express the common faith and mind of the Church' (p56). From this emerges the supremacy of 'bishops of prominent sees' and this leads on to the 'importance of the bishop of Rome among his brother bishops, as explained by the analogy with the position of Peter among the apostles, (which) was interpreted as Christ's will for his Church' (p57).

At this point surely it would have been appropriate for ARCIC to have asked the question, 'Was this historical development right or wrong?' But divine sanction of the development is assumed and we are hastened on to the incredible statement: '... the primacy, rightly understood, implies that the bishop of Rome exercises his oversight in order to guard and promote the faithfulness of all the churches to Christ and one another' (p58). To hold a Bible in one hand and a history book in the other should be sufficient answer to such nonsense.

The Statement next moves on to the (for them) vexed question of the relationship between Scripture and tradition and the respective authority to be attributed to each. Conciliar definitions are elevated. Thus local councils gave to the Church a canon. (We were tempted to ask at this point, Did it include the Apocrypha?). Acts 15:28, 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us', is lifted from the Council of Jerusalem and applied to conciliar definitions. They then point out that

in the course of historical development decisions had to receive the approbation of the Roman see. 'By their agreement or disagreement the local church of Rome and its bishop fulfilled their responsibility towards other local churches and their bishops for maintaining the whole Church in the truth' (p61). Curiouser and curiouser! Who gave that church that responsibility more than any other church? But nobody seems to have asked the question. Nor, seemingly, did anybody query the apparent equality of authority underlying the following statement: 'In both our traditions the appeal to Scripture, to the creeds, to the Fathers, and to the definitions of the councils of the early Church is regarded as basic and normative' (p61). Is Scripture supreme, indeed, unique in its authority? Then why not say so? Silence is eloquence on a point like this. The reason, of course, is that ARCIC has not moved basically from the Tridentine equating of tradition and Scripture as parallel sources of authority in and for the church.

This matter leads on to an initial consideration of Papal supremacy (or 'universal primacy' as their jargon has it). Their argument for it is surprisingly weak: 'The only see which makes any claim to universal primacy and which has exercised and still exercises such episcopate is the see of Rome, the city where Peter and Paul died' (p64). On that basis the bishop of Jerusalem would have a prior claim, for his was the city where Jesus died! They do not place great emphasis on the so-called Petrine texts (Mt.16:18f; Lk.22:31f; Jn.21:15-17). Of course, they do not need them since their argument no longer depends upon them. Even Vatican I's use of the phrase '"divine right" of the successors of Peter' need cause no difficulty. 'If it is understood as affirming that the universal primacy of the bishop of Rome is part of God's design for the universal koinonia then it need not be a matter of disagreement' (p65). Where was the alleged Anglican evangelical, we wonder, when such a statement was assented to?

An interesting and crucial example of ARCIC's dexterity in appearing to address itself at a profound level to contentious issues, while in reality saying nothing at all, but doing so in a complicated and obscure way, is its treatment of Papal infallibility. They say that Anglicans find 'grave difficulty' in the concept. However, we are assured that even Vatican I hedged the doctrine about with 'very rigorous conditions (that) preclude the idea that the pope is an inspired oracle communicating fresh revelation, or that he can speak independently of his fellow bishops and the Church, or on matters not concerning faith or morals' (p65). Apparently, all that he does is to

express the mind of the Church on issues concerning divine revelation. A footnote refers to the fact that 'infallibility' is a technical term which does not bear precisely the same meaning as the word does in common usage. They refer you back to two earlier paragraphs which supposedly illustrate this and thus bring you nearer a definition. All that these say is that doctrinal definitions do not exclude subsequent restatement and that the Church can make judgments faithful to Scripture and consistent with tradition respecting the formulation of the central truths of salvation. Not exactly clarification, as we think you will agree. But what then of the decree of infallibility itself, or those of the Immaculate Conception and Bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mary? Where in Scripture are they found? Answer, nowhere. Thus they must, if they be true, have come as the result of some post-Scriptural revelation. Are they true or false? And how do you decide such a question? The verbiage breaks down, and for all the protestations of ARCIC the position is exactly what it was before the Commission ever set about trying to reconcile two irreconcilables.

The 1981 Elucidation is no help to them. This speaks of the New Testament writings as only the 'primary norm for Christian faith and life' (p69). The Scriptures are a 'witness to divine revelation'. Tradition is concerned with 'the growth of the seed of God's word from age to age' (p71) - which sounds strangely like Newman's doctrine of development re-vamped for twentieth century ears.

The final and in many ways the most significant section of the Report is the 1981 Statement 'Authority in the Church II'. This was the document that was published shortly before the Pope's visit and that was hailed by many as indicating that the hatchet had finally been buried and the way smoothed for eventual re-unification of the Roman Catholic and Anglican communions. In it ARCIC endeavours to grapple with four outstanding problems related to the question of primacy. Five years' further study, so we are told, have enabled the Commission to present a fresh appraisal of the weight and implications of these four difficulties. The difficulties in question are: 'the interpretation of the Petrine texts, the meaning of the language of "divine right", the affirmation of papal infallibility, and the nature of the jurisdiction ascribed to the bishop of Rome as universal primate' (p81). We shall now consider their findings briefly in that order. It goes without saying that they are of crucial importance for the claims of Rome.

Their treatment of the so-called Petrine texts is interesting. To some

16.

it might even be surprising. They affirm (what can hardly be denied) that Peter seems to have occupied a place of unique prominence among the apostles - a position which is not sufficiently explained by what some have described as his impulsiveness and natural impetuosity. They acknowledge that his weakness may have required help or correction. (They do refer to the incident at Antioch when Paul had occasion to rebuke Peter - Gal.2:11-14 - although one must say that they seem to minimize the implications of this incident. The implications are surely pretty devastating so far as claims of papal infallibility are concerned.) They also recognize that the terms applied to Peter in e.g. Mt.16:18f are applied elsewhere to all the apostles (cf. Mt.18:18, Eph. 2:20). All this is only to be expected in the currently fashionable emphasis on collegiality. But even so it is interesting that they are willing thus to sever their claims for papal supremacy from the New Testament. Interesting - but not surprising, for Rome's claims have never by any stretch of the imagination been grounded on biblical evidence. They go on to make further pertinent admissions. 'The New Testament contains no explicit record of a transmission of Peter's leadership; nor is the transmission of apostolic authority in general very clear' (p83). They would have been yet more accurate had they acknowledged that biblical evidence for such transmission is, quite simply, non-existent. But, as anyone familiar with the controversy will know full well, the fact that the New Testament provides no evidence for a claim is no great obstacle in Roman Catholic eyes to its validity.

It comes, therefore, as no great surprise to read a few lines later, '... it is possible to think that a primacy of the bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament and is part of God's purpose regarding the Church's unity and catholicity, while admitting that the New Testament texts offer no sufficient basis for it' (p84). In other circles this might be termed having your cake and eating it! Their conclusion is that 'a universal primacy will be needed in a reunited Church and should appropriately be the primacy of the bishop of Rome ...' (p85). There follows the non sequitur, 'In a reunited Church a ministry modelled on the role of Peter will be a sign and safeguard of such unity' (ibid). Why it should prove to be in the future what it 'has manifestly failed to be in the past was, apparently, not a question that disturbed the equanimity of their thinking!

Jus Divinum is the next question tackled by the Commission. This really concerns the issue of the nature of the authority by which the bishop of Rome lays claim to primacy. Some of us might be tempted to suggest

that they give a misleading answer to a misguided question - a question that assumes what the Scriptures do not allow. But the Church of Rome - and apparently ARCIC - are happy to speak in terms (admittedly nebulous) of this primacy as expressing 'God's purpose for his Church' (p86). It matters not that Scripture makes no provision for such primacy. Apparently, 'Anglican theologians' are happy 'to recognize the development of the Roman primacy as a gift of divine providence - in other words, as an effect of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church' (p87). They conclude that 'the language of divine right used by the First Vatican Council need no longer be seen as a matter of disagreement between us' (p88).

This leads on to the next point, Jurisdiction, which they define as the power or authority necessary for the exercise of an office. They work up the scale of the ecclesiastical hierarchy discussing the different levels of jurisdiction. Eventually they arrive at that of the bishop of Rome which, they tell us, 'is ordinary and immediate (ie. not mediated) because it is inherent in his office' and 'universal ... because it must enable him to serve the unity and harmony of the koinonia as a whole and in each of its parts' (p89). Despite the fact that all this is served up in the language of collegiality and that for a couple of pages the already hard-pressed episcopate and koinonia are called upon to work overtime, the Commission skates around the question that surely it ought to have faced explicitly. The question is, 'What happens when the Pope thinks one way and the collegiate community (however that be conceived) demurs?' As the Papal decree of 1870 put it so clearly, the *ex cathedra* 'definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not by reason of the consent of the Church' (Pastor Aeternus, ch.4).

The last question to be tackled is that of Infallibility. The Commission asks 'whether there is a special ministerial gift of discerning the truth and of teaching bestowed at crucial times on one person to enable him to speak authoritatively in the name of the Church in order to preserve the people of God in the truth' (p92). On the way to their answer to this question they mention all sorts of qualifications in passing. For example, '... the assent of the faithful is the ultimate indication that the Church's authoritative decision in a matter of faith has been truly preserved from error by the Holy Spirit' (p92). What price then the decree of Infallibility itself? Is it part of the definition of 'the faithful' that they assent to the Church's authoritative decision? In the language of logicians that is known as *petitio principii*, or, arguing in a circle. Presumably they think that

they avoid this logical trap by means of an old medieval concept that surfaces at this point. Thus when decisive judgments in matters of faith are made by universal councils or by the universal primate what they are doing is 'to articulate, elucidate or define matters of faith which the community believes at least implicitly' (p93 our underlining) We referred earlier to the 'catholic cast of thought' which pervades the whole of this document and here, if we may be pardoned for saying so, is an explicit example of it. Is there such a thing as implicit belief? Or is it, as Calvin and the other Reformers claimed, a figment of the Scholastic imagination? 'It would be the height of absurdity', writes Calvin, 'to label ignorance tempered by humility "faith". For faith consists in the knowledge of God and Christ (Jn.17:3) not in reverence for the church ... As if Scripture does not regularly teach that understanding is joined with faith!' (Institutes, III,ii.3). But it is quite evident that ARCIC at this point is quite happy to move in the orbit of medieval Catholicism: 'The Church's teaching authority is a service to which the faithful look for guidance especially in times of uncertainty' (p94). In other words, believing, not Scripture but the Church, where you cannot see!

They add, 'The Church's teaching is proclaimed because it is true; it is not true simply because it has been proclaimed' (p94). Which sounds fine until you begin to nail it down. Take, for example, any one of the allegedly infallible *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the Pope - let us say, that concerning the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Let us then apply the foregoing assertion to it. We ask, 'Is it the (Catholic) Church's teaching? To which the answer can only be 'Yes'. There follows our second question, 'Is the teaching true?' To which our answer must surely be 'No!' But perhaps even more important is the third question that is begged right throughout the Commission's Statements and Elucidations, 'How do you decide whether or not it is true?' To which there can be but one satisfactory reply, 'To the Word and to the testimony'.

Now to be fair to ARCIC, it does recognize that there are many Anglicans who find difficulty with these Marian dogmas. However, there is a dogged pussy-footedness even about its way of stating this apprehension. It is not reported that these Anglicans conceive these dogmas to be wrong. Rather, it seems to be the fact that 'the Marian definitions ... are the only examples of such (*ex cathedra*) dogmas promulgated by the bishop of Rome apart from a synod since the separation of our two communions' (p95, our underlining). In other words, what ARCIC admits may disturb some is not the possible erroneous nature of

the dogmas, but the procedural blunder (dare we call it?) of the Pope in formulating these dogmas without regard to the blessed principle of collegiality. Christ had a word for it: straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel!

We need not be surprised, therefore, at their sanguine conclusion. That differences between their two churches still remain they readily acknowledge. '... but if any Petrine function and office are exercised in the living Church of which a universal primate is called to serve as a visible focus, then it inheres in his office that he should have both a defined teaching responsibility and appropriate gifts of the Spirit to enable him to discharge it' (p98). But even that way of stating it is a masterpiece of ecumenical diplomacy. 'It inheres in his office that ...' Does that mean that it is the inevitable equipment enjoyed by the incumbent or simply that it is the desirable qualification for aspiring holders of the office? You pays your money and you takes your choice. But one thing you must not do - rock the boat by asking awkward and unnecessary questions of the type that Luther and Calvin, yes, and even Anglicans of a former generation were wont to ask.

What can be said in conclusion? First, why was it that the material principle of the Reformation - the doctrine of Justification by Faith - was not dealt with? Indeed, it gets only a passing reference (and that terminologically inexact) in the whole Report. After all, ARCIC was supposed to deal with the major points at issue between the two communions. However much in practice the XXXIX Articles have been relegated to the history shelf so far as the Church of England is concerned, Article XI surely constituted one of the points of head-on collision between Rome and Canterbury when the two fell apart. On these grounds alone the doctrine was surely worthy of consideration.

Second, where oh where is there the least vestige of a trace of an element of respect for evangelical conviction in this Report? We have become used in latter years to the 'crest-of-the-wave' mentality of our evangelical Anglican friends. They are, so they assure us, spawning bishops by the handful and being recognized at long last by the powers that be in the establishment. To what point, we are entitled to ask, if an evangelical (and one of their brightest young things at that) can be party to a Report like this and apparently not find it necessary to bring out a minority statement?

Finally, for all the laudable attempts by ARCIC to face what it reckons

to be the difficulties, and in the facing of them to avoid controversial language that would preserve prejudices rather than lead to enlightenment, it seems to us that the old issues of the Reformation are still crucially relevant: the supreme authority of Scripture; who is a Christian and how does a man become one? What is the Church? And, is the Church of Rome a Church at all? So long as such issues are buried the cause of truth will not be advanced.

THE FIRSTBORN AND THE PASSOVER

Rev Tom Holland BD (Letchworth)

This article is part of a much longer work by the author which concentrates on the significance of the FIRSTBORN in the Bible. The whole work forms an important and timely contribution to biblical theology in at least five ways:

1. It helps to confirm the Pauline authorship of Colossians particularly with reference to the words, 'the firstborn of every creature' (1:15) which is shown to be a thoroughly Pauline concept.
2. It also shows convincingly that the 'first-born' does not refer to Christ's position in creation but rather to his role in redemption. In this way the misunderstanding of the term by Arians, both ancient and modern, in order to undermine the deity of Christ is exposed.
3. It questions and rejects the long established view that the setting of the New Testament letters is Greek and Roman rather than Hebraic. For this reason the study of the Old Testament is shown to be essential for the understanding of the New Testament.
4. It sheds additional new light on the gospel of John, Romans and Hebrews.
5. It also illuminates and clarifies further the purpose and significance of the Saviour's person

and work.

Plans are now in progress to publish the whole work in the near future and the copyright of this article is reserved by the author. Mr Holland is Pastor of Grange Baptist Church in Letchworth, Herts.

NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP appears to have paid little attention to linking Christ's title, the 'prototokos' (firstborn), with the Passover events. Alan Richardson wrote, after noting the importance of the Passover for the Jews, 'This notion seems to have left little trace upon New Testament theology, though the idea of Christ as "our Passover" and as "the Lamb of God" are distinctly related to it'.¹ F.F.Bruce has written in private correspondence with the author 'Nor do I know of any commentator who links our Lord's title as "the firstborn" in redemption with the firstborn in the Passover'.²

The two references that Richardson has alluded to, are far from the sum total of the New Testament passages that link up with the Passover, as we shall soon see, but before we identify, and examine those we will state what we believe to be the true setting for the 'prototokos' and then proceed to see if the New Testament text will support our claim.

In the Passover narrative it was the firstborn son who was designated by Yahweh to represent the family. On the Passover night that representation was to be bound up with the family's deliverance from the angel of death. Now we must be clear about this, as it is fundamental to the argument being put forward, that it was not the family that the lamb represented. The lamb represented the firstborn and died in his place. The firstborn's life was threatened because he represented the family. It is this representative role, we believe, which links the New Testament statements that Christ is the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and that Christ is our Passover (1 Cor.5:7) with the statement that he is the firstborn. To be more exact, Christ is the firstborn, the one who represents his family. Because no other could face the angel of death and so spare Christ of his representative role, he died as the paschal lamb had done. He is both the firstborn and the Passover offering, for in the Christian Passover they are one. This double designation firstborn/Lamb of God is not an obstacle to our argument. In Christ we find many offices and titles converge. Prophet and priest converge with king, priest converges with victim, Saviour converges with judge, and in the incarnation God converges with man. The New Testament writers would

have little difficulty in applying such a principle of converging diversity to yet a further realm of Christ's offices and work. The firstborn and paschal lamb converge to be one and the same person. The Exodus was the Old Testament's shadow of the redemptive work of Christ (1 Cor.10:1ff) and it is little short of bewildering that scholarship has failed to look into the significance of the firstborn in that first act of redemption, and to appreciate the application of the title to Christ by the New Testament writers.

This interpretation takes the expression 'prototokos', removes it from the realm where it has been traditionally placed, of being an ontological expression, and places it firmly in the realm of redemptive history. Christ is not the firstborn, but acts as the firstborn. It is a title to express the work he has done in his death. This is borne out even from the Old Testament usage of the expression in the Passover narrative, for the firstborn could, in fact, be the second, fifth or even tenth born in the family. If he was the first male to be born he was the firstborn. This observation is supported by W.Michaelis who wrote on the etymology of the Hebrew 'bekor' (firstborn) that it 'is neither connected with the Hebrew words for "to give birth" - it can be used for fruits etc. as well. Nor is it related to the words for "one", "first", nor the similar word for "head", "chief" - to the concept which it was designed to express there did not necessarily belong a comparison with other things of the same kind, since the first might also be the only one'.³

The significance of our explanation of the title in Colossians 1:15 'the firstborn of all creation', ought to be obvious. For Paul, redemption, like the fall, has a cosmic scope. Romans 8 shows the whole creation waiting for restoration, which will happen at the climax of Christ's redemptive work, when his people are released from bondage and are glorified. The firstborn's significance in the Exodus was only for his family. The significance of the death of Christ, the Christian Passover, goes beyond that of his own family to the universe that was caught up in the tragedy of the fall. So he is 'the firstborn of all creation'.

We can develop this even further when we recognise that the firstborn is also synonymous with the Old Testament redeemer. They are one and the self-same person. Now whilst this is never explicitly stated in Scripture because the equation was so obvious to any Jew, we believe the evidence exists to show it to be so, and this we shall outline

shortly.

Before we turn to the New Testament texts in which 'prototokos' occurs it would be useful to survey the responsibilities that the Old Testament redeemer had to fulfil, and we will see how they developed, providing a backcloth for the work of Christ to be set against.

The first responsibility, we will note, which fell upon the shoulders of the redeemer was the one of securing revenge for the family. When a member of the family was murdered the redeemer's duty was to exact blood vengeance on the guilty party; the law of retribution rested upon his shoulders. Gen.4:14-15, 23-24; Num.35; Deut.19; Josh.20. In the latter part of Isaiah, where Yahweh is often called the redeemer, Yahweh promised to act as the avenger of his people, Isa.43:4, 14-16; 47:4; 49:25-26; 59:16-20. In the New Testament Christ, Himself, is presented fulfilling this same role, Luke 1:68-78; 18:7; II Thess.1:6-9; Rev.6:9-11.

The next role of the firstborn redeemer in the Old Testament was that of securing property which had been lost to the family through debt. In Ruth 4:4 Boaz requested Naomi's nearest kinsman to perform the responsibility of acting as the redeemer to secure the family field. In Lev.25:8-34 we have the principle of Jubilee outlined. It fell upon the 'nearest relative' (v.25) to act as the redeemer, whenever possible, to recover the family's property. Once again, we find Yahweh promising to act as Israel's redeemer in securing what she had lost (Isa.43:6-7; 51:11; 52:8-10). Israel was promised the return of her own land to be her possession. Again, in the New Testament, we find this role attributed to Christ as he recovers the Kingdom of Heaven for those who were deprived of it by sin, Col.1:13-14; Heb.9:15; Rev.5:9-10.

The third role of the redeemer was to fulfil the law of the levirate. This law appointed the redeemer to act as the protector of the widow in the family. If a woman was widowed and childless it was the responsibility of the redeemer to take her as his wife and raise up a family on behalf of his deceased brother. Deut.25:5-10; Ruth 3:13; 4:1-8. Once again, this aspect of the redeemer's role is used to illustrate the act of salvation Yahweh promised to accomplish for his people. 'He will save Jerusalem from her widowhood and raise up children for her' Isa.49:20-21; 50:1-2; 54:1-8; 62:4-5. This same role is applied to Christ, who takes the Church to himself, and acts as her

husband. Note how this fits into the concept of a second marriage in Romans 7:1-4. So also, I Cor.6:20; Eph.5:25; Rev.19:7-8.

So there is a significant connection between the roles of the Old Testament firstborn redeemer and the various aspects of the redemptive work of Christ. This connection gives good ground to suppose that the New Testament use of the 'prototokos' title has an Hebraic origin rather than a Greek. Indeed, when we recall that Psalm 89:27 was seen in rabbinical writings to apply the title 'firstborn' to the Messiah it reinforces the messianic redemptive concept which we claim to be bound up with the title.

Before the argument outlined above can be accepted there are three questions that need to be satisfactorily answered.

- i) Did the firstborn actually represent the family in judgment? Was he a sacrifice for the family?
- ii) Why was it that at the Passover it was the firstborn, and not the father, who represented the family?
- iii) Was the firstborn, and the redeemer, one and the same person, and if so, why two titles when the one of redeemer could satisfactorily cover both roles?

The first of our questions then, is, did the firstborn actually represent the family in judgment?

A.S.Yahuda saw no more significance in the death of the firstborn than it being a battle between Yahweh and the Egyptian gods. He pointed out that the firstborn son of Pharaoh had the same rank as his father, he had the title 'Sa-Ra-en - Khetef' i.e. 'the son of Ra from his body'. He was a god himself. Yahuda argued from this that the significance of the death of the firstborn was 'to defy the mighty gods of Egypt, to expose their impotence to protect the offspring of the 'Son of Ra'.⁴ He saw no other significance in the death of the firstborn of the nation than a means of convincing Pharaoh and his people that the death of the ruler's firstborn was no accident.

Yahuda's explanation of the death of the firstborn is clearly inadequate. If the scope of the firstborn's death was only to support the claim that Pharaoh's firstborn's death was no accident there should

have been no need for Moses to require the Hebrews to secure protection by the death of a lamb. Simply the death of all Egypt's firstborn would have sufficed. The requirement of blood, central to the whole Jewish sacrificial system, and then the permanent memory of this deliverance of Israel's firstborn, reflected in the subsequently inaugurated sacrificial system and dedication of the tribe of Levi to the Lord in place of the firstborn; all is clear evidence enough to show Yahuda's understanding was inadequate.

D.M.G.Stalker noted that 'Set apart' in Exodus 12:12, which literally means 'cause to pass over (he^{re} bhir)' is the word used for sacrificing children to Molech, II Kings 16:3; Ezek.20:31; etc. Stalker did not see direct borrowing to have occurred. He wrote, 'The usages of the two peoples are quite different. Though in Israel the firstborn were to be set apart to Yahweh as his, they were to be "ransomed" from him, a term which could suggest that they were sacrificed in theory, though not in actual fact'. Thus Stalker sees a sacrificial concept to lie in the purpose of the firstborn's death, although he does say 'details of the motivation are somewhat confused. Exodus 12:11ff connects the Passover with the smiting of the firstborn of the Egyptians, while Exodus 12:27 connects it with the sparing of Israel'.⁵

We can add to these opinions those listed by R.A.Stewart. He says, 'It has been argued that the Passover is an adaptation of something much older than Moses - whether a circumcision ceremonial, or an anti-demonic threshold rite, or a shepherd's festival, or a sacrificial attempt to enhance the vitality both of the flock, and of the celebrant, or a sacrifice of the firstborn as old as Cain and Abel, defining by its very reference the offence and punishment of Pharaoh, or a common meal of communion or magic. This list is by no means exhaustive'.⁶

We would claim that whatever the origin of the Passover might be, the full significance of the firstborn's death, like so many other Hebraic concepts, can be seen clearly only when it is placed in the context of the solidarity of the family and nation. R.P.Shedd supports this when, explaining the significance of sacrifices for sin, he says that they were not to be seen as a 'mechanical transference of penalty'. Shedd goes on to say, 'There is no compulsion to explain this identification merely on the basis of the psychic life of nature (i.e.'mana') in which man shares. As in the case of the commemoration of the Passover, or circumcision, (in which the initiate or member was identified

with the redemptive event), it is the event of the death of the victim in which the guilty party shares. This is the impression gained from an examination of the Passover ritual outlined in Exodus 12. The lamb was the vicarious substitute for the firstborn of the nation, which in turn realistically represented the nation. It is the vicarious substitution of the experience of death which must be recognised. What should have happened to the firstborn is through the principle of a sacrificial commutation of the penalty brought upon the substitutionary victim'.⁷

Shedd, whose work 'Man in Community' explores the semitic concept of solidarity, is clarifying the very matter we are grappling with. He is saying that it is missing the full significance if we simply see the lamb dying for the firstborn. If a lamb had not been slain, the firstborn would have died as the representative of the family. What the lamb is to the firstborn, the firstborn is to the family, a substitutionary sacrifice. We shall shortly see how identification of this principle brings clarity to other passages related to the theme of the firstborn, but for now we shall rest our case on Shedd's submission that the firstborn's role as a sacrifice was avoided only because a lamb was slain as his substitute and the firstborn shared in the victim's death on the basis of semitic solidarity.

There are three Old Testament passages which we believe support our claim that the death of the firstborn was related to punishment and deliverance. They are Jer.31:9; Micah 6:7 and Zech.12:10. The Jeremiah passage is used by Matthew in his nativity narrative, and we will consider that passage later when we examine Matthew's understanding of the passage. We will, at this stage, limit ourselves to the passages in the minor prophets.

The passage recorded in Micah is a familiar one in which the prophet is asked by Israel what it should do to atone for its sin, the people are represented as saying 'With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, even ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' (Micah 6:6-7).

The reference to this offering of the firstborn as an atonement bears a number of possible interpretations. E.Henderson says, 'It was

customary among the ancients, on calamities or dangerous emergencies, for the rulers of the state, to prevent destruction of all, to offer the most dearly beloved of their children as a ransom to divine vengeance'.⁸ This is supported by G.W.Wade who said, 'The idea behind the kind of sacrifice here imagined is plainly that atonement for sin could be made by the sinner through some self-inflicted mortification or loss'.⁹ J.M.P.Smith saw this passage as proof of the practice of human sacrifice being practised in Micah's day, but refused to accept it was for atonement. Smith saw it to be a reference simply to a desire to please Yahweh, and going to extremes to achieve that goal. He said, 'The phrase Sin of my soul has been taken by many as sin-offering of my soul; but this cannot be, for the parallel word transgression never has the meaning guilt offerings, and the technical sin offering of the later law certainly never contemplated the possibility of human sacrifice as one of its constituent elements'.¹⁰ Smith's remarks, however, require that the people had their religious understanding technically concise and clear, and the very point of the passage is to show that they did not have any such understanding. H.McKeating argues against using the passage to show human sacrifice was widely practised. He claims that the question asked is rhetorical, expecting the answer, 'Of course not!' The argument is, McKeating says, 'If the costliest sacrifice cannot achieve such an end, what is the point of the ordinary sacrifices of rams, calves or oil?'¹¹ E.B.Pusey sees the passage as a rebuke, 'They would not withhold their sons, their firstborn sons, from God, part, as they were of themselves. They would offer everything (even what God forbade) excepting only what alone He asked for, their heart, its love and its obedience'.¹² C.Von Orell saw the passage as definitely reflecting an attempt to expiate for sin by means of the firstborn's death, 'The climax grows in boldness; shall I give my firstborn for my sin, properly, as my sin, but with the sense of expiating for sin, **אָנָוֶן** having both significances'.¹³

The range of opinion recorded shows a variety of attitudes to understanding the purpose of the suggested sacrifice of the firstborn. It would seem to us that there is no forcing of the intended meaning of the passage when saying it is expressing belief, even if only popular belief, of some possibility of dealing with a situation of crisis by the death of the firstborn. This is suggested by the attitudes of the surrounding nations who did follow such practices. This is the view of Orell who went on to say, 'An example of such desperate efforts to win the favour of the deity, or to avert His wrath, was furnished by heathen neighbours, such as the Moabites (II Kings 3:27) and especially

the Phoenicians'.

Our reasoning supports those scholars who see here a suggestion that the sacrificial death of the firstborn might be offered as an appeasement to God's wrath, and an attempt to avert His judgment. If this is true, it links up with what we have claimed for the purpose of the firstborn's death in the Passover, and we do not need to look for any external influence for this statement. The people saw the conditions to indicate God's judgment would fall, and they ask, 'Will it be as when it fell in Egypt, and will it be averted in the same way?'

The next passage to consider is that of Zechariah in which he says, 'And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son' (Zech.12:10).

The text of this passage poses a problem in that some MSS give 'look on him whom they have pierced', while others have 'look upon me whom they have pierced'. The majority of commentators accept that because the latter 'look upon me', with Jehovah speaking, is so difficult, it must be the original and the 'looking upon him' was introduced to overcome the problem of speaking of the piercing of Yahweh.¹⁴ Attempts have been made to identify who has been pierced. Those who wish to uphold the text that gives 'look upon him', make a range of identifications as to who has been pierced. These vary from Onasis III who was assassinated in 170 BC, to Simon the Maccabee who was assassinated in 134 BC, to a representative of Yahweh. A.E.Kirtpatrick held the latter position and said, 'It is Jehovah who has been thrust through in the person of his representative'. This view, of course, could accept both texts, but it is difficult, as J.B.Baldwin has pointed out, to see how two distinct people die in the death of one representative.¹⁵ Rex Mason also accepts the one pierced is a representative of Yahweh, probably a little known figure belonging to the prophetic circle. He comes to this conclusion because he sees the mourning over the treatment of the one who had been pierced follows repentance, rather than precedes it, so indicating in Mason's thinking that hardly suggests the role of the 'Suffering Servant', still less a Messianic one.¹⁶ In other words, it is not the cause of repentance but an effect of it. But this requires that we should expect repentance to be natural once the evil has been exposed. This, however, cuts across what Zechariah is actually

stating. The repentance will be of divine origin, not human. Once this has been given they will see their crime in a new light that will lead to bitter mourning. Thus Mason's argument loses its thrust, because we cannot measure the degree of importance to be attached to the one pierced, by his effect to produce repentance. This is borne out fully by Paul's explanation of repentance in II Cor.7:9-11 where he distinguishes between two types of sorrow, one worldly, and the other godly. Hinckley Mitchell dismisses a Messianic identification for the one pierced by saying, 'Those who identify the one pierced as the Messiah overlook one point of great importance, namely, that while the effusion of the Spirit and the effect produced by it are evidently future, the act of piercing the nameless victim belongs to the past. This means that the one pierced was not the Messiah whose advent all will agree was still future when these words were written; but someone who had at that time already suffered martyrdom'.¹⁷ But this comment cannot be upheld. It requires that we accept Zechariah to be speaking from the vantage point of his own historical situation, looking forward to what will happen, whereas examination of the passage shows he is speaking from the vantage point of the vision of the outpouring of the spirit of prayer and supplication, and from that point the piercing is a past event. In other words, it is past not from the point at which Zechariah lives, but from the event he is speaking about. When the outpouring of the spirit of prayer and supplication takes place they will have committed the offence. Calvin interpreted the text as saying that God was wounded by the sins of his people ¹⁸ while T.V.Moore argues that its interpretation can only be for the Messiah being pierced. Moore said, 'This evasion is utterly inadmissible and the text still stands, asserting that the Jews would look at Jehovah whom they had slain, a prophecy which can only be interpreted in the light of the cross'. ¹⁹ In spite of the divergence of opinion, we would claim that it clearly links a redemptive event with the death of one likened to a firstborn. Obviously the main original reason for the reference to the firstborn is to emphasise that the grief will be intense, but the mention of grief over the loss of the firstborn could not but recall the Passover event to any Jew. The passage's significance and meaning would go far beyond what a superficial reading of the text might convey. The passage would draw together the strands of Jewish redemptive history, and at the heart of that, is the role of the firstborn. This understanding is supported by the context itself (Zech.12:7-9). The preceding verses speak of the smiting of the nations by Yahweh as he defends Israel, a theme that obviously has its counterpart in the Exodus events. This claim is supported by the way John uses the

passage in the opening of the Revelation, in a setting glorying in the redemptive work of Christ (Rev.1:4-8). It is also used in John's Gospel, in the very context of Christ's death, which John repeatedly links with the Passover event (John 19:37).

R.Le Deaut ²⁰ suggests that by New Testament times, and later, the first Passover was regarded as having an expiatory character. This view is supported by R.E.Brown²¹ who thinks this came about because by this time lambs were sacrificed within the Temple area by the priests. Against these views is C.H.Dodd ²² who argues the reverse. He claims that there was probably expiatory significance in the Passover ritual in its very earliest stages, which he sees to be pre-Mosaic, but long before New Testament times this had been dropped. From the evidence we have considered we would suggest the true picture is that the Original Passover was regarded as an expiatory sacrifice, and all subsequent celebrations were memorials of the original without expiatory value.

The next question which we have set ourselves to resolve is, why was it the firstborn, and not the father, who represented the family?

As the Passover event took place after 400 years in Egypt it is reasonable to suppose we might find some significance in the role of the firstborn in that nation's understanding. It is this that V.L. Trumper argued for.²³ He considered that the text of King Unas (Osiris, Budge Vol.1 p121) to reveal the firstborn's special significance in Egypt. In that text, the dead King has succeeded in making his way into Heaven. The passage describes the terror of the gods when they see him arriving, as they soon discover that he is mightier than they, and he commences to chivy them about. One of the lines describing the being says, 'He is God the firstborn of the firstborn'. Trumper went on to point out that from the writings of Herodotus we learn that it is probable that the sacred bull representing Apis, which was kept in the Temple, was the first and only born. It is specially stated that the cow who was his mother had no subsequent offspring.

The influence of the Egyptian religious belief is clearly seen in the golden calf Israel worshipped soon after leaving Egypt (Ex.32:1-4). It could be argued from this that the significance of the firstborn also came from Egypt. The dynasty depended upon the survival of the firstborn son of Pharaoh. If he did not in turn give birth to another 'son of Ra' his throne was directly threatened. It is obvious that with

the birth of the firstborn his significance was even greater than his father's, for the future of the nation, the throne, and even Ra himself, was then focussed upon the safety of the new son of Ra. The father's death would be by no means as calamitous as the death of his firstborn. His representative role was more crucial than that of his father's, until he himself had fathered a son.

But there is yet another concept that could have given the death of the firstborn such an important significance in representing the family, and its origin is in Abraham and his son Isaac. When Isaac was offered up by Abraham (Gen.22) even though the sacrifice was not actually made, Jewish understanding in keeping with their understanding of social solidarity and the doctrine of the merits of the fathers, saw Israel, the nation as a whole, actually offered up in Isaac. By this offering, of Israel's firstborn, the Jew saw himself offered up to God and so sacrificed. This doctrine of Israel's sanctification in Isaac has been carefully documented by Moore.²⁴ The evidence for the significance of the offering of Isaac has slowly emerged over the last century.²⁵ The testing of Abraham as to whether he would obey God and offer his son is known in Rabbinic studies as the Aqedah, which means 'the binding'. It is also the term used for binding sacrifices to the altar in preparation for sacrifice.

A study by G.Vermes published in 1961²⁶ made use of Rabbinic sources, the targums and the intertestamental literature relating to the Aqedah. One of the major contributions of this work was that it drew attention to Pseudo Philo's 'Liber antiquitatum biblicarum'. This was previously known by scholars but had been somewhat neglected in New Testament research.

According to Vermes there are two types of targumic tradition with regard to Genesis 22: the primitive kernel as represented by the 'Fragmentary Targum' and 'Neofiti' and the secondary version represented by 'Pseudo-Jonathan' and a Tosefta fragment of the 'Jerusalem Targum'. The distinctive features of the oldest targumic tradition are:

1. Abraham told Isaac that he was to be the sacrificial victim
2. Isaac gave his consent
3. Isaac asked to be bound so that his sacrifice might be perfect

4. Isaac was favoured with a heavenly vision
5. Abraham prayed that his own obedience and Isaac's willingness might be remembered by God on behalf of Isaac's children
6. Abraham's prayer was answered 28

Pseudo-Jonathan presents the whole episode as a test of Isaac's fidelity, as well as of Abraham's love and faithfulness.²⁹

Vermes showed that the targumic tradition about Isaac's active role in the sacrifice was already implicit in three works of the first century A.D.: The 'Jewish Antiquities' of Josephus, '4 Maccabees' and Pseudo Philo's 'Liber antiquitatum'. Josephus wrote that the offering of Isaac was not only a test for Abraham, but also insisted on Isaac's merit and on his voluntary self surrender.³⁰ In '4 Maccabees' Isaac is presented as the proto-martyr, and in several other passages there is an allusion to the power of the blood of the martyrs, but with no explicit relation to Isaac.³¹ Pseudo-Philo stresses the willingness, even the joy, of Isaac. He relates Isaac's sacrifice to other sacrifices offered to God and accepted by God for the sins of men. Finally, Pseudo Philo presents Isaac as being hopeful for the beneficent effect of his self-offering upon future generations.

Vermes went on to show that in '4 Maccabees' Isaac is implicitly the model of a martyr's death offered for the sins of Israel.³² He suggests that this is linked with Isaiah 53 where in verse 7 the servant is compared to a lamb brought to the slaughter, just as was Isaac. Also, Isaac's sacrifice was ordered by God, as was the servant's (Is.53:10).

Vermes emphasised the sacrificial nature of Isaac's offering by linking Isaac's free consent with the tradition in Pseudo Philo and later midrashic texts that Isaac's blood was shed. The Fragmentary Targum explicitly mentions a prayer by Abraham for the pardon of transgressions of Isaac's descendants.³³ Other targums are not as explicit but it seems that the sacrifice was thought to have played a unique role in the salvation of Israel.³⁴ Vermes concluded from the testimony in Rabbinic sources that the Temple sacrifices (which were offered on the very site of Isaac's offering: II Ch.3:1, Jubilees 18:13, Josephus) and perhaps all sacrifices, were intended as a memorial of Isaac's self-oblation. Vermes thought that this suggests that the atoning efficacy of the 'tāmîd' offering and of all the sacrifices in which

a lamb was immolated and perhaps even of all expiatory sacrifice depended on the power of the sacrifice of Isaac.³⁵

There is another interpretation of the significance of the Aqedah, identified by Vermes as the secondary version. It rejected the expiatory significance of the Aqedah because no blood was shed, and interpreted its significance to be that of an example of faithfulness even unto death. J.Sweetnam noted how the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasized that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and thinks this is to stress the obvious superiority of Christ's sacrifice, whose blood was actually shed. But there is further significance in the Aqedah for our study of the firstborn. Le Déaut, whose work³⁶ supports Vermes' claim that a Rabbinical tradition saw a propitiatory significance in the offering of Isaac, noted from study of the Intertestamental 'Poem of the Four Nights' found in the text of Codex Neofiti I at Ex.12:42, that there are four key events affecting Israel. These are creation, the birth and sacrifice of Isaac, the Passover in Egypt, and the end of the world, and all are said to take place on the night of the Passover. Le Déaut also noted that Jubilees also links the sacrifice of Isaac with the date of the Passover.³⁷ This led him to conclude that there was an important significance in the events of the Passover for the Jewish interpretation of the Aqedah. Sweetnam gives support for this view³⁸ believing that if there was a connection between the Passover and the Aqedah it would probably be based on the common factor of the redemption of the firstborn and would probably precede the Exile.

There is yet a further link between the Aqedah and the theme of the firstborn. Not only was Isaac the firstborn of the Covenant people, but his binding was actually linked with the Passover itself. The efficacy of the blood of the Passover lamb was not seen to be in itself but in it being a reminder of the sacrifice of Isaac. In the 'Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael' is a halakhic midrash which Sweetnam thinks was edited not earlier than the end of the fourth century A.D. but dating in substance from the Tannaitic period.³⁹ The passage is concerned with selected sections of Exodus. At 7:78-82 occurs the reference to the Aqedah. It is a comment on the words 'And when I see the blood' from Ex.12:13.

'And When I See the Blood I see the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac, for it is said, "And Abraham called the name of that place Adonai-Jireh" (The Lord will see) etc. Likewise

it says in another passage, "And as he was about to destroy the Lord beheld and He repented Him", etc. (I Ch.21:15). What did he behold? He beheld the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac, as it is said, "God will Himself see the Lamb" etc. (Gen.22:8)'

The significance of the Aqedah for the interpretation of the New Testament will be dealt with later. At this point we will limit our study to the material so far considered which we believe offers significant evidence to **suggest** that the firstborn was associated with vicarious judgment on behalf of the family. It was a principle established before the inauguration of the Passover event, when Isaac was offered up as the eldest son of the Jewish people. So whilst accepting that the father was the head of the family yet nevertheless he did not represent it in the face of judgment. That fell upon the firstborn by divine decree.

Our third question is, are the firstborn and redeemer one and the same person?

Now it must be stated that although this was not always so in practice, nevertheless it was clearly the ideal. The firstborn and the redeemer were intended to be one and the same person. The difference in the roles is that the firstborn acted in respect to sacrificial representation, as previously outlined, and this could not be abdicated or handed on. That role was bound up in the very person of the firstborn. There was only one way of avoiding the role being played out, that was by substitutionary sacrifice. The redeemer's role, however, was a role that could, and often was, handed on to the next of kin, either because of death or because of abdication.

The two titles, firstborn and redeemer, are never explicitly tied together in the Old Testament. This need not be a problem to our thesis, for to the Jews the identity would be so obvious that it would never need to be stated. But evidence does exist to show how natural the relationship was. Boaz had to approach the one who was next of kin to Ruth's former husband (Ruth 4:4). Although Boaz was related, there was another who had the responsibility of redemption before himself. Obviously it would work down through the members of the family. The eldest, or firstborn, being the redeemer. If the eldest was dead, or refused to act, it went to the next eldest brother. If there were no brothers, or if they refused to act, the role of the redeemer fell upon

the nearest relative who would accept the duty, the process of elimination having to be gone through before a relative could take on the role, as established in Lev.25:25. This is exemplified in the account Luke gives of the Sadducees' attempt to trick Jesus on the resurrection. The Sadducees make it clear that the eldest remaining brother took the unfortunate widow so as to fulfil the role of the redeemer. 'The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died' (Luke 20: 27-30). Coupled with this, Edersheim has pointed out that the practice of inheritance under Jewish law gave the eldest son, the firstborn, twice the inheritance of any other member of the family. Hence, if there were five the inheritance was divided into six parts and the eldest received two parts so as to fulfil the responsibilities of the redeemer.⁴⁰

There is another sphere in which the firstborn/redeemer role can be seen to be inter-related, if not synonymous. It is in Jewish Messianism. We have already noted that the king (later to be applied by the Rabbis to the Messiah) was called the Lord's firstborn (Psalm 89:27). Clearly, it originally had reference to the king's promised superiority over the kings of the earth. This title is also linked with that of the 'Son of God' (Psalm 2:8) given because the king had the responsibility of representing Yahweh to his people. He was to uphold Yahweh's laws, protect his people and sustain the poor, especially the widow. He was, in other words, the redeemer. This designation, redeemer, although not actually given to the king himself, was applied to Yahweh in the context of kingship when he was declared to be 'Israel's king and redeemer' (Isa.44:6). Clearly, there is a close association between the titles 'Son of God', 'redeemer' and 'firstborn'. In fact, when we examine the whole of the verse of Isaiah 44:6, which we have made reference to, we find further evidence that our train of thought is correct. Isaiah says, 'This is what the Lord says - Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and the last; apart from me there is no God'. These very titles were gathered together by John and used to honour Christ. He wrote, 'Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who has loved us and washed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega" says the Lord God, "Who is, and was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev.1:4-8). That the last part of the above quoted passage from Revelation is to be applied to Christ is confirmed by the fact that in verse 17 of the same chapter Jesus himself says, 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last'. John is therefore gathering the very titles that we are considering, those of 'firstborn', 'king' and 'First and Last', and in a context saturated with terms of redemption, ascribes them all to Jesus.

Supporting what we are claiming is the rabbinical interpretation of Isaiah 59:20. 'The redeemer will come to Zion to those in Jacob who repent of their sins, declares the Lord'. In periqta 166b the peculiar form of 'plene' in which the word 'Goel' (Redeemer) is written is taken to indicate the Messiah as the Redeemer in the full sense. Hence the Messiah is called the Firstborn (Ps.89:27) and the Redeemer (Isa.59:20) in rabbinical literature. In fact, these titles are linked elsewhere in the rabbinical writings. Edersheim wrote, 'Ps.2:7 is quoted as Messianic in the Talmud, among a number of other Messianic quotations (Sukk.52a). There is a very remarkable passage in the Midrash on Ps. 2:7 (ed. Warsh. p.5a), in which the unity of Israel and the Messiah in prophetic vision seems clearly indicated. Tracing the 'decree' through the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, the first passage quoted is Ex.4:22, 'Israel is My firstborn son'; the second, from the prophets Isa.52:13, 'Behold My servant shall deal prudently', and Isa. 42:1, 'Behold, My servant, whom I uphold'; the third, from the Hagiographa, Ps.110:1, 'The Lord said unto my Lord', and again Ps.2:7, 'The Lord said unto Me, Thou art My Son', and yet this other saying (Dan. 7:13) 'Behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven'. Five lines further down, the same Midrash, in reference to the words 'Thou art My Son', observes that, when that hour comes, God speaks to Him to make a new covenant, and thus He speaks, 'This day have I begotten Thee' - this is the hour in which He becomes His Son'.⁴¹

We have long recognised that the title servant in the servant songs of Isaiah oscilate between the individual servant and the community, but here it is shown that this solidarity extends to other titles, including that of firstborn. Not only this, but the titles themselves are interlinked, so firstborn is linked with the suffering of the servant title, they illuminate the meaning of each other.

The significance of what we have considered ought to be obvious. This interrelationship enriches the significance of the various titles, and firstborn is coloured by all the redemptive concepts inherent in the person of the suffering servant. The firstborn is the suffering redeemer.

Edersheim has also brought to our attention the fact that the Rabbis linked the firstborn and servant with the title Son of God from Ps.2:7. This points to a redemptive significance behind the heavenly declaration at Jesus' baptism when the heavenly voice declared, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased' (Matt.3:17), which is, of course, an amalgamation of Ps.2:7 and Isa.42:1.

But the strongest strand of evidence that Christ is the firstborn/redeemer comes from the New Testament itself. Examination reveals a startling omission. Christ is never called the Redeemer. His work is constantly described as a work of redemption, but never is He given the title 'the Redeemer'. What we do find, however, is that regularly He is called the firstborn, and that title is always closely related to the descriptions of His work of redemption. This omission is even more significant in that Jewish literature of the New Testament period contains many references to the Messiah being the Redeemer.

There can be only one explanation for the absence of the title Redeemer from New Testament Christology. It has been taken up in the minds of the New Testament writers into the more definitive title 'the firstborn'. This development is quite natural, as Christ's redemptive role always has its origin in the vicarious sufferings he underwent. This was not so in the Old Testament. Only the firstborn had a vicarious role. The redeemer's role was quite separate. Thus, when we come to the New Testament, the writers see it as quite natural to designate Christ as the firstborn, since it is from his vicarious sufferings that his redemptive work flows.

To the evidence so far considered we can add the results of recent sacramental studies. Some Catholic theologians ⁴² have refused to accept the Mythraic origin of Paul's thoughts concerning baptism which has been widely accepted by recent scholarship, and have turned to the Old Testament cultic system as a possible origin. Their conclusions are that the dying and rising of Romans 6 has its setting in the Jewish sacrificial system, the Passover being specifically identified as the source. To this can be added the claim of W.D.Davies who, after

examining Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper, summed up his conclusions by saying, 'We believe that Paschal ideas dominate his view of the Eucharist'.⁴³

The significance of other Messianic titles, used both by the Lord and Paul is also significant for our study. The doctrine of the second Adam suggests the representative role that the firstborn fulfilled. It is through this position that Christ is the federal head and redeems his brethren (Rom.5:9). J.Jeremias has pointed out that Paul avoided the use of 'bar nāshā' Jesus' self descriptive title as it would have misled the thoughts of his Gentile hearers. Instead he rendered the substance of 'bar nāshā' by 'o anthrpos' (Rom.5:15; I Cor.15:21; Eph.5:31f; cf I Tim.2:5). It is evident that Paul knew the self description of Jesus as Son of Man because of the way he interpreted Psalm 8 Messianically when he used it in I Cor.15:27. Jeremias wrote, 'with his Adam/Christ antithesis Paul expresses the same thought as underlies Jesus' self description as 'bar nāshā', namely, that Jesus is the firstborn of the new creation of God. As Adam stands at the head of the 'aiōn outos', as the first man, so the risen Christ stands at the head of the 'aiōn mellōn' as the initiator of the perfect redeemed creation of God'.⁴⁴ And so, to all the material we have considered relating to the firstborn we can add all that Paul has had to say about the last Adam, and indeed, all that Jesus had to say about the Son of Man. Both titles are inseparably linked with the concept of the redeemer/firstborn figure.

Jeremias' work has the support of H.Ridderbross who claimed that the title firstborn of every creature was not only to be linked with Adamic concepts, but is the keystone of Paul's Christology which he says was implicit at the resurrection of Christ. Ridderbross wrote, 'In other words, from Christ's significance as the second Adam all the categories are derived which further defined his significance as the firstborn of every creature'.⁴⁵

Our claim then, at the conclusion of this section of our study is that far from the Passover event having little influence upon the writers of the New Testament as A.Richardson has asserted, it made up the very substructure upon which they built their concepts of redemption. Indeed, we can go even further than this. The doctrine of Christ's Person is illumined and clarified by the doctrine of his work. Therefore, rather than the expression 'firstborn of every creature' being a problem to Christ's deity it rather upholds it. No creature could,

through its death, reconcile all things together. Only the creator himself could achieve this. Only God, himself, could be the firstborn/redeemer of all creation.

We do not have sufficient space in this article to work our thesis out in detail in the relevant New Testament texts, but we will apply it by way of illustration to Col.1:15-18 to demonstrate the significance it holds for Biblical exegesis.

There are many scholars who say that the expression 'firstborn of all creation' or, as the NIV gives it, 'firstborn over all creation' in Col.1:15 is so unpauline that it is evidence that Colossians was not written by Paul. Others explain the phrase as a redaction whilst others claim it is Pauline on the basis that there is no textual evidence to suggest the contrary. The approach taken by those scholars who accept the authority of the phrase can be divided into three. There are those who say its origin is a Greek hymn and that it ought therefore to be kept in the light of Hellenistic thinking. Michel, for example, says, 'it is impossible to explain the meaning of Col.1:15 apart from Hellenistic cosmic thought'.⁴⁶ There are those who say that the term is to be interpreted from an Old Testament/Rabbinical perspective, and one such scholar is W.D.Davies whose thesis we have already examined. There is a third group represented by Lightfoot who say that both the Hellenistic and Hebraic backgrounds are to contribute to the understanding Paul would have us share in through his use of the phrase.

R.P.Martin, a member of the last group mentioned, supports a Greek origin for the hymn. He wrote, 'It is clear that Paul's purpose in appealing to this hymn is to show the primacy of Christ over all orders of creation (so NEB). "Firstborn" cannot therefore mean that he belongs to God's creation; rather he stands over against God's handiwork as the agent through whom all spiritual powers came into existence (v16). He is Lord of creation and has no rival in the created order'.⁴⁷ However, Martin has not resolved the Christological problem that the expression has presented for trinitarians by making Christ to be distinct from the rest of creation because he is the agent of creation. Even as the medium of creation, unless He is of one substance with God, He is still a creature.

In deciding the significance of the hymn its origin is not necessarily of major importance. It would be foolish to think that there was any relationship between the meaning of a hymn sung by a football crowd

and a worshipping congregation. What is important is not so much its origin but its new setting, that is the main factor that determines its application and meaning. Indeed, there may be a complete antithesis between the concepts being presented in the two settings, even though the words are the same. This is illustrated in the case we are examining. In Old Testament/Rabbinical thought the firstborn was a Messianic title, and there was no equation between the Messiah and Wisdom. This fact is acknowledged by Martin when he says, 'No Jewish thinker ever rose to these heights of daring to predict that wisdom was the ultimate goal of creation'.⁴⁸ Martin, nevertheless, thinks that this is what Paul is saying in view of the fact that v20 'Hails the crucified Lord as the great unifier of heaven and earth'. We shall note the significance of this statement of Paul for our redeemer/firstborn thesis shortly, but it is clear that Martin wants us to accept that Paul is introducing Hellenistic concepts to explain Christ's significance, and that those concepts are not illustrating Old Testament/Rabbinical teachings but adding to them, the origin of the extended revelation being originally Greek philosophy.

Whilst the majority of scholars would support Martin's exposition not all are convinced of the Hellenistic origin of the hymn itself. A.M. Hunter thinks that the parallelism and the early position of the verb reflects a Semitic origin.⁴⁹ C.F.D. Moule has noted the parallel between v14 and Acts 26:18. He wrote, 'common to both passages are "e exousia tou skotous os tou setana", the idea of transference from this exousia to God or Christ's Kingdom, and the collection of the conceptions of the promised land ("kleros") and of forgiveness ("aphesis") and God's people ("egiasmenoi" or "agoi") cf also Acts 26:23 quoted in v18 below. Is St Paul in this epistle using ideas which had been with him from the time of his call? In any case behind some, at least, of the ideas in both passages is the Old Testament, Deut.33:3f'. Moule also noted that the expression 'the Son he loves' is a Semiticism for 'his beloved Son'.⁵⁰ Clearly, Paul's thought in this expression links with Psalm 2 and the heavenly voice at Christ's baptism which, as we have seen, pointed toward a suffering Messiah. Such a concept could not be married to a Hellenistic concept of wisdom, nor to a Jewish one for that matter. It does, however, marry to the redeemer/firstborn concept, for Paul follows his statement regarding the son he loves (v13) by saying, 'In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins' (v14). The hymn begins in v15 eulogising Christ and exalting Him above the whole of creation. But, the hymn is concluded with the statement of v20 'and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on

earth, or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross'. So Paul has returned to his theme of redemption, which he apparently left in v14, and continues it through to 2:12.

It is by identifying the setting in which Paul uses the hymn that the meaning of the firstborn becomes clear. In the Old Testament the firstborn was the sacrifice through whom redemption was achieved. Here the theme is exactly the same. Christians have been delivered by the death of Christ (v13), who is the firstborn of the New Israel (v15). That Paul calls him the firstborn of every creature is totally consistent with what he goes on to say, 'and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood'. This reconciliation of all things, which explains Christ's title firstborn of all creation, is perfectly consistent with Paul's doctrine of redemption as expounded in Romans 8 where he says the whole of creation is in bondage to sin and is waiting for its release at the appearing of Christ. Rather than the expression being totally unpauline, it is thoroughly Pauline in the concept it holds. The significance of the reference to Christ's role in creation is not to be dominated by Hellenistic or Jewish concepts of wisdom. It is merely stating Christ's credentials for being the firstborn of all creation. Being the origin of the first creation he is qualified to be its redeemer and to bring about a new creation.

When we come to the second usage of firstborn in the Colossian passage we come nearer to the traditional interpretation of the kingly Messianic title which we have already observed it to have among the rabbis through its use in Psalm 89:27. Paul cannot be referring to Christ being the first to be raised from the dead, for he would have used the term firstfruit, as he does elsewhere (I Cor.15:20,27). As Moule has pointed out, the phrase is given to Christ to endorse the description of Him being the Head of the body.⁵¹ It is, therefore, a title of one who rules, indeed one who conquers, and that which is conquered is death itself. This interpretation is supported by Helyer who wrote, 'Heb.1:6 is to be linked with Col.1:18 and Rev.1:5 where we likewise have the term applied to the risen and exalted Lord. The title itself recalls the Davidic prophecy (Ps.89:27) and stresses the special relationship which obtains between God and the Son'.⁵² Christ is, therefore, being hailed by the use of this title as the conqueror of the last enemy, death.

+ + +

INDEX

1. A.Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, London, 1958, p28
2. In private correspondence with the author replying to an enquiry for information of any scholars who have identified and developed this theme.
3. M.Michaelis, *T.W.D.N.T. Vol.VI*, p873.
4. A.S.Yanuda, *The Accuracy of the Bible*, London, 1934, pp85/6.
5. D.M.G.Stalker, *P.C.B.*, London, 1962, p221.
6. R.A.Stewart, *N.B.D.*, London, 1958, p936.
7. R.P.Shedd, *Man in Community*, London, 1958, p37.
8. E.Henderson, *The Books of the Twelve Minor Prophets*, London, 1845, p257.
9. G.W.Wade, *The Books of the Prophets Micah, Obadiah, Joel and Jonah* London, 1925, p51.
10. J.M.P.Smith, W.H.Ward, J.A.Brewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*, Edinburgh, 1912, pp126/7.
11. H.McKeating, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, Cambridge, 1971, pp186/7.
12. E.B.Pusey, *The Minor Prophets, Vol.IV, Micah*, London, 1907, pp237/8.
13. C.Van Orell, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, Edinburgh, 1893, p214.
14. cf. J.Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, London, 1972, p190.
15. op. cit. p190.
16. R.Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, Cambridge, 1972, pp118/9.
17. H.Mitchell, J.M.P.Smith and J.A.Brewer, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi Jonah*, Edinburgh, 1912, p330.
18. J.Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Vol.V, Zechariah and Malachi*, (trans. by J.Owen), Edinburgh, 1849, p363.
19. T.V.Moore, *The Book of Zechariah*, London, 1958, p200.
20. R.Le Déaut, 'La Nuit Pascale' *Essai sur la signification de la Pâque Juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII (An Bib 22)* Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1963, p199 n.173.
21. R.E.Brown, *The Gospel According to John, Vol.I*, p62, London, 1971.
22. C.H.Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge, 1960 p234.
23. V.L.Trumper, *The Mirror of Egypt in the Old Testament*, London, no date, before 1932, pp121/2.
24. G.F.Moore, *Judaism*, Harvard, 1927, Vol.III, pp539, 540 and 549.

25. For a Summary of the History of Research into the Aqedah see J. Sweetnam, *Jesus and Isaac, A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah*, Rome, 1981, pp4-21. Sweetnam gives a very extensive bibliography relating to studies in the Aqedah.
26. G.Vermes, *Redemption and Genesis XXII - The Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus in Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, Haggadic Studies (S.E.P.B.4), Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1961.
27. op. cit. p194.
28. op. cit. p195.
29. op. cit. p197.
30. op. cit. pp197/8.
31. op. cit. p198.
32. op. cit. p202.
33. op. cit. p206.
34. op. cit. pp206-208.
35. op. cit. pp208-211.
36. R.Le Déaut, 'La Nuit Pascale'. Essai sur la signification de la Pâque Juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII (An Bib 22), Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1963.
37. op. cit. pp179-184.
38. op. cit. p80 n 458.
39. op. cit. p67
40. A.Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Grand Rapids 1962, Vol.II, p259.
41. op. cit. Vol.II, p716.
42. cf. V.Warnack, *Taufe und Heilsgeschehn Nach Rom 6*, A.W III 2, 1954, pp284-366. Also, *Die Tauflehre des Romerbriefes in der Neuen Theologischen Diskussion in A.W V 2*, 1958, pp274-332. Both cited by R.Schnnaackenbunrg. *Baptism in the thought of St. Paul*. (trans. by G.R.Beasley-Murray) Oxford, 1964, p45.
43. W.D.Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, London, 1955, p250. For Davies' full argument see pp227-284.
44. J.Jeremias, *T.W.D.N.T. Vol.I*, p143.
45. H.Ridderbross, *Paul, an Outline of His Theology*, Grand Rapids, 1975, p84. For full argument see pp76-86.
46. cited by L.R.Helyer in *The Prototokos Title in Hebrews*, *Studia Biblica et Theologica*, Vol.VI, No.2. October 1976, p18.
47. R.P.Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, London, 1974, pp57/8.
48. op. cit. p58.
49. A.M.Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors*, London, 1961, p125.
50. C.F.D.Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Cambridge, 1957, pp60/1.
44. 51. op. cit. p68. 52. op. cit. p12.

ADVICE TO READERS

Dr D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones

In his Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Library in London (1969), the 'Doctor' emphasised the value of this library and the enormous help he had derived personally from using it. He then referred to the help given by libraries in the States during his five month summer break there that year. 'I know nothing more pleasurable and exciting as an occupation than the right use of a library', he continued, 'I really had a most enjoyable time in the United States, not in looking at scenery but going round libraries! The key to the enjoyment of a library is to follow up references ... If ever you come across something in your reading that you are not aware of, follow it out, investigate it, find something more about it. If there is a book on it, read it; and one thing will lead to another in a most fascinating manner'. We now reprint, with permission of the Evangelical Library, the Doctor's concluding remarks.

There are certain lessons which I think we can learn from all this. The first, I would say, is the importance of balanced reading. Do not get into the bad habit of only reading one side of any issue or on any subject. I have known many people fall into this thoroughly bad habit. They only read their own side and they only read the authors whom they know are going to repeat what they already believe. Read the other side as well, because, I have shown you, that two men looking at the same facts, the same incidents, can describe them in almost entirely different ways. So read both sides, balance your reading. In fact this is not only an honest thing to do and an obvious commonsense thing to do, but I find it is a very profitable thing to do. Actually if you do it properly it will strengthen your original view, because you will get the other side, and it will stimulate you to answer it, and then men on your side will already have been answering it so it will strengthen you. But sometimes a spirit of fear comes into men's reading, it seems to me, and they are afraid to read things which they can not guarantee to be on their own side.

The same thing can happen, of course, with regard to listening. There was a lady in a certain church, which I must not mention, who when her minister, for whom she had great respect and regard, was lecturing on a certain subject and came to a particular aspect in which her father

had been very interested, and knowing that her minister did not agree with her father's view; instead of coming to listen to what the minister had to say about this subject stayed away. In spite of her respect for him she was not prepared to listen to another side in case it might upset what she had always received as almost divinely inspired from her own father. Now this is something of which we must never be guilty. Read books which hold an opposite view to the one you hold: it will sharpen your mind, and it will give you a better understanding; and it should end in substantiating the view you hold rather than in making you change it. Do not be guilty of the spirit of fear in connection with your reading. The second lesson which I have learned myself, and which I would suggest to you, is a very practical point: the importance of noting slight changes in the emphasis or the teaching of theological professors and preachers. Let me give you just one illustration. I referred just now to the Mercersburg Theology and J.W.Nevin. This impressed me and in a sense really frightened me. J.W.Nevin was a student under, and a pupil of, the great Charles Hodge in the 1820s. He was Charles Hodge's favourite pupil, so much so that when Hodge went on a visit to Germany about the middle of the 1820s he himself suggested that Nevin should deputise for him in what was then the Princeton Theological Seminary, the great bastion of Reformed faith, and so on. Charles Hodge picked out this man, J.W.Nevin, and he did deputise for Charles Hodge while he was away. But eventually J.W.Nevin became the leader of the Mercersburg Theology which became quite heretical at certain points and Hodge had to oppose him in an almost violent manner. What struck me, and amazed me, and almost alarmed me was that Nevin did not arrive at that new position in one step. No, it was a series of very small steps, almost imperceptible. Actually it started over their respective views of Charles G. Finney. There it began and from that it went on and developed, until in the end they were in two entirely different positions. Why do I say that? I do so for this reason. Some of us as Evangelicals are constantly being charged with being spiritual detectives, and we are said to condemn a man for a dot or a comma. They say that we are over-critical, that surely we must not all be agreed about everything, and if certain men who have always been evangelical say something on one occasion which we do not agree with we must not drop them and become excited. That is what is being said about us. But I would say on the basis of my reading throughout the years that what they are saying about us is mainly wrong. Why should a man begin to vary in his teaching? I could illustrate this over the question of Evolution. This is how it happened a hundred years ago and it is happening again now. They do not suddenly get up and say

that they do not believe the Scriptures; what they do say is, 'Well of course we have always taken the first three chapters of Genesis literally until now but we are not so sure about this now. Need we say this?' There was an instance in one of the weekly papers within the last few weeks where a man writing as a true evangelical explains away the account of Eve being made out of Adam's rib. But still he would claim that he has not departed from the authority of the Scriptures. It seems to be just a detail; but it is a departure. And it is from such small beginnings that men have often moved almost imperceptibly step by step until they are eventually in an entirely different position.

We are surely having evidence of this at the present time over the attitude to Roman Catholicism. 'Oh, but after all' they say. The moment a man says that, watch him. We must not think that these changes take place in big steps; they almost invariably take place in slight, minor changes. Then they go on from position to position and as the controversy develops they are eventually in an entirely different position. So let us pay great attention to what may appear to be but slight variations in men's view of any aspect of the Truth, and particularly, I would say, with regard to the Scriptures.

I end on this third and last lesson: the importance of taking a whole view. What I mean by that is that we must never be guilty of 'missing the wood because of the trees'. I sound as if I am contradicting myself. I have been impressing upon you the importance of paying attention to details, and I do so, and I hold to that; but be careful that in doing that you do not get into the position in which because of certain particular details you miss the big thing. Let me give an illustration. Take that Kentucky Revival. The great Archibald Alexander, the Founder of Princeton Theological Seminary, a man who wrote the book that has been re-published this year on the Log College knew that Revival intimately. He had been converted in a previous revival himself, and he knew all about these phenomena and these excesses and all these other things that happened in the Kentucky Revival. But Archibald Alexander because he was a big man, because he was a well read man, and because he saw the whole as well as the details did not - like some young men whom I have been reading recently and who clearly developed a 'one track mind' - condemn the whole of the Kentucky Revival as a tragedy or an error or a mistake because of certain features with which he was not in agreement. No, he saw the value of the whole, the greatness of this mighty movement

of the Spirit of God in spite of unfortunate tendencies and excesses that came in during the course of the Revival. Let us be careful not to develop this 'one track mind' type of thinking and pounce on details which we do not like and because of that condemn the whole. Nothing is perfect in this world; so let us look for the big things and excuse the excesses and the errors and try to correct them in a spirit of love. Above all let us be careful, that we do not condemn a work of God because in certain aspects of it the devil has seen his opportunity and has come in. Let us try to preserve this large, whole, balanced view. That, I think, is to be obtained ultimately by the right kind of reading and studying which I have suggested to you, and which is made possible by an institution such as this Evangelical Library.

We strongly urge readers to use the facilities of the Evangelical Library. For those unable to visit the library, books can be obtained by post. Further details are available from the Librarian, The Evangelical Library, 78a Chiltern Street, London W1M 2HB. Tel. 01-935 6997.

BOOK REVIEWS

RELIGION IN THE U.K.

The Editor

Great Britain may not be a 'Christian' country but according to recent research it is at least a 'religious' country with 74% of the population claiming a firm religious affiliation. This is the surprising statistic highlighted in the 'U.K. CHRISTIAN HANDBOOK - 1983 EDITION' and published jointly by the Evangelical Alliance, the Bible Society and Marc Europe (430pp £9.95).

After a brief introduction by the editor, Peter Brierley, there follow four interesting articles on Building up the Body of Christ, Religion in the U.K. Today, The Mission of the Church from Britain and, finally, The Sexual Division of Labour in Missionary Societies. The book is then divided unequally into three main sections, namely, the statistical, directory and the index. The directory section is the longest (pp41-321) and includes almost anything you may want to know about in church

life ranging from adoption agencies and animal welfare organisations to theological colleges and Bible schools! Some of the other organisations included are Art and Layout Services, Audio-Visual/Video Services and Producers, Book Publishers, an exhaustive list of all 'Christian' bookshops in Britain, Conference Centres, Hotels and Guest Houses, Conventions, Denominational Churches and their headquarters, Evangelical Agencies, Film/Filmstrip Hire Libraries, Missionary Societies, Periodicals, Poster Producers, Public Address Equipment Supplies and Youth Organisations. Do you know, for example, which are the most expensive theological colleges in Britain? In 1981 Salisbury and Wells Theological College topped the league with fees of £2802 with St. John's, Nottingham a close second (£2790) followed by Trinity College, Bristol (£2619), and fees for the Church Army College of Evangelism were only £50 cheaper. This directory section is a veritable mine of information which will prove invaluable for churches.

The value of the book is then enhanced by a useful Index section. Allow me, however, to concentrate this review on the statistical section which is divided into two main parts; firstly, religion in the U.K. and, secondly, overseas missionary work from Britain.

In the first section there is an absorbing and detailed account of the total U.K. 'church' memberships together with details of the number of ministers, churches and their comparative decline/growth. Out of every thousand adults in the U.K., only 174 belong to 'Christian Churches' (a broad term including all denominations, Protestant, Catholic and Russian/Greek Orthodox etc) and 136 attend at least once a month. The highest percentage is in Northern Ireland where eighty per cent of the population are Church members, followed by thirty-seven per cent in Scotland, twenty-three per cent in Wales and only thirteen per cent in England. There is one full-time minister for every one thousand adults (which is twice the number of medical G.Ps) and there are over fifty-one thousand churches where people are welcome (twice the number of Post Offices!). These figures mean that less than one-fifth (17.4%) of the adult U.K. population are members of a Church. The decline in overall membership averaging just over one per cent has continued since 1970 but the decline was less sharp in the latter half of the decade. Growth, however, was seen amongst immigrant groups (African and West Indian churches), Pentecostal and independent evangelical churches as well as the cults. The most spectacular growth was in the house-church movement which developed from practically nothing in 1970 to an estimated sixty thousand in 1980. The Brethren membership

fell at the rate of 1.4% per annum to 68,000 in 1980, Quakers decreased by 1.9% to under eighteen thousand and the Salvation Army fell by 4.3% to seventy-four thousand.

The increase in the number of cult adherents could be misleading. Mormons, for example, have more than a 5% rate of growth worldwide, but in the U.K. the rate is only 2.7% per annum. The Jehovah Witnesses have only a one per cent annual increase yet statistical caution is required. A one per cent increase in the membership of the Roman Catholic church would involve an additional twenty thousand while a similar percentage could be achieved by only two people joining the Rumanian Orthodox Church! In other words, small groups fare better statistically. Again, the Unification Church had an increase of 30% in 1980 but it had very few members in 1975 and its numbers were boosted by several hundred members from Japan and various parts of Europe, but most of these have now left the U.K. for Germany or the USA.

One interesting fact emerges from all these statistics, namely, there is no evidence at all of a strong anti-Christian or even anti-clerical sentiment in the U.K. as is found in other areas of Europe. Dis-interestedness rather than antagonism prevails in Britain.

What of the mission of the Church from Britain?

More than 7500 men and women from Britain serve with nearly two hundred different missionary societies in one hundred and fifty countries; short-termers have dramatically risen from five per cent in 1976 to over thirty per cent in 1980. Support, however, for Christian work generally works out at only sixty-seven pence per week per church member, one fifth of it is given to overseas work. Out of 5.1 million Protestant Church members, 5804 missionaries are currently serving with Protestant missions and the Brethren and Baptists have more missionaries per church member than other groups. Protestant missionary societies have an increase of 58% in administration costs which is partly due to factors such as the increase in short-term workers (up to 31%), more care in selection and pastoral care and improved literature and deputation. There are now 250 fewer U.K. Protestant missionaries working in Africa than in 1972 and now 415 more serving in Europe. Financially there is an average annual contribution of £8 by Protestants to overseas work, or 15p per week per member.

What basis is there then for claiming that the U.K. population is

religious rather than Christian? The Muslim faith is growing at a rate of 8.4% and now has over a million adherents here. The actual total of people who claim allegiance to Christianity and other world religions as well as new religious movements in the U.K. is a surprising 74% of the population.

This is a fascinating handbook which, despite its comprehensiveness and ecumenicity in ecclesiology, can be a useful source of information for churches and pastors.

AN OVER-VIEW OF SOME RECENT OLD TESTAMENT PUBLICATIONS

Rev Stephen Dray, MA BD (London)

The Old Testament remains a growth industry for Christian publishers, and this article seeks to keep abreast of some of the more significant recent contributions.

COMMENTARIES

An increasing number of commentary series on Old Testament books are now becoming available. Some of these series have already been mentioned in these reviews. However, several recent additions ought also to be mentioned.

Of greatest significance will probably be the publication by Zondervan of the 'Bible Students' Commentary'.¹ These volumes are translations of the Dutch series entitled 'Korte Verklaring', and it is hoped that a subsequent copy of the Journal will be able to give detailed attention to some of these volumes.

The 'Daily Study Bible' series undertaken by William Barclay for the New Testament has now been extended to include the Old Testament under the general editorship of J.C.L.Gibson.² The series is projected to include volumes by a variety of scholars (both conservative and liberal) and six such volumes are currently available. In the three volumes seen by the reviewer the Leviticus volume by G.A.F.Knight is undoubtedly the best. George Knight is one of those liberal theologians on its more conservative wing who preserves an evangelical piety amid critical presuppositions. Typically, he is more concerned with theology than criticism in this commentary, and the volume is only occasionally flawed by his liberalism. As a result, this over-small commentary reflects the mature meditation of a formidable Old Testament scholar on

a portion of scripture which he has clearly frequently preached and greatly loves - a love instilled in him because in Leviticus is the theology of the cross; in Leviticus we see Christ in all the glory of his work. There is much that is highly suggestive in this volume and which makes it a useful supplement to those commentaries reviewed in Foundations No.6. It should, however, be used with a degree of care and, unfortunately, cannot be whole-heartedly recommended to our congregations because of its liberal tendencies.

David Russell's contribution in the same series on the book of Daniel is written against an extensive knowledge of the inter-testamental apocalyptic writings (see, for example, his 'The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic' published by the Student Christian Movement Press). Russell presupposes that the book of Daniel was written in the second century before Christ. Nevertheless, the particular strength of his book is that each section of the text is divided into a three-fold commentary in which basic exegesis is followed by interpretation and then a Christian application. In a book like Daniel this is a necessary but much neglected procedure. Russell's emphasis on the practical application rather than eschatological speculation is a lesson for us all.

John Gibson's own volume on Genesis 1-11 is written in the light of his presupposition that the material is mythological. Nevertheless, much of his theological interpretation of these chapters is of enduring value, although, for example, on chapter 6 he opts for the popular liberal interpretation that the 'sons of God' are angels (a view also, of course, still found in many conservative circles).

A particularly valuable series of books is to be found in the recent republication of C.R.Erdman's Volumes on the Old Testament.³ Described as 'expositions' the earlier volumes, especially up to and including the book of Numbers, do include expository material. However, all the volumes (and especially the later ones) are given over more especially to producing a detailed survey of the contents of each book. The reviewer has already found the Isaiah volume of considerable value in giving a quick, bird's eye view of the prophet's message.

The most valuable recent commentaries seen by the reviewer are, however, undoubtedly the two volumes by Victor Hamilton and David Atkinson respectively. The former volume is an extensively researched attempt to view the pentateuch against its Biblical - theological background.

As such, it is not a detailed commentary although its particular orientation makes it more valuable than many commentaries. This volume is highly recommended and should serve as a most fruitful and suggestive tool for the preacher.⁴

David Atkinson's volume is a further contribution to the 'Bible Speaks Today' series published by the IVP. It is the first attempt in that series to deal with a portion of Old Testament narrative - a task which Atkinson performs with the utmost skill. The author views the book as a story which emphasises the providence of God at work in the individual lives of His people. In addition, he suggests that the book is set against a background in which Old Testament spirituality is found in its highest expression. With this in mind (and by the use of extensive cross-referencing, especially with reference to the cultural/theological context) Atkinson uses a restrained typology to apply the intensely pastoral lessons of the book to the modern reader. Reading this commentary has stirred up the reviewer to want to preach on Ruth! It has also suggested some of the principles which should be employed in preaching Biblical narrative and it, therefore, has a wider value for all those who are seeking to preach such material. All preachers should study this volume.⁵

ARCHEOLOGY

Baker Bookhouse are to be commended for their series 'Baker Studies in Biblical Archeology'. Two volumes in this series are under review here. The book entitled 'Egypt and Bible History'⁶ provides archeological background material to the Bible which is written up in such a way as to be accessible to the non-specialist and the non-academic. Thoroughly conservative (the early date for the Exodus being preferred) and interestingly written and illustrated this small book ought to commend itself to a wide readership.

The other volume is that by Edwin Yamauchi entitled 'Foes from the Northern Frontier'. This is a more technical work and is a comprehensive account of the background to all the prophetic references to foes from Israel's northern frontier.⁷ As such its special value will be to the preacher who is dealing with passages in which such references occur. However it is a must for all students of prophecy who are inclined to make much of such references without the adequate background knowledge which alone can justify or refute their arguments.

SPECIAL STUDIES

We begin this section by referring to the book entitled 'Old Testament Wisdom; an Introduction' by James L.Crenshaw.⁸ This volume will probably soon establish itself alongside von Rad ('Wisdom in Israel') and R.B.Y.Scott ('The Way of Wisdom') as one of the standard texts on the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. A general discussion of the issues raised by the concept 'wisdom' is followed by a survey of the Biblical wisdom books (Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes) and the non-canonical material (Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, etc). Finally a discussion of the legacy of wisdom is followed by a useful chapter on Egyptian and Mesopotamian wisdom literature. The value of the book is, however, sadly weakened as far as the conservative reader is concerned by an almost reactionary liberalism which pervades the book and which, for example, refuses to attribute hardly any of the Proverbs to Solomon.

An interesting study which has come to the reviewer's attention is the book entitled 'The Hiding God' by Raymond L.Scott.⁹ This volume is sub-titled 'Jesus in the Old Testament' and is a complete and well argued statement of the viewpoint that the Old Testament theophanies of God are, in fact, pre-incarnate visitations from the second person of the trinity. The reviewer remains unconvinced of Scott's final position but commends this book to those who wish to give consideration to this popular conservative viewpoint.

Three books are especially recommended in this section. The first is entitled 'Tradition and Testament' and is a collection of essays written in honour of C.L.Feinberg.¹⁰ Eleven essays are included in this volume which will be of considerable interest to the Old Testament specialist and, indeed, to others. Of value to students in particular is the essay by C.L.Feinberg himself on the uses and abuses of archaeological data in the study of the Bible. For the pastor the short final article by W.A.Criswell encouraging preaching of the Old Testament is a heart-warming challenge which is also stimulated by the remaining essays. Gleason Archer has written an essay on the Masoretic Text of 1 Samuel, arguing (against F.M.Cross) its reliability. Thomas J.Finley provides an important contribution to discussion on the Hebrew system of tenses and especially the waw-consecutive imperfect. Richard D. Patterson, Donald Glenn and P.D.Feinberg provide detailed exegetical studies of the Song of Deborah, Psalm 139 and Daniel 9 verses 24 to 27 and in so doing provide excellent examples of how we should do our

exegesis prior to the proclamation of God's word.

Of considerable value is Bruce K. Waltke's article entitled 'A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms' in which the author seeks to develop a legitimate 'Messianic' exegesis of the Psalms. He eschews uncontrolled allegory and the restrictive hermeneutic which only commits as 'Messianic' those Psalms so used in the New Testament. Waltke proposes that the majority of the Psalms are to be seen as 'Messianic' in the sense that they are the Psalms of the king who bears a typical relationship to 'great David's greater son'. This is a most suggestive method and rewards careful examination.

Walter Kaiser follows this by conducting an excellent study in the relationship between Psalm 40 vv 6-8 and Hebrews 10 vv 5-10. In a detailed analysis he argues for the absolute legitimacy of the New Testament author's use of the Psalm and indicates the hermeneutical principles he used.

Two final essays deal with the theology of the Balaam oracles and with the nature and content of salvation in the Old Testament. The former article is by Ronald B. Allen and the latter, is an interesting attempt by a dispensationalist to argue that there is only one way of salvation throughout the Bible. This article is by J. S. Feinberg.

One final comment. Here is evangelical academic study at its best. Practical, edifying and scholarly the work is not vitiated (as so much evangelical scholarship in England) by the constant preoccupation with seeking to be 'respectable' in the eyes of liberal scholars.

The second book, which is of the highest possible value, is entitled 'Jesus and the Old Testament' and is written by R. T. France.¹¹ This volume was originally published by the Inter Varsity Press but has been out of print for some time and is, therefore, a welcome reprint and addition to Baker Bookhouse's 'Twin Books Series'. Basic to the interpretation of the Old Testament is the question, 'How did Jesus understand the Old Testament in the light of Himself and His gospel?' Detailed exegesis of all the major passages in which Jesus refers to the Old Testament are included in this thoroughly indexed and most carefully argued work. This volume should be obtained and constantly referred to by all preachers of the gospel.

The final book requiring a special mention at this point is the very

valuable 'Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties' by Gleason Archer.¹² Archer is a thoroughly conservative Old Testament scholar of the highest calibre who is committed to the inerrancy of the Bible. This book has arisen out of that conviction and the experience of thirty years' seminary teaching. Covering the whole Bible, Archer seeks to deal with the whole gamut of alleged Biblical discrepancies. He is particularly skilled in his discussion of textual difficulties and in the reconciling of historical data although his theological harmonisations reflect an Arminian theology and a somewhat fundamentalist approach to Biblical interpretation. Nevertheless, since the intellectual assaults on the believer are often very considerable this volume will go a long, long way to resolving many of the difficulties. This book will be of special value to all students (especially of theology) and pastors.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Of considerable value, especially in introducing the young believer to the Old Testament, is Geoff Treasure's book 'The Book that Jesus Read'.¹³ In a racy style the main features of the Old Testament story are outlined and placed in their proper redemptive perspective. This book should encourage the reader to study the Old Testament for himself.

Complementing this volume is Cyril Bridgland's book 'Pocket Guide to the Old Testament'.¹⁴ Aimed at providing the basic help needed to study Old Testament books Bridgland achieves his purpose admirably in providing short summaries, Biblical background, basic introduction and applications stimulated by the questions he appends at the end of each chapter. There are, however, two small criticisms (apart from the complaint that the cover is so drab). The first is that there ought to have been more emphasis on theological content and application than is actually found in the book. Secondly, this could have been done at the expense of the sometimes unduly detailed discussion of critical issues. These latter have a strange feel in the book - there is often a far greater concession to more liberal viewpoints in discussing such critical issues than seems consistent with Mr Bridgland's views expressed elsewhere in the book. Do we detect a second-hand work?

The major study under this section, however, is the book entitled 'Old Testament Survey' produced by the three Old Testament staff at Fuller Theological Seminary.¹⁵ The purpose of this volume is to encompass in

one cover all the basic material required in the study of the Old Testament. This includes, for example, Biblical introduction, theology, geography and archeology, etc. This purpose is admirably achieved without making the material over basic and general, and is accomplished by means of a highly readable style. The stance of this book is basically conservative. However, the following footnote found on page 353, in discussing the book of Jonah, reveals the tendency of the book. The authors say 'Paul described inspired scripture as "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3 v 16). In the context, there can be no doubt that he meant only religious or spiritual teaching'. The implications of such a radical reunderstanding of the traditional evangelical view of scripture is particularly marked in the handling of the material on the pentateuch and makes the reviewer feel that the authors are at best to be described as liberal evangelicals. Nevertheless, it would be wrong not to say that this volume will probably quickly, and rightly, become regarded as the best currently available conservative introduction to the Old Testament.

REFERENCES

1. Three volumes are currently available in this series. The first two volumes are on the book of Genesis and are by G.C.Aalders. The third volume is on Exodus by W.H.Gispen.
2. Genesis Volume 1 by John C.L.Gibson, 214pp. paperback, £2.95.
Leviticus by G.A.F.Knight, 173pp. paperback, £2.95
Daniel by D.S.Russell, 234pp. paperback, £2.95
All three volumes are published by the Saint Andrew Press of Edinburgh. Volumes on Exodus, the books of Samuel and on the first fifty Psalms are also now available.
3. The Eerdmans volumes are
The book of Genesis, 124pp. paperback. The book of Exodus, 144pp. paperback. The book of Leviticus, 144pp. paperback. The book of Numbers, 142pp. paperback. The book of Deuteronomy, 95pp. paperback
The book of Isaiah, 160pp. paperback. The books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, 126pp. paperback.
All these volumes are published by Baker Bookhouse.
4. Handbook on the Pentateuch by Victor P.Hamilton. Published by Baker Bookhouse. 496pp. hardback.
5. The Wings of Refuge by David Atkinson, published by Inter Varsity Press, 128pp. paperback.

6. Egypt and Bible History from Earliest Times to 1000 BC by Charles F. Aling. Published by Baker Bookhouse, 145pp. paperback.
7. Foes from the Northern Frontier by Edwin M. Yamauchi. Published by Baker Bookhouse, 148pp. paperback.
8. Old Testament Wisdom: an Introduction, by James L. Crenshaw. Published by the SCM Press, 286pp. paperback, £5.95
9. The Hiding God by Raymond L. Scott. Published by Baker Bookhouse, 176pp. paperback.
10. Tradition and Testament: Essays in honour of Charles Lee Feinberg. Edited by John S. and Paul D. Feinberg. Published by Moody Press, 325pp. hardback.
11. Jesus and the Old Testament by R. T. France. Published by Baker Bookhouse, 286pp. paperback.
12. Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties by Gleason L. Archer. Published by Zondervan, 476pp. hardback.
13. The Book that Jesus Read by Geoff Treasure. Published by the Inter Varsity Press, 128pp. paperback. £1.75
14. Pocket Guide to the Old Testament by Cyril Bridgland. Published by Inter Varsity Press, 240pp. paperback. £2.75
15. Old Testament Survey by William Sanford La Sor, David Allan Hubbard and Fredric William Bush. Published by Eerdmans. 696pp. hardback.

THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

William J. Abraham. Oxford University Press 1982. £9.50

When I opened this book I was led to believe that here I would find some new and exciting fare in the debate over biblical inerrancy. The author, associate professor of theology in Seattle Pacific University and formerly a Methodist minister in Northern Ireland, led me to expect he had discovered an interesting menu that would satisfy the tensions raised by biblical inerrancy. Sadly I found myself, instead, sitting in the theological works canteen and ruminating upon the same food that is served there regularly.

In his introduction Abraham reminds us that 'there is a serious crisis among evangelicals regarding the doctrine of inspiration'. He recognises that the evangelical doctrine of Scripture is rarely understood by its critics and therefore the author sets out to make that doctrine clear. Abraham considers himself in the evangelical tradition and certainly in many ways understands the evangelical position clearly. He identifies three central ingredients: 1. the nature of inspiration - a unique act of God whereby scripture is breathed out. 2. the locus

of inspiration - as originally given or written. 3. the implications of inspiration - the Bible is inerrant.

However, 'despite its simplicity and sophistication' this view has failed to win full support from those who would otherwise embrace evangelical doctrine. Abraham laments that many consider inerrancy a *sine qua non* of evangelical belief and anything else is 'too vague, ad hoc and obscurantist'. It is this position that Abraham sets out to challenge. He claims for his book 'a modest attempt to offer a positive account of inspiration which is contemporary, coherent and credible' (p.7). Rather presumptuously perhaps the writer claims 'there can be no blurring of the fact that evangelicals cannot remain satisfied with the views of such key figures as Warfield and Packer'. For this reason a new departure is both essential and possible.

In chapter 1 Abraham recognises the enormous debt of conservative evangelicals to B.B.Warfield. But concludes that this position involves 'substantial innovations in theology'. It was this 'disturbing revelation' that set Abraham on a new course. B.B.Warfield's approach is described as a deductive approach, that is, they begin with very firm convictions about the meaning of inspiration and from this deduce by normal rules of inference what this entailed for the content and character of the Bible (p.16).

It is a main part of Abraham's claim that the theory of inspiration outlined by Warfield and modern conservative evangelicals is an innovation which does not reflect either the Apostolic or the Reformers view. He maintains that the dictation theory was once held by evangelicals and that dictation and inspiration, as understood by conservative evangelicals, are inseparable. When dictation goes, inerrancy goes: 'they are linked by way of logical inference'. Perhaps this is the first great weakness of Abraham throughout the book. He fails completely to understand that in the minds of many inerrancy and dictation are not inseparably linked. God's method of inspiration can produce an inerrant result without resorting in every case to dictation.

Having outlined what he calls the deductive approach of Warfield, Abraham continues in his second chapter to decry the inductive approach of men like William Sandy in his 1893 Bampton Lectures, and Wheeler Robinson and James Barr. We can agree with Abraham when he informs us that Barr does not inspire confidence. After offering his understanding of Barr's theology on Scripture, he admits that it is hard to understand! Even if conservative evangelicals are wrong, claims Abraham, at least everyone knows what they believe; 'the fundamental problem

with Barr's proposal is that it is still too vague and obscure'.

Chapter three is entitled the 'Concept of Inspiration' and this chapter is the heart of the author's theory. He begins with the following criticism: 'Evangelical theologians have built their theories around the idea of divine speaking. This is simply a basic category mistake'. Since all statements about God are analagous to the same statement used of men (eg. father, love, forgive), we must ask in what sense the word inspiration is used of men. This will show us how it is to be predicated of God. Abraham claims that theologians have failed to attend to the root meaning of the word 'inspire'. This, together with Abraham's eleven line exegesis of the word 'theopneustos', and his conclusion that 'inspire' is 'entirely correct' as a translation, is written almost as if B.B.Warfield had never published a detailed study of the use of the word in ancient literature and arrived at a completely opposite conclusion! Abraham's whole argument is that our concept of inspiration is based upon God speaking rather than God inspiring. He insists that we must ask how inspiration is used by men. But here is a fatal error. Because the author fails to recognise that how we use the word today and how 'theopneustos' was used by the ancients, may be very different, as Warfield has clearly demonstrated.

Abraham suggests there are two concepts of inspiration. First what he calls polymorphous in the teacher. That is, the teacher inspires through teaching, lecturing, discussing, publishing and so on. Secondly, polymorphous in the student. That is, we see the effects of inspiration in the varied aspects of student thought, activity and so on. There is, of course, nothing new in this distinction by Abraham. Both concepts, though not under these pretentious titles, were faced in 'God inspired Scripture' when B.B.Warfield criticised Dr Cremer. Abraham finds it perfectly legitimate to speak of degrees of inspiration in the Bible and recognises that the human agent, even when inspired, can make mistakes. However, when confronted with the problem how we can then believe that the Bible gives us a reliable account of God's saving acts, his answer is simple: it is based upon the status of God as omniscient and infallible; 'therefore what he inspires will bear significant marks of truth and reliability'. A statement vague enough to mean anything or nothing! The key to Abraham's whole argument is that divine inspiration does not depend upon divine speaking and he believes that once this has been grasped it is 'a liberating experience' (p.67). His view he believes to be in line with the differences of style and culture and also allows for the critical historical investigation. This is needed, he believes, to 'fill out the

degree to which this or that part of the Bible can be historically reliable'. For example we cannot answer in advance whether Jonah was a historical figure or not, and it is an open question as to how far the Gospel of John is chronologically accurate. Both these examples, however, beg the issue. After all 2 Kings 14:25 should settle the first question for Abraham and the second question (problem of John's chronology) has nothing whatsoever to do with inspiration unless John claimed to be chronologically exact, which he did not.

Again and again Abraham falls back on the dictation theory and fails to see that God can inspire words without dictating them. He never answers the challenge that if you reduce Biblical infallibility at one point you cannot rely upon it anywhere. Admittedly he raises this issue and then dismisses it as if it were an argument of straw. But it is not straw. On page 71 this author, 'within the evangelical tradition', concedes that his view of inspiration allows inspiration to continue even outside the Bible. Thus even the ordinary in the writings of men can be inspired. This is the inevitable conclusion and weakness of his theory.

In the fourth chapter under the title 'Divine Speaking and the Authority of Scripture', Abraham criticises the view of G.Ernest Wright (1952) and others that revelation is only seen in action. He defends the view that revelation must be in speaking as well as action. If we can only know about God by his actions then we know nothing of causes or reasons, only events. He rightly argued that we need 'not just a revelation in history but also a revelation about history' (p.86).

Chapter five brings us to Abraham's 'Exegetical Considerations', and he sets out his claim at the beginning. 'Here I ... intend to show that my position does full justice to the classical texts of the Bible on inspiration'. He refers to 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 claiming that 'of these two texts only the first deals directly with the topic of inspiration'(!) Following this rather enigmatic statement Abraham casts himself even more in the liberal mould when he claims 'furthermore, 2 Timothy cannot on any account be considered a central book in the Bible. Important as it is in certain respects it cannot stand on a par with Romans, Galatians or Hebrews, not to speak of the Gospels'. This is surely a strange stance for anyone who claims to be in the evangelical tradition. Abraham divides the Scriptures into three categories on the subject of inspiration. First the classical texts. On 2 Timothy 3:16, 'leaving aside the irrelevant issue of how to

translate the opening phrase' (!). He goes on to claim that there is no mention in this verse of Scripture being word for word the very words of God, thus there is no mention of inerrancy and the inference is not even drawn by the writer. This vital verse on the subject of inspiration is dismissed in one page plus the eleven lines of an earlier chapter. We can only presume that the reason he finds so little value in the verse is because he has not taken the trouble to decide how to translate the opening phrase! It is quite incredible that on this verse you would hardly think that B.B.Warfield had written anything according to Abraham. On 2 Peter 1:21 Abraham claims there is even less to say on inspiration than 2 Timothy 3:16. Once again, because no attempt is made to exegete the Greek words involved, his discussion of this verse is wholly dissatisfying. The second category concerns Jesus' own attitude to the Old Testament and on this subject Abraham claims, 'There is no point in the Gospel where Jesus speaks explicitly of the inspiration of the Bible. Nor is there any reference to the original autographs. Jesus, like Paul, refers to copies and translations, not to original autographs when he comments on Scripture. Nor is there any explicit reference to inerrancy. There is not a single text which speaks plainly and explicitly on these matters. This is surely astonishing'. What is even more astonishing is that Abraham should actually draw our attention to so few verses in the Gospels in which Christ speaks of the Scriptures. It is true that he spends four pages discussing Matthew 5: 17-18 but surely no one would claim this passage to be a key to the whole subject and even Abraham admits that the passage has 'taxed the minds of the great exegetes'. Under this section we are referred to 1 Corinthians 7:10,12, and 25. In a strangely naive misunderstanding of Paul's meaning in these verses the exegesis is dismissed in nine lines with the conclusion that Paul recognised his words were not given by God. It seems hardly to have occurred to Abraham that there could be a more positive understanding of Paul's words which have been traditionally understood by evangelicals. viz. that on these particular issues our Lord in the Gospels had nothing to say. Thirdly, Abraham speaks of the Old Testament quoted in the New Testament as direct utterances from God. Two passages are given as examples, Romans 9:17 and Hebrews 3:7 where Scripture and God are equated. Warfield is accused of failing to recognise that 'to argue that all of the Bible is spoken by God is no different from arguing that it is dictated by God'. His own solution to the constant use in the New Testament of God and Scripture as interchangeable introductions to quotations from the Old Testament is to suggest that this is merely a fitting expression of the deep respect

there is for the canon of the Old Testament' (p.107).

Abraham's Postscript in the final chapter defends his position with evangelicals and attempts to show the shifts in evangelical position through the centuries. Of course evangelicals have changed their language and tightened their grip as inerrancy has been increasingly attacked but this does not mean, as Abraham implies, that evangelicals have changed their position. He includes a brief survey of Wesley's (inconsistent?) view of Scriptural authority, and concludes with an appeal for unity among evangelicals even where they differ on scripture.

Conclusion - Sadly Abraham's work treads not a new path as we are led to believe but an old path which has been resuscitated by evangelicals today. I did not find it helpful in clarifying the issues of Biblical authority. All along I felt that Abraham was avoiding the real issues and he left us with no clear understanding as to where and how we could be sure that scripture was reliable and where errors could be allowed. Without a clear statement of what is and what is not reliable the whole fabric of this argument must fall to the ground. His questioning of the value of 2 Timothy (as compared with other books of the New Testament) shows that our 'slippery slope argument' is not so foolish as many would have us believe today. Without putting too fine a point on it I had expected something a little more valuable and well thought out from Oxford University Press.

Rev Brian Edwards BD
Surbiton, Surrey

THE WYCLIFFE BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF THE CHURCH

by E.S.Moyer (Revised and enlarged by Earle Cairns) and published by Moody Press. 449pp. hardback.

This useful dictionary includes over two thousand thumbnail biographies of leaders of the Christian Church from the immediate post-apostolic period to today. It is important especially for the inclusion of many evangelicals and missionaries - the sort of people often omitted in other works. However, its value is vitiated by the lack of any bibliographic material - a fact which makes it almost valueless

for the researcher. Moreover, it is sometimes lacking in theological data and insight while, for example, educational details are rather over-done. The dictionary, quite properly, reflects its American origin but is also slightly eccentric in its selection and coverage. This last fact is emphasised in the B's by the omission of John Bradford and the John Browns while E.M.Bounds is given more space than Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann!

ANALYTICAL GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

by Barbara and Timothy Friberg. Published by Baker Bookhouse.
854pp. hardback.

This book is the first of six projected volumes by the Friberg's on the basis of their research on the computational linguistics of the Greek New Testament. The present volume uses the U.B.S. text and grammatically analyses each word in the New Testament by means of an inter-linear code of symbols. The dust jacket properly claims that 'both beginning and advanced students of Greek will find this an invaluable tool. It enables one to read the text more quickly, seeing at a glance the grammatical relationship between the words. It serves admirably as a reference tool, allowing one to check in a moment the accuracy of his own analysis of a word. And it proves most helpful to those looking for creative ways to review and improve their knowledge of the Greek'.
