

foundations

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Romans 1 and Aids

Loss of the Supernatural

The Gospel of God

Male and Female II

Book Reviews

Index Issues 13-18



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Foundations is published by the **British Evangelical Council** in November and May; its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, Biblical theology, church history and apologetics — and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry; its policy gives particular attention to the theology of evangelical churches which are outside pluralist ecumenical bodies.

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Editorial

With this issue *Foundations* reaches its eighteenth and I am glad to commend to all our readers the stimulus of the articles we are able to include.

In **Exegesis**, Pastor Paul Brown gives us a valuable exposition of part of **Romans chapter 1**, relating and applying it to the debate on homosexuality and Aids. It is a balanced treatment of a subject which is causing considerable alarm at present.

The Rev Alasdair Macleod gives us a penetrating study of contemporary theology under the title, **The Loss of the Supernatural Today**. This material was greatly appreciated when it was first delivered at the BEC Annual Conference in Bristol in 1986 and we are glad it is given wider circulation in this published form.

The Gospel of God was the tremendously important theme of this year's BEC Study Conference. Pastor Robin Dowling has outlined all five papers for us, covering the cultural context in which the Gospel is preached, its biblical content, how that message is authenticated and applied, then what kind of response we should be seeking. Those who were unable to attend the conference can at least see where all the discussion started! It will be no surprise to those who were present that the BEC Executive have decided that the 1987 Annual Conference in November should have as its theme **The Urgency of the Gospel**.

The article on **Male and Female**, begun in issue 17, is now completed by the Rev Hywel Jones. In Part II he looks at the New Testament material and considers the implications of this for headship, submission and whether women should teach in the Church. These matters are significant for all evangelicals, not only those agonizing over them within the Church of England.

For the convenience of our readers we are also pleased to provide in this issue an **Index** of the articles, reviews and contributors in issues 13—18.

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Exegesis 4: Romans 1, Homosexuality and Aids

Paul Brown

The coming of the awful disease of AIDS has given rise to a whole variety of emotional reactions, and to public debate and concern which has only just begun. In a situation where people are confused, mistaken, angry, disgusted and afraid, the responsibility lies on Christians to speak wisely, accurately, humbly, compassionately and to bring to bear the divine perspective of the Word of God upon the issues that are raised. The passage which, perhaps, Christians think of first of all when considering this matter is Romans 1:18-32 and because of its crucial importance we need to examine it carefully.

Wrath

The main subject of this passage is the wrath of God (v.18), but at the outset we ought to note the way in which Paul introduces this subject and his purpose in doing so. His over-riding concern is the gospel which he preached, a gospel which tells how a righteousness from God is available for everyone who believes (vv.16,17). In the section we are considering (and indeed right on until 3:20) Paul paints the dark backcloth against which it was his joy and glory to preach the gospel of justification. Men and women are sinners, they are already under the heavy cloud of God's wrath which hangs impending over them, indeed which is already partially manifested both as penalty and warning. In this situation Paul is not ashamed of the gospel but is eager to preach it, even in the degradation of Rome. Our perspective then is entirely wrong unless we see the situation depicted in Romans 1:18-32 as manifesting both the need and the opportunity for preaching the Gospel of the merciful provision of God — justification, in the place of condemnation.

In this passage the wrath of God is not simply spoken of as something which will be revealed at the last day, rather “the wrath of God **is being revealed**” — present tense; this is something which is manifested here and now. The way in which God's wrath is manifested is not in particular afflictions or punishments as such, but in his giving people over to the unrestrained expression of the sinful desires within their hearts. Three times this phrase is used “God gave them over” (*paredoken* vv.24,26,28). As Judas Iscariot gave Jesus over to the Jewish hierarchy (John 13:21) and the Jews gave Him over to Pilate and the Romans (Acts 3:13), so, in his wrath, God gives people over to the shameful lusts and depraved mind which are themselves the result of refusing the knowledge of God which they have, and suppressing the truth which they know.

This threefold repetition seems to suggest a certain progression, the more people continue in impenitency and contempt of God (v.28), so the more God

gives them over. However, it does not seem likely that Paul intended a definite order here — first a giving over to sexual impurity, second to unnatural relations, and finally to every kind of wickedness. The third section is far too diverse to suggest that; Paul is surely gathering together a whole variety of sins to illustrate the state to which a society degenerates when it is given over in this way.

Sexual Sins

However we view the progression indicated here, in the general way suggested or in more clear-cut stages, it is surprising that Paul focusses twice upon sexual sins (v.24 and then vv.26,27). Christians are sometimes accused of an over-concentration upon sexual morality to the neglect of other ethical priorities, and doubtless this charge is sometimes justified. However, this passage — and others too — do indicate a particular seriousness attributed to sexual misbehaviour and especially unnatural sexual activity. It may be we ought to note particularly the phrase “for the degrading of their bodies with one another” in v.24. The sin particularly specified for which God gave people over was idolatry — stripping God of his glory as the immortal, invisible, spiritual God and degrading him by picturing him in the likeness of animals and reptiles. It is possible that the “punishment fits the crime” here. Those who degrade God and reduce him to the level of animals are themselves given up to their sinful desires, so that they degrade their own bodies, behaving not with the dignity of human beings, but with a capitulation to instinctive desire and the promiscuity that is often the characteristic of animals.

There can surely be no doubt that Paul focusses on homosexual behaviour with particular emphasis and distaste. Two verses are devoted to this whereas he could easily have included such sins in the long list of verses 29-31, much as he does in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10. There are a number of features of Paul’s discussion which call for comment.

The words which are used by Paul here underline the attitude which he had to this type of behaviour — ‘shameful lusts’, ‘indecent acts’, ‘perversion’. There can be little argument about the essential accuracy of the translation in the first two cases, but it would be possible to question whether ‘perversion’ is too strong and too specific a translation of *plane*. The word is more usually translated ‘error’ and its basic meaning is ‘wandering’, ‘departing from the right path’. However, in this case it is referring to behaviour which is a departure from the norm, and ‘perversion’ is surely an accurate designation of behaviour which perverts the sexual act from its proper mode and its place within heterosexual marriage.

The second thing here is that Paul describes homosexual relations as ‘unnatural’. In many ways it is surprising that anyone should ever describe them differently, as it is clear both from the Bible and from the way God has made us that the normal sexual relationship is heterosexual. However it is not uncommon for people to say of homosexuals of either sex that their sexual desires and subsequent behaviour are ‘natural for them’. At one level this seems rather ridiculous, it is simply saying whatever a person feels like doing is

natural for him or her — it is natural for a kleptomaniac to steal, for a compulsive liar to lie, and so on. What Paul is saying, however, is that homosexual behaviour is not the natural expression of human sexuality, nor the natural use of the sexual organs. Because men may be ‘inflamed with lust’ for other men that in no sense makes it natural or ‘according to nature’. Rather that evidences a sinful and deviant propensity that needs the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to deal with it (8:13).

A third aspect of Paul’s discussion which is of particular importance at the present is the consequence which he sees homosexual behaviour bringing — “and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion”. The words are important in this place also. ‘Penalty’ *antimisthia* is rather ‘recompense’ or ‘reward’, from *misthos* meaning ‘wages, hire’ with the preposition *anti* meaning ‘in return for’, ‘in place of’, thus strengthening the idea of what is earned or deserved. The whole expression is *ten antimisthian hen edei, edei* meaning more than ‘it is fitting, appropriate’ rather ‘it is necessary’, ‘it must be’, qualifying the noun to read ‘the recompense they ought to (receive)’, expressed well in the NIV by ‘the due penalty’.

Recompense

Of what does this recompense consist? Doubtless it includes all the unhappy consequences of such activity which the persons involved experience themselves. Hendriksen lists “a guilty conscience, sleeplessness, emotional stress, depression” and these are unquestionably to be included, but we cannot exclude venereal disease, herpes, cancer, and now AIDS. Such things are not said, in themselves, to be judgements of God or expressions of his wrath. Rather they are the type of consequences which follow when God’s ways are ignored. Promiscuous behaviour and deviant behaviour because of the very close and intimate nature of the contact involved exposes those who participate to risk of infections of various sorts, particularly, of course, to the risk of infection by sexually-transmitted diseases.

The judgement and wrath of God is seen in God giving people over. When this happens people lose their sense of responsibility, of rationality and restraint. The immediate satisfaction of desire becomes the important thing; the consequences are forgotten, submerged, out of sight and out of mind. This is seen very clearly in the present publicity for men to use condoms. The argument is, people are going to have sex whatever happens therefore to save life and to prevent the spread of infection, condoms are essential. It is probably not too much to say that the last words of this chapter could be taken out of their context and applied here, “they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practise them”.

The flow of argument in this passage then is this. The wrath of God is seen in the present when God gives over responsible people who know, from the evidence of the creation, sufficient truth to humble themselves before God, but who prefer rather to follow their own wisdom and imaginings. God, as it were, says to them, “You think you can get on without me, without listening to my words, but following your own ideas? Very well, get on with it and see

where it leads you.” The judgement is to be left to our own sin-damaged thoughts and desires; the consequences are what we bring on our own heads by our foolish and irresponsible behaviour.

Abuse

Before we try and draw some conclusions it may be of some value to hazard an explanation for Paul picking out sexual depravity in the way he does. Could he not have mentioned many other sins? Doubtless he could, but it may be that he focusses on sexual sins because they abuse and degrade the most precious of human relationships that God has given to us. The way in which God chose to create the first man and the first woman, the prominence which is given in the creation story to what could be called the first marriage, the simple beauty of the narrative in Genesis 2, the remarkable words “the the LORD God ... brought her to the man”, all serve to point up the glorious gift that marriage is. And marriage is a sexual relationship: all other aspects of the marriage relationship can be and are, to some extent, shared with others, but at the heart of marriage is the personal, intimate, exclusive relationship of sexual intercourse. This lies at the heart of marriage, as a loving, joyful marriage lies at the heart of stable family life, which in turn lies at the heart of stability and good relationships in all areas of society. Sexual sin tears the pearl out of its God-given setting and makes it a plaything of swine — that is of those who appreciate neither its nature nor its purpose. Such behaviour subverts family life and introduces disruption and unhappiness throughout society. When this gift is perverted to homosexual relations or relations with animals then it becomes an abomination (Lev. 20:13,15,16) in the eyes of the Creator and an insult to his wisdom and goodness.

Implications for Today

1. The root of our moral problems is a spiritual one. It is because men suppress the truth of God and prefer their own way, even their own religion, that God gives them up. If the real root is spiritual and religious, then the ultimate solution can only be spiritual and religious also.
2. It is clearly improper simply to say that AIDS is a judgement of God on homosexual behaviour. The position is more complicated than that, both in terms of this passage and the facts of the situation. There are AIDS victims who contracted the disease from blood transfusions, others from heterosexual relations within marriage and babies are now being born with AIDS. On the other hand the AIDS virus is not passed on by lesbian relations, but that does not exclude such behaviour from the strictures of Paul.
3. Undoubtedly AIDS must be included as one part of the ‘due penalty’ which improper and unnatural relations bring in their train. To abuse God’s gifts, to depart from his ways, to repel conscience and to neglect God’s laws, always bring unhappy consequences, not just for those who do such things, but often to a far wider circle of people than that — children, parents, spouse, relatives, friends, neighbours. But this is true not just of homosexual sin, nor of sexual sin, but of all sin. The consequences of human sin are impossible to trace out in all their ramifications and it is heart-rending to consider the mountain of

misery and sorrow which humanity has built up for itself by its inexcusable disobedience to God.

4. It is very doubtful whether it is satisfactory to make the common distinction between homosexual behaviour and homosexual orientation, as if such orientation were a non-moral matter. For example Hendriksen's comment, "A person's sexual orientation, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is not the point at issue. What matters is what a person does with his sexuality" is only true up to a point. A shameful lust is a shameful lust even if it is resisted. It is true that temptation is not sin, but it is also true that we are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners. Sin is a principle of evil and disobedience in all of us. It manifests itself in many lusts and immoderate and improper desires. Homosexual desire is a manifestation of indwelling sin and has to be seen in that light. This is not to single out the homosexual as a special case for we are all beset by innumerable lusts and evil desires, but it is to say that he, or she, like all the rest of us, cannot simply be satisfied with victory in the outward area of behaviour, but must also look for grace for the mortification and transformation of the inner life as well (Romans 8:5-9).

5. Paul could write in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 of those whose lives were marked by the sort of sins this passage brings before us, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed ... sanctified ... justified." We are thankful to God and encouraged by reports we hear of similar gracious deliverances in our own day.

6. The attitudes that Christians have towards those whose sins include those we have particularly considered in this chapter must be looked at with some care. It is probably best to isolate several aspects.

a) Chapter 2 verse 1 reads, "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things." It is very likely that Paul is here turning to the Jews who had a strong tendency to condemn the Gentiles for their immoral behaviour. The point cannot be that those who condemned others committed exactly the same outward sins to the same degree; Paul obviously has in mind 'sanctimonious persons' (Calvin) whose life-style appeared superior and who consequently felt in a position to judge and condemn. But sin is not just a matter of outward life; the roots of all sins are within us all, and sins of thought and imagination (e.g. Matt. 5:27-29) are real sins bringing the judgement of God upon us. It is, alas, perfectly possible for us to sin in the mind even as we consider these words of Paul, such is the power and deceitfulness of sin to seize the opportunity such words present (7:7-13). Our Lord's words, "Do not judge, or you will be judged" (Matt. 7:1) are directly applicable here. To make known the laws of God, and the judgements of God, is one thing; but it is another to adopt a position of moral superiority and condemn and despise others. By nature and practice we are all sinners, vile and unclean, and we must never forget this; nor that the only thing that causes us to differ from others is the sovereign grace of God.

b) It is not enough, of course, simply to avoid a harsh, condemnatory spirit; as

Christians we must always be controlled by love and compassion. It is true that some homosexuals do not want compassion, rather acceptance and approval, but even the bravado of those who flaunt their pervertedness must move us not just to righteous anger but even more to grief and sorrow. It is utter tragedy that persons made in the image of God can become as sexually debased, as vicious, callous, ruthless, selfish ... as our newspaper headlines constantly tell us is true. That it is hard, almost impossible, to love some people is true, yet we are called to nothing less than this. However two comments need to be made. *Firstly*, love does not mean we do not feel disgust, nor righteous anger, where these are appropriate. Christians should be shockable, though many of us have become almost as insensitive to violations of purity and holiness as the men of the world. *Secondly*, love is something strong, active and practical. It does not consist in mouthing benevolent-sounding sentiments, it operates hand in hand with truth, and actively seeks the highest good of others.

c) What is our attitude to the AIDS sufferer who contracted the disease through his own perversion and promiscuity? Is it not his own fault? Is he to be treated as a leper, an outcast? This must not be. Nor is it our first duty to point out the link between his disobedient life-style and its consequences. He is undoubtedly a sinner, but we are always meeting sinners. He is suffering because of his behaviour, but then so is the man seriously injured in hospital who crashed his car while he was drunk. He is a fellow human being, suffering and dying, who needs love and mercy, who desperately needs the gospel of grace. We must be ready with love, care, touch and truth.

d) Finally, and it is a fitting conclusion to this paper, we must preach the good news to all creation, not least to those who know themselves to be dying from AIDS. It is not only the wrath of God which has been revealed from heaven. The love of God has also been revealed, and more than revealed, it has come down to earth in the person of the Son of God — “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”. We are not only ourselves debtors entirely to Love Incarnate, we are also his representatives and ambassadors in this world. So we are back where we began. Jesus came preaching the gospel (Mark 1:14), Paul served with his whole heart preaching the gospel (1:9); the world, under the wrath of God, needs above all the cleansing, renewing gospel of grace.

Pastor Paul Brown BD is minister of Bethel Evangelical Free Church, Stoke on Trent. This article is based on a paper originally prepared for the Christian Citizenship Committee of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, of which Mr. Brown is the Chairman.

The Loss of the Supernatural Today

Alasdair Macleod

The author has edited for Foundations' readers the transcript of his address at the 1986 BEC Annual Conference where the overall theme was The Supernatural in Christianity.

As you can see from the title, I have been given a very broad remit. The brief called for a non-academic treatment of a range of important issues, the only topic specifically excluded being that of "supernatural gifts". I can simply say that I have done my best with the resources available to me in local Highland Manse! The first half of the address will look briefly at the claim that society and theology are increasingly secular. The second part will focus on five great areas where biblical supernaturalism is consistently under attack. And the whole gives me the opportunity to indulge some of my favourite quotations!

The term "supernatural" is a controversial and slippery one. The Concise Oxford Dictionary summarises its basic content in ordinary usage: "beyond what nature will account for ... due to or manifesting some agency above the forces of nature, outside the ordinary operation of cause and effect". But I also want to insist at the outset that we must put more content into the term as we lament the loss of the supernatural, because we are not concerned simply to defend the notion of a supernatural realm in some general sense, of "something" or "someone" beyond this world, this life. We assert a full biblical supernaturalism, which proclaims the God of Scripture, the unique, the transcendent, the personal, the speaking God. All that we will maintain and defend in this conference depends on our understanding of His existence and activity.

Secular Society?

While we recognise with gratitude that there are actually real growth points for evangelical religion in Britain today, we know that the general picture is very different. Historians and sociologists chart the way in which the influence of the Christian church has steadily diminished in the last two or three hundred years, a church whose input was so influential in law and politics, in education, in social welfare, and in the moral outlook of society. Bryan Wilson has spoken of the church in Britain functioning "more as a service facility than as an evangelistic agency, more as the provider of occasional and reassuring ritual than as the disseminator of vital knowledge or the exemplar of moral wisdom."¹

The Enlightenment

Historians of thought are in broad agreement as to the decisive shift in the thinking of the West, tracing it back to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Two popular treatments from very different theological perspectives express that agreement. Lesslie Newbigin in *The Other Side of 1984* speaks of the Enlightenment as "the proximate source of our culture",² and Os

Guinness in *The Dust of Death* looks back to this “momentous stage in the journey of the Western mind”. This was the period when the leading thinkers of Europe were confident that darkness was giving way to light as the mysterious was being explained. Important in this was the influence and methodology of developing science, observing phenomena, analysing data and formulating laws. And absolutely critical in the whole ethos was the place given to human reason as against divine revelation. Guinness says that as the century drew to a close, “the break between reason and revelation was finalized, and the battle was joined in terms of ‘Hellene’ versus ‘Hebrew’, light versus darkness, reason versus superstition, philosopher versus priest and men of realism versus purveyors of myth”.³

At first many of these thinkers were Deists, believing in a God who was a first cause, a prime mover, but not necessarily involved in what He had set in motion. But as time went by, less and less need was felt for any God at all. Men dispensed with Him in cosmology, and then in the nineteenth century in geology and biology, and finally the social sciences, sociology and psychology, offered their reductionism. The story moves steadily on to the closed universe and the closed minds of many in our day. There is no-one beyond what they call nature. There is nothing beyond the continuum. Every event has a cause, an explanation, within the system.

Humanism

We thus live in an age where the focus is on this present, physical universe, and where transcendent and eternal assertions are regarded as meaningless or irrelevant. Secularism is the philosophy which is oriented to this world in this time, and it is the dominant world view of modern Western culture. R.C. Sproul has argued that secularism is the umbrella which shields the various non-Christian philosophies beneath it. “Secularism has the necessary common denominator to tie together humanism, pragmatism, relativism, naturalism, pluralism, existentialism, and several other isms.”⁴ Some years ago E.L. Mascall analysed his society in words that are more apposite with every year that passes: “In saying, as I shall, that our present age is radically secularised, I mean that, whatever remnants remain in our national life of the trappings of religion ... the vast majority of men and women today organise their lives on the assumption that the only realities of which they need to take account are those that are perceived by their senses in the brief span of time that lies between their conception in their mother’s womb and their death on the motorway or in the hospital bed. This carries with it two consequences: first, that there is nothing after death that we need bother about ... secondly, that there is nothing during this life that we need bother about except the things of this world.”⁵

I was intrigued recently to read Arthur Holmes’ outline of contemporary humanism, in his *Contours of a World View*, and then to realise that his analysis of seemingly remote philosophies was actually illustrated in a real-life family living near me! He describes four main types of secular humanism. Scientific humanism sees scientific reasoning and application as the culmination of a long process of the evolution of thought and as the key to solving our problems. Romanticist humanism regards man as essentially good, but argues that modern

technology, institutions and pressures have corrupted him. Existentialist humanism is varied, but essentially pessimistic, as we live in a world that gives no guarantees and offers no hope. Marxist humanism focusses on the problem of alienation, as workers are shaped by economic forces they are not allowed to control. Now imagine our family. Dad knows no science, but is convinced that science has disproved religion, and that technology and medicine are on the march to a better world. Mum faces the hum-drum routine of each day with resignation, her youthful hopes and dreams unfulfilled, and certain there is nothing beyond this life. Son is at College and now an avowed Marxist. Teenage daughter is anti-technology, pro-Greenpeace, with a post of an endangered seal taking pride of place in her bedroom.

nothing beyond this life. Although she has never heard the term, her outlook is that of an existentialist humanist. Son is at College and now an avowed Marxist. Teenage daughter is anti-technology, pro-Greenpeace, with a poster of an endangered seal taking pride of place in her bedroom, a romanticist humanist if ever there was one. There they all are, living in the same house!

The Media

How is secular thinking promoted and reinforced in our culture? If time allowed, there are several areas which could merit our attention, among which education for example is of enormous significance. But we will look at one other pervasive influence, that of the media. James Hitchcock, author of *What is Secular Humanism?*, has written: "It is the mass media which, more than anything else, account for the rapid spread of secularism in the late twentieth century." He is including within his definition television, radio, cinema, newspapers and the glossy magazines. "The media", says Hitchcock, "have the power almost to confer existence itself. Unless a belief or an institution receives some recognition, it does not exist."⁶ Through television particularly, secular assumptions, humanistic thinking, hedonistic values, are being pumped into people's homes and minds for several hours every day. And when someone is given valuable resources to make programmes on Christian thought, that someone is a Cupitt.

In *The Christian Mind*, Harry Blamires described the difference between the supernaturalist perspective and the one which comes through the media. He wrote of the former seeing sinners in need of mercy, powerless creatures trying to do without God and making an appalling mess, a world voyaging like a little vessel across the sea of time, a world utterly dependent on God. He asked: "Is that the world represented by our Press and radio and T.V., our journalists and politicians? No ... the world pictured by modern secularism and present to current popular thinking is very different. It is a self-sufficient world. It is a world whose temporality is conclusive and final, whose comprehensiveness of experience embraces all that is and that will ever be. It is a world run by men, possessed by men, dominated by men, its course determined by men."⁷

Secular Theology?

Much contemporary theology is very different from that of the Reformers and their successors, when Scripture was seen as divinely given truth, unchanging

and determinative, and the task of the theologian was to seek to understand and articulate that truth. Clark Pinnock has expressed this in terms of the two poles of the ellipse of Christian theology, God's revelation and the world of human existence. "Theology was conservative with respect to the Word pole, and contemporary only with respect to the modern setting and the problems of communication." But this has changed radically, and Pinnock states that it is human reason or experience which is now taken to be crucial. He points to the influence of Kant and Schleiermacher in the loss of the objective truth content of the Gospel. "The result", he says, "has been a great transformation of classical theology."⁸ Because we have lost the supernatural voice, the transcendent God who has spoken His authoritative Word, we have the vast and complex range of theological thought in our own day. I can now only highlight one or two of the better known names and trends to illustrate the point. Some of the specific issues at stake in the theological debate will be noted in the second part of the address.

Prominent Features

One of the most significant figures in modern theology was Rudolf Bultmann, a man in whom anti-supernaturalism was dramatically apparent. He maintained of course that the Gospel had been presented in mythological terms, because the men who wrote the Bible lived in a pre-scientific age. They believed in a three-decker universe, heaven, earth and hell, and they were fond of supernatural intervention. Modern man cannot believe that, and so we must de-mythologise the Gospel and present it in more acceptable terms. Paul Tillich was another who had a profound influence. He spoke of God not as a transcendent person but as the depth and ground of being. God is just what is most important to you, your ultimate concern. John Robinson was building on the thought of men like these in his million-selling *Honest to God*. He aligned himself with other so-called "thinking theologians" and gave the reason for his programme in the light of contemporary culture. "There is a growing gulf between the traditional orthodox supernaturalism in which our Faith has been framed and the categories which the 'lay' world finds meaningful today." He asserts that the supernatural God is "dead beyond recall".⁹

There are two theological movements of our day which demand mention. The first is 'Process Theology', particularly influential in the United States and increasingly so elsewhere. God is described as 'dipolar' and everything is seen as 'in' God. God and the world are dependent on one another, and so God is in process, growing, developing. This is all very far from traditional views of divine sovereignty and sufficiency. The other movement is 'Liberation Theology', coming especially from Latin America. The philosophy here is Marxist, evangelism is a call to political action, and eschatology is this-worldly. There are now variants of the theology of liberation, Asian, Black, Feminist, and significantly they all speak not only of the theology of liberation but also of the "liberation of theology" from the old constraints, assumptions, dogmas. The politicization of the Gospel seen in liberation theology is an increasing characteristic of theological and ecclesiastical

thought and action in our own land too. The term 'politicization' I recall from Edward Norman's Reith Lectures of 1978, *Christianity and the World Order*: "... the most remarkable of all the changes that have occurred within Christianity during the last twenty years ... By the politicization of religion is meant the internal transformation of the faith itself, so that it comes to be defined in terms of political values ... It is losing sight of its own rootedness in a spiritual tradition; its mind is progressively secularized; its expectations are prompted by worldly changes; and its moral idealism has forfeited transcendence."¹⁰

Media Controversies

Our thoughts will also run to other recent controversies in the media. We remember the furore caused by *The Myth of God Incarnate*. Donald Macleod wrote at the time: "The most urgent and the most demanding problem facing us is this great school of prestigious professional academics deliberately destroying the faith of their fellow-Christians; and aiming to undermine not only our faith in particular doctrines but our faith in the very foundations and possibility of doctrine. They are theological anarchists entrenched in the very citadels of theology."¹¹ Then we had Don Cupitt and the "Sea of Faith" television series. In the accompanying book he summed up the change in Western thinking as "from myths to maths, from animism to mechanism, and from explanation down from above to explanation up from below". Note the crucial contrast: down from above, up from below. Cupitt rejects the supernatural, explanation down from above, and so must begin and end with man. God is just the sum of my human values. He calls on us to discard supernatural theology entirely, and to free ourselves from "nostalgia for a cosmic Father Christmas".¹² Following that we had the controversy surrounding the well publicised views of David Jenkins, Bishop of Durham, especially on topics like the birth and resurrection of our Lord, and these we will take up later. And then most recently of all we have seen the publication of *The Nature of Christian Belief*, and agreed with the criticisms of an ambiguity which sought to allow Anglicans of supernaturalist and anti-supernaturalist persuasions to agree to its wording.

There is one other issue largely neglected by mainstream evangelical theology, but important in contemporary debate, namely the relationship between Christianity and other religions. Theologians who are already uncertain about traditional orthodoxy on God, Christ, Scripture, Salvation and Judgment, are therefore open to other religions, classifying them too as human searches for the divine, and as they become more sympathetic to these religions their theology becomes even less Christian. J.I. Packer has written recently: "It seems fairly clear to me that pressure on conservative theology is still building up from exponents of religious relativism and pluralism ... We may expect a generation of debate on the program of moving through and beyond syncretism to a nobler religion than any that has yet been seen. That notion, which has emerged more than once in liberal circles, looks like an idea whose time, humanly speaking, has come; and countering it, I predict, will be the next round in the church's unending task of defending and propagating the

gospel.”¹³

Areas Under Attack

Let us turn now to note five critical areas where the supernatural is under attack, and where we are called to reflection and action.

The Cosmos

This is a theme where much is being written, and where I am just going to dip my toe in the water. We have already seen that, in the minds of many people, it is modern science which has made Christianity unbelievable, or at least unnecessary, and which has also caused some theologians to question traditional fundamentals. As we proclaim the truth of Scripture in this area, we begin where the Bible does: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Against any philosophies which hold to the eternity of matter, or any naturalistic explanations of the origin of the physical universe, we maintain that God is the absolute Creator of all that is, that He created out of nothing, because of His sovereign will, and by the instrumentality of His dynamic Word. That is the answer to the great question: “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

It is also vital to stress the lordship of this God over his creation, against any teaching that he is identical with it, or dependent upon it, or imprisoned within it. He is transcendent over what he brought into being. This King however is also involved through his creation, not only upholding it, but ceaselessly active everywhere within it. We need to hold this against any God-of-the-gaps approaches, where he is seen only in the unknown. And we emphasise it too because many theologians insist that traditional supernaturalist theologies of the Creator and Ruler have lost the immanent and concerned God. But we must refuse to surrender either transcendence or immanence. Both characterise the God of Scripture, the one who is intimately involved in all the detail, as well as sovereign and supreme over the whole.

The lordship of God also means he can intervene dramatically in what we call miracles. Nowadays perhaps scientists are not so rigid in their view of natural law, but in the thinking of many the problem still lies there. But such laws are simply descriptive of the regularities which we observe in the universe, and they allow us to predict what will happen on the basis of precedent. For us, they are God’s customs, his ordinary way of working. But we also believe in a God to whom the universe is always open. To accept the God of Scripture is to accept the possibility of miracle, and to accept the Scriptures of God is to accept the historicity of certain miracles. In the recent Tyndale Fellowship symposium on the miracles of Jesus, William Craig has written: “... if a personal God exists, then he serves as the transcendent cause to produce events in the universe which are incapable of being produced by causes within the universe ... Given a God who conserves the world in being moment by moment, who is omnipotent, and free to act as he wills ... The presupposition against the possibility of miracles survives in theology only as a hangover from an earlier Deist age and ought to be once for all abandoned.”¹⁴

The Bible

We know well the antipathy of secularism to divine revelation and to final truth. Blamires points the contrast: "The popular modern unwillingness to reckon with the authoritative, God-given nature of the Christian Faith is bred of the anti-supernaturalist bias which dominates contemporary thinking, and is indeed native and natural to secularism. It is also nourished by the popular misconception of the nature of truth. Our culture is bedevilled by the it's-all-a-matter-of-opinion code." Against this secular view he maintains the givenness of Christian truth. He writes: "To think christianly is to think in terms of Revelation ... It is a religion of acts and facts. Its God is not an abstraction, but a Person — with a right arm and a voice ... The Christian mind has an overriding sense that the truth it clings to is supernaturally grounded, revealed not manufactured, imposed not chosen, authoritative, objective, and irresistible."¹⁵

But debate over Scripture and revelation is also found within the professing Christian churches. Following the Enlightenment's stress on reason as against revelation, we had the gradual development of higher criticism, with scholars beginning to look at the Bible in the same way as they would any other book, and applying to its story the kind of canons of historical research and acceptability which they applied to any record of events. Increasingly Scripture was seen as a human book, revealing the way that a religion developed over the centuries. The humanness of the Bible is of course very important. Real people who lived in this world wrote in human language, and each was an individual who made a distinctive contribution. But we recognise a primary authorship. The Scriptures are 'God-breathed', and so this book has come from one mind, from above. It is that fundamental which must govern our attitude to the nature, status and purpose of Scripture.

The denial of the supernatural in the revelatory process means the loss of five things. First, you lose history, because you no longer accept that the extraordinary events of Scripture actually happened as recorded. Instead you have stories told later to express important truth in dramatic form. As you reject God's authorship, you also lose Scripture's unique authority. James Barr has welcomed the pluralism of modern theology, as theologians come from different perspectives and accept different standards. He insists that those who want to say the Bible is our authority are just sighing nostalgically for old times. "Within this newer context the idea of the 'authority' of the Bible has become anachronistic."¹⁶ Thirdly, you lose unity. Instead of one mind, one author, modern interpretation stresses diversity, so that we hear many voices, from within their own cultural horizons, offering us what may be competing theologies. Then also you lose clarity, perspicuity. As you emphasise humanness and the gulf between biblical culture and ours, you raise doubts about the possibility of the original message of the author reaching us. But God has written a book whose basic message is accessible to ordinary people as they are guided by His illumining Spirit. And finally, appropriately enough you lose finality. Religious pluralism is held to preclude the notion of one final Word from above.

If time allowed, it would be good to think of the supernatural and preaching, because we want to proclaim this Word and see God work through it. For such blessing we are totally dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit. The fire must come from above.

The Saviour

There is no other Christ but the supernatural one. Modern Christology is often focussed in terms of starting-point. Is it to be from above or from below? From above is the way of traditional Christology, accepting that Jesus was the pre-existent Son of God who came from heaven to be incarnate for us. Now many want to begin from below, from the manhood. Though there are orthodox exceptions, such a methodology seldom takes us further than suggestions that Jesus was a man uniquely open to the divine or one who was adopted by God.

Recently the Christological pronouncements of David Jenkins have hit the headlines. He has denied the virgin conception, insisting that the evangelists were writing myth, though another Doctor opened his Gospel with an explicit claim to researched historicity (Luke 1:1-4). Jenkins is failing the Christological test at the first hurdle. As Donald Macleod wrote in the *Banner of Truth* some years ago: "The chief importance of the Virgin Birth, however, in the light of present controversy, probably lies in the fact that it indicates and guarantees as no other doctrine can the status of our Lord as a thoroughly supernatural person ... the Virgin Birth is unambiguous. It immediately identifies itself as a biological absurdity, as supernature, and so long as it is accepted precludes any attempt to account for the life and character of Jesus Christ on naturalistic principles. On the very threshold of Christological study the revelation of God has placed the stumbling-block of the Virgin Birth to offend and to test us — to ascertain whether we are prepared to do justice to His uniqueness."¹⁷

Jenkins has been critical too of the traditional doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus. If you are interested in following this up, read Murray Harris' Paternoster booklet, *Easter in Durham*, where he quotes and critiques the Bishop. On the TV programme, *Credo*, Jenkins spoke of the Resurrection as a series of events demonstrating the livingness of Jesus and experienced by the disciples. They became aware of His continued livingness as His presence and power were perpetuated in their hearts and minds. Jenkins seems unconcerned about the body of Jesus, whether it was still in the tomb, or had been taken away. Nothing makes more of a mockery of the faith to the man in the street than talk of a resurrection while you still have a corpse. And if the resurrection is what Jenkins insists, then the apostolic verdict is that Christian faith is futile and we are still in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17).

The antithesis between the supernaturalist and anti-supernaturalist perspectives is also highlighted by the Cross. Those who hold to a purely human Christ see this as the great confirmation of their doctrine, with the confusion and desolation of a martyr Christ. But the Scriptural interpretation of that Cross insists on a supernatural Saviour at the heart of a cosmic

conflict. We have the anger of a transcendent Father, the immolation of the Son, the assault of the forces of darkness, and the spoiling of principalities and powers. Only that can make Calvary Good News.

Finally here, it can be taken for granted that the religious and theological pluralism spoken of earlier will consistently deny the uniqueness and exclusiveness of Jesus, as the incarnate Son, and as the way, the truth and the life. John Hick, for example, editor of *The Myth of God Incarnate*, has written much on this theme. For such, Jesus Christ is no longer the only name given for salvation.

The Christian

We know that we have been the recipients of supernatural grace. That meant first a supernatural birth. It was our Lord who spoke to a cultured and religious man, and who used the terminology 'from above' to describe the new birth which Nicodemus needed. No theology here of the essential goodness of man or his natural affinity with God. This is something urgent, radical, sovereign and mysterious. John Murray wrote of the absolute difference between the two kinds of birth: "The natural cannot produce anything but the natural ... The supernatural alone produces the supernatural, and it infallibly secures the supernatural character of its issue."¹⁸ Scripture regularly uses the language of miracle to describe conversion, comparing it with events as stupendous as creation and resurrection. When we ask about miracles today, it is helpful to remember that every conversion is a miracle of invincible divine energy.

The supernatural birth is the beginning of a radically new life. Donald Macleod has issued a plea for a view of the Christian life as "consistently supernatural". The believer is rooted in Christ and nourished by Him. "These things are true all the time, as we face temptation, responsibility and pain."¹⁹ And so my sanctification, my service, my prayer, my perseverance, are all supernaturally empowered. The living God is active in my life, in all its ups and downs. J.I. Packer has recently written: "There are many of us for whom the role model is Joni Eareckson rather than John Wimber. We see the powers of the kingdom operating, but mainly in regeneration, sanctification, the Spirit as a comforter, the transformation of the inner life, rather than in physical miracles which just by happening prevent much of that other kingdom activity whereby people learn to live with their difficulties and glorify God."²⁰

There is a sense in which this supernatural work makes us truly natural. I have just been listening to a tape of Sinclair Ferguson speaking on the subject, "John Owen on the Holy Spirit". Owen teaches that the Spirit in the life of Jesus means that we have perfect holiness married to perfect humanity, and so married together that perfect humanity and perfect holiness are really synonyms for one another. Ferguson takes that as a key to a biblical understanding of what the Holy Spirit really does in men's lives. "The creation of holiness in the believer by the power of the Spirit is synonymous with the creation of a true humanity in the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Supernatural grace makes us natural in the sense that it makes us more like what we should have been, more like what Jesus was. Supernatural grace alone can make us truly human.

The Goal

What of the destiny of the individual and the cosmos? Definitions of secular humanism include the denial of a life beyond this one as a fundamental tenet. For some death is a taboo subject. For others it is to be faced in all its bleakness, as in Bertrand Russell's classic passage in "A Free Man's Worship": "... no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system."²¹

The Christian churches are seeing a denial of traditional eschatology within their own borders. In a lecture on "Immortality and the Gospel", Bruce Milne has spoken of the lack of supernaturalist, eternal perspectives among the theologians, who in some cases are in danger of moving "from a neglect of immortality to a positive antipathy".²² He justifies this with a study of two highly influential writers, Moltmann and Gutierrez. Milne sees the modern retreat in this area as stemming from the spirit of modern secularism exerting a drag upon the Christian hope, from the impact of Marxist criticism, and from the pre-occupation with the problem of suffering so that the focus on another world is viewed as unworthy and escapist. We do want to affirm practical discipleship in the here and now, but also to insist on personal survival beyond death, on God's guiding of world history to a consummation, on the return of Christ to raise and judge, and on the renewal of creation. Biblical supernaturalism offers eternal hope to a despairing world.

Again it is Blamires who has so superbly expressed the collision between the secular mind rooted in the natural order and the Christian mind with its supernatural orientation: "Ponder the violence of the concealed collision. On the one hand is the assumption that all is over when you die ... that eating, sleeping, growing, learning, breeding and the rest, constitute the total sum of things ... On the other hand is the almost crushing awareness of a spiritual war tearing at the heart of the universe, pushing its ruthless way into the lives of men — stabbing at you now, now, now, in the impulses and choices of every waking moment; the belief that the thoughts and actions of every hour are moulding a soul which is on its way to eternity ... that we are committing ourselves with every breath to salvation or damnation."²³

Concluding Thoughts

The constraints of time have meant a good deal of chopping along the way (most drastically in the treatment of miracles), and this final section will virtually have to disappear. But we cannot leave our subject without at least noting a resurgence of the "supernatural" in one direction — in astrology, magic and the occult. As the supernaturalism of truth and grace is lost, the illegitimate begins to flourish. Guinness' *Dust of Death* is helpful in this area, and David Porter's *Children at Risk* has recently shown how young children

can know a great deal about the occult through fantasy role-playing games.

We need to proclaim biblical supernaturalism, with its grace and its hope into the world in which we live. We have looked at that supernaturalism in terms of the Cosmos, the Bible, the Saviour, the Christian, and the Goal, and each one has stressed the 'from above' theme. But notice how earthed each one of them was. God made a world for us, and we are to rest in the sovereignty of the transcendent One who rules from above. From above He has spoken and still speaks to man in human language. From above He came into our world, into flesh. From above the new birth brings the life of God into our hearts. From above He will come and renew creation. The supernatural is so earthed in our world and in our needs. And thus there is nothing more relevant to this planet, to human life here, to men and women in the twentieth century, than true biblical supernaturalism. Without it, we have nothing to say.

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The Gospel of God

Robin Dowling

This is a summary of the contents of the five papers prepared for the BEC Study Conference, the theme of which was 'The Gospel of God'. This took place from 23rd to 25th March 1987 at High Leigh, Hoddesden, Herts.

The Context of the Gospel Rev. Sidney Garland

This paper deals with what has become known as **contextualization**.

We only really know what Scripture says when we relate it to our world. 'To fail to relate the Scriptures and the Gospel to our context is to fail in living out the Gospel and it is also to fail in communicating the Gospel to the multitudes of the lost in their particular contexts throughout the world.'

Three different contexts must be kept in mind. First, there must be a sensitivity to the history and culture of the biblical writers. Secondly, our own presuppositions influence the results of our exegesis. The third context arises when we communicate the message to a receptor in a different culture.

The concept of contextualization, which first came to the fore in 1972, takes further the previously gained insight with respect to the importance of developing indigenous local churches. For example, whereas indigenization views culture as static and unchanging, contextualization takes account of such factors as secularity, technology and 'The Marxist analysis of the struggles for human justice in many countries of the Third World'.

Some models of contextualization endanger the Gospel itself. The **Dialectic** model supposes that the historical document cannot provide universal truth but only the possibility of common experience. We must look for the Gospel behind the gospels and contextualization becomes a question of interacting with the present historical contexts to arrive at our Gospel. The authority of Scripture is lost and man becomes his own authority. The **Liberation** model arises from this dialectic approach and starts with a prior ideological commitment to the oppressed in their various contexts and struggles. This ideology (usually Marxism) becomes the hermeneutical key for understanding biblical texts and, again, the authority of Scripture is lost, the Bible being used merely as a book of illustrations of God's activity in history.

The approach of Liberation theology to Scripture is reflected in its use of the Exodus narrative. The exodus of Israel from Egypt is viewed as an example of what God is doing for all of humanity i.e. His 'universal salvific will'. Interpretation majors on the political activity of the people in achieving liberation and God is regarded as on the side of all oppressed peoples, inspiring movements of protest and violent revolution.

Such interpretation should alert evangelicals to their failure to do justice to

such factors as the political dimensions of the Gospel and corporate sin. However, the New Testament points to a new exodus fulfilled in the life and death of the Lamb (Luke 9:31), bringing in a new age which the original exodus from Egypt only foreshadowed (1 Cor. 10:11). Also, using the Exodus story to justify violent revolution fails to take account of 'the intrusion of judgement curse' which took place at that time and fails to note the NT stress on the inadequacy of that liberation. 'The Liberation view of sin is dangerously shallow.'

The **Accommodation** model of contextualization takes seriously the need for a missionary to accommodate to the people he is evangelizing and finds support for this in the approach of Paul (1 Cor. 9:20-22). However, the Roman Catholic policy of accommodation (embracing local religious practices) has led to syncretism. Conversely, the **Opposition** model has emphasised separation from the surrounding culture, leading to the loss of every effective channel of communication.

The **Transformation** model, pioneered by Charles Kraft, is based on developments in the field of Bible translation, where the aim is now 'dynamic equivalence' rather than formal correspondence. Kraft applies this to the contextualization debate, 'insisting that it is the message not the form which is important, and that in fact to preserve the message the form must change'. The problem is how do we separate form and content and how do we maintain the Scriptures as our only rule of faith and practice? Kraft has much to teach us but his approach to Scripture brings the danger of a relativism which undermines its authority.

The **Possessio** model advocated by J.H. Bavinck, warns us that, because of the all-prevailing nature of sin, many cultural practices are inseparably related to false religion. However, there is good in cultures as a result of God's common grace and, as the Gospel relates to each cultural context, it is to take possession of the entire life of the people and every area of their culture. Christ can renew and re-establish the distorted and the deteriorated, giving new meaning and direction. Whilst there are great dangers in the application of this model, it is very useful for developing a biblical contextualization.

Our task, then, is to be involved in the effort to contextualize. The apostles tailored the exact content of the message to the particular circumstances of their audience and the best preachers, such as Lloyd-Jones, have always engaged in such 'incarnational preaching'. We must not lose the Gospel in an effort to separate its content from its cultural forms but must regard it as a multi-faceted diamond, with different aspects relevant to different cultural situations. This raises the issue of **Multiperspectivalism**, delineated by Professor Harvie Conn, who argues that looking at more than one facet of the diamond helps us to see the whole all the better. In this connection, theology is a dynamic, not a completed process.

So then, the development of a contextual theology must include certain perspectives. The situational perspective views man as caught up in the history of Salvation and involves applying the Scriptures to the great variety of

cultures and situations experienced. The existential perspective takes account of the fact that our spiritual condition and maturity have a significant bearing upon our understanding and practice of the Gospel. Above all, the normative perspective brings before us the fundamental question of the role of the Bible in the contextualizing process. In this respect, we will ensure that our theology is a biblical theology, a covenant theology (involving covenant obedience) and an applied theology which avoids all unnecessary 'offence' (*skandalon*) whilst manifesting the true skandalon (Jesus Christ) which a person must overcome in order to come to faith. Furthermore, we will challenge men and women to submit to the Lordship of Christ, necessarily opposing certain cultural features, such as ritual prostitution in the Third World and sexual promiscuity in the West. We will also engage in 'incarnational witness' (John 20:21, 17:18). Finally, we will encourage the church in each culture of the world to work out (scripturally) its own theology, with a pattern of life which expresses itself in a 'contextualized form of worship' and meaningful social activity.

The Content of the Gospel *Prof. Archie Boyd*

This paper considers certain key Scriptures concerning the Gospel.

In **Mark 1:1**, the Gospel is described as 'the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. There are those who would understand the genitive ('of Jesus') as meaning that the reference is to the Gospel Jesus preached. Another possibility is that this is a genitive of origin, the reference being to 'the Gospel that originated with Jesus'. However, bearing in mind Mark's use of *arche* ('beginning'), and taking this verse as a title for the whole book, we are reminded of what Luke says in Acts 1:1, 'where he describes his first book (his Gospel) setting out what Jesus began to do and teach'. It is therefore appropriate to understand the phrase in Mark 1:1 as meaning, 'the Gospel **concerning** Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. Mark is in accord with Paul in Romans 1:1-3, who describes the Gospel as 'of God' in the sense of origin (cf. Mark 1:14, and 'concerning' (*peri*) His Son).

This is important, since this use of the objective genitive by Mark calls our attention to the content of the Gospel as summarised in the designations Jesus Christ, Son of God. The pages that follow (in Mark) give us 'a presentation that is an exposition of these titles, and an exposition that is indeed Gospel'.

In harmony with Mark 1:1 is Romans 1:1ff (see above). The two words *kata sarka* ('according to (the) flesh', v.4) set before us the weakness and humiliation involved in the fulfilment of the promises concerning the Son of David. However, Paul is saying that the Son of God who became the seed of David lost nothing by all that was involved in that but, without laying aside that nature, has been appointed (*horizo*, v.4) to the place of dominion exercised through the Holy Spirit. This is in complete harmony with Peter's preaching in Acts 2 (note verse 36). For Paul and Peter there is no Messiahship without humiliation and suffering. The name 'Jesus Christ' does the unthinkable and juxtaposes the cross and exalted Messiahship.

All the above indicates that the Gospel is not just the revelation of some eternal principle. Rather God himself in the person of his Son, incarnate as

Jesus, acted in history in fulfilment of his own promises. **Matthew 4:23** refers to 'the Gospel of the Kingdom' (cf. Matt. 9:35 and Luke 8:1). Through the parable of the sower it is clear that the word of God (Luke 8:11) is equivalent to the word of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:18). Philip is spoken of as 'preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God' (Acts 8:31). In Acts we have witness from both Luke and Paul that Paul's Gospel was the Gospel of the Kingdom (see Acts 28:23-31). Throughout the New Testament the Gospel is presented as the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Jesus and the early preachers were obviously using language which had some meaning for the hearers. Although their conceptions of the Kingdom were wrong, Jesus was confirming that it was not wrong to expect a Kingdom. The Kingdom had drawn near or come in such a way that the appropriate response was repentance and belief. That was his Gospel.

The description of the Gospel as 'The Gospel of the Kingdom' is comprehensive. It points to **fulfilment**, indicating the coming to pass of what God promised, as a present reality (see Mark 1:15). It is **theocentric**. The Kingdom is what God himself has done. It speaks of the **exercise of God's authority and rule**. Primarily, the Kingdom of God is the divine kingly dominion exercising itself. Furthermore, **the Kingdom has come in the person of Jesus as the Messiah**. John the Baptist pointed away from himself (Matt. 3:11). Jesus points to himself (Matt. 12:28, see also Acts 8:12). It is because he is the Messiah that the Kingdom has come. The concepts of Kingdom of God and Messiah are inseparable.

Two further dimensions of 'the Gospel of the Kingdom' are important. There is **two-fold significance**. Isaiah 61 (cf. Luke 4:16-21) indicates that the year of the Lord's favour is the day of vengeance of our God. This two-fold note is found in the Baptist's preaching (Matt. 3:11,12). It is seen in Jesus' ministry. The coming of the Kingdom in Jesus marks the fulfilment of the promises of salvation and judgement for all who are the enemies of the King. Finally, the Kingdom is **present and future**. It is a present reality but not a perfected reality. The latter lies in the future. The same term *epiphaneia* is used of both the first coming and the second coming of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10 cf. 1 Tim. 6:14). It is more accurate to speak of one coming in two stages. At the consummation, the two-fold aspect of the Kingdom will be finally manifested, the redeemed will have resurrection bodies and these will be 'the transformation, renewal and bringing into harmony of all creation'. It is **this** coming of the Kingdom that Jesus taught us to pray for.

In **Acts 20:24,25** Paul speaks of 'testifying to the Gospel of God's grace' as one and the same with preaching the Kingdom. In testifying to this Gospel, Paul taught from the OT Scriptures. It is this Gospel of the **grace** of God that Jesus referred to when He spoke to the woman of Samaria of 'the gift (*ten dorean*) of God'. Luke uses the same terms for the Gospel in Acts 14:3. See also 1 Peter 1:13.

The description of the Gospel as 'the Gospel of God's grace' focusses attention on the sovereign initiative of love in answer to the sin situation. In this realm,

Scripture presents an antithesis between law and grace. On the other hand, the Gospel of God's grace honours the law and brings about a new obedience (Romans 8:3,4). The gift of grace is to be received by faith — faith in Jesus Christ, not in the abstract. It is in Jesus Christ that this grace has come (John 1:17), this grace being mightily at work in Jesus' obedience and atoning sacrifice. With Christ, as the fruits of his work, all the gifts that come together constitute the salvation of God.

In **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**, Paul states that the Gospel is the authoritative tradition. The verbs *paralambano* (to receive) and *paradidomi* (to deliver), with the *gnorizo* ('I make known') of verse 1, speak of what has been given and received as authoritative and so definable and unalterable. The Gospel, 'is a clearly delimited body of truth concerning the Christ and what he has accomplished and experienced and why'. Here, in counteracting error, Paul's emphasis is on Christ's resurrection. However, Paul's point is that Christ's resurrection on the third day was 'from the dead' and takes all its meaning and significance from what that death was. This Christ is the content of the Gospel, here and throughout Scripture.

The Authentication of the Gospel *Rev. Neil C. Richards*

This paper asks how God demonstrates the truth of the Gospel to people.

It is presupposed that fallen man is naturally hostile to the Gospel and only a sovereign omnipotent God can bring men and women to acknowledge its truth. The question arises — are miracles necessary today to authenticate the Gospel and does their presence assure its success?

Miracles involve an extraordinary intervention of God's power. Christ's miracles were signs of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God (Luke 11:20). They were also his credentials (Acts 2:22; John 20:30,31). They served to authenticate his person and claims. Such miracles did not of themselves produce faith. The Pharisees did not deny that Jesus worked miracles but attributed them to the devil (Mark 3:22). The miracles were effective signs only to those who had eyes to see and hearts to receive. Where faith is absent, miracles do not achieve their purpose.

Despite the miracles, our Lord's emphasis was on the preaching of the Word (Mark 1:38). At the close of his ministry, in John 14—17, Jesus emphasises the need to keep, and live by, his words. This is the focus of the ministry of the promised Holy Spirit. Then there is the reference to greater works in John 14:11,12. John Wimber thinks this means that we should all expect to work miracles — miracles greater than Christ's. The apostles did not perform wonders greater than those performed by Jesus. Rather, through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the newly-established church was equipped to spread the Gospel through the world. Now there were myriads of conversions instead of hundreds, pointing up the antithesis between the humbled and the exalted Christ. The endings of Matthew, Luke and John (there are special problems associated with the end of Mark's Gospel) indicate that the preaching of the Gospel, not healing, is the ongoing commission of the Church.

Miracles served to authenticate the apostles and their message (2 Cor. 12:12). The question is, do the miracles which authenticated Jesus and Gospel truth have the same value to us who did not see them take place? We cannot use them to prove the divine authority of the Scripture which records them. However, as we read the Scriptures, faith is confirmed by the miracles (John 20:30,31). If no other miracles ever took place than those recorded in the Scriptures, especially the resurrection of Christ, we would have abundant signs and wonders to confirm the Gospel to us.

Are contemporary miracles essential to the success of a Gospel ministry? John Wimber advocates 'power evangelism', that is, Gospel witness accompanied by miraculous signs. He sees the clashes between the Kingdom of God and Satan's Kingdom as 'power-encounters' which have the effect of opening unbelievers to the Gospel and so lead to church growth. He contrasts Paul's eloquent preaching at Athens, giving meagre results, with the successful 'power evangelism' engaged in at Corinth. He argues that miracles make evangelism more effective, often making persuasive arguments unnecessary.

An evaluation of Wimber's teaching is called for.

First, Christianity is supernatural through and through, quite apart from miracles. Paul speaks of the **Gospel** as 'the power of God' (Rom. 1:16 cf 1 Cor. 1:18,24). 'The Gospel is not simply a message about the power of God but to all who believe it is the mighty power of God at work delivering them from the guilt and power of sin and working mightily in them to sanctify and preserve them and bring them to glory.'

Secondly, the triumph of the Kingdom is primarily seen in the liberation and transformation of men and women by the power of the Gospel. It is not that healing miracles and exorcisms do not display the power of the Kingdom, but God's normal way with regard to bodily weakness, illness and death is to enable us to bear with them and to triumph over them by grace (2 Cor. 12:9). Furthermore, **thirdly**, the preacher must have the right role model. In certain senses of course — e.g. with respect to holiness and wisdom — Christ is the supreme model. However, there were unique aspects to his ministry. It led up to the cross and also gave a foretaste of the age to come. Miracles were an essential part of his Messianic mission. The lives and labours of the apostles also provide a pattern for us. However, as eye-witnesses of the resurrected Christ, exercising foundational ministries, they too were unique. We cannot argue from them for an ongoing 'signs and wonders' ministry. We find our role model in 2 Timothy 4, where Paul charges Timothy to 'preach the word ... in season and out of season'.

Fourthly, the Scripture possesses intrinsic divine authority simply because it is God's Word. Calvin described the Scripture as 'self-authenticating'. Despite this, an inward work of the Holy Spirit is necessary because of the blindness caused by sin, not to impart authority to Scripture, but to bring people to a persuasion of its truth and authority. The Gospel is 'the pure message of Scripture'. In it, God speaks (2 Cor. 5:20). What is needed for it to be received freely is not miracles but the inward renewing power of the Spirit. Similarly,

fifthly, miracles do not create faith nor do they necessarily signify grace. Faith results from this inward work of the Holy Spirit. The instrument the Spirit uses is the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Miracles do not guarantee godliness (Matt. 7:21-23).

Sixthly, the greatest revivals in the history of the Church have not been characterised by an abundance of miracles. This is inconsistent with the idea that 'power evangelism' is normative and the means of rapid church growth. **Seventhly**, turning to the contemporary situation, most attempts to work miracles seem to fail and this 'hit and miss method' seems very different from the miracles recorded in the NT. Also, much that is called miraculous, such as a measure of restoration, is unworthy of the term 'miracle'. When God does indeed work in extraordinary ways let us not focus on such things but on Gospel living and on the Gospel's transforming power.

In conclusion, we must not lose sight of the greatness and power of the Gospel itself, as 'power evangelism' tends to do. The great works of the Holy Spirit are regeneration and sanctification. Holy lives are still the Gospel's greatest argument.

The Application of the Gospel *Mr. Paul Helm*

This paper discusses the way the Gospel is presented in preaching, with particular reference to the issue of the 'free offer'.

Two general comments need to be made. First, preaching and hearing both take place in the sight of God. We must not think of the presentation of the Gospel in terms of technique. Also, the central ideas of the Gospel presuppose human accountability. It is, largely the erosion of belief in these things that has made the application of the Gospel difficult in Britain today. Secondly, we must not think that, in presenting the Gospel, there is a 'mix' of duties which ensures success. Such success is in the hand of a sovereign Lord. Now certain theses can be considered.

First, Scripture indicates the necessity of a 'law-work' in sinners, producing conviction of sin, but it does not isolate it in a rigid way. Many have experienced a separate period of conviction of sin before penitence and faith but, in Scripture, there is considerable variety in preaching and conversion experience (cf. Lydia and the Philippian jailer). It is difficult, in practice, to separate law and Gospel in preaching and if a 'law-work' were clearly prescribed as necessary for conversion it would amount to an addition to the Gospel, undermining its freeness. However, **secondly**, a 'law-work' is necessary, not as a condition to be fulfilled, but because of what the Gospel is. The Gospel is for sinners and sin is lawlessness. Coming to Jesus is coming to him as the Saviour from sin.

Thirdly, conviction of sin may occur through aspects of divine truth which conceptually imply or are implied by the law. These include the sinless perfection of Christ, manifest when his person and work are preached, and the doctrine of the atonement.

Fourthly, Galatians 3:24 does not give even limited support to the idea of a

'law-work'. Paul is arguing historically, not experientially. Because the law came **after** the promise, it is impossible for the law to overturn or supercede the promise of grace in Christ given to Abraham. It served as a temporary schoolmaster for Israel and continues in force without this function.

Fifthly, the Gospel is to be presented with a view to bringing about a real change in the relation of the unconverted sinner to God. In this respect, the approach of those who hold to eternal justification is defective. Although God has eternally decreed the justification of the elect in Christ, Scripture presents the justification of believers as something which happens in time, involving a change in a person's relationship to God. Preaching aims to effect this change, through the Holy Spirit. If a preacher holds to eternal justification, his preaching becomes merely descriptive; the offer of the Gospel becomes impossible.

Sixthly, the Gospel is not to be presented as if the hearers have power to turn to God of their own accord. They are not 'in a position of equilibrium, poised to choose for Christ or against Him'. Divine power must accompany the preaching. From the above, the preacher of the Gospel must steer a middle course. Preaching must neither fall short of 'offering Christ' nor must it go beyond it. It is thus necessary to focus on the free offer.

Seventhly, the Gospel is to be offered freely in preaching. There are no conditions which a person has to fulfil before he comes to Christ. If the free offer is denied, people are inevitably turned away from Christ as the sole sufficient Saviour and want to mix Christ with something else. Of course, all the other chief elements of preaching the Gospel must be in their place and there must be a God-given recognition of need if a person is to come to Christ. However, to advocate that a person must be **aware** of such a change in order to come to Christ is to move in the direction of legalism. The free offer of the Gospel prevents the would-be believer looking to himself, instead of Christ, for salvation, and is the appropriate counterpart to the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Eighthly, the offer of the Gospel does not imply that a person has the power to come to Christ by himself. Some object that the free offer implies that faith, God's gracious gift (Eph. 2:8), is a duty. But the antithesis between something being a gracious gift of God and something being a duty is a false one. More seriously, some object that calling men to come to Christ implies they have a natural ability to do so. However, the free offer is only one element in a total Gospel ministry which includes for example, teaching about the bondage of the will.

Ninthly, the offer of the Gospel is genuinely and sincerely made. 'How can God offer his grace sincerely to those whom he knows are destined never in fact to receive it?' Various responses to this have been made in Reformed circles. Some have recourse to the distinction between the secret and revealed will of God. Others suppose that God has real desires which may nevertheless be overridden in the divine mind by other considerations. J.I. Packer argues that, whilst it is the preacher's duty both to offer the Gospel and to believe in

divine sovereignty, it is not his duty to reconcile these duties. However, it is more satisfactory to argue that the free offer is necessary because of the necessary ignorance of both the preacher and his unbelieving hearers as to whether or not those hearers will be finally saved. God's will is that people are saved by the application of saving truth to mind and will, not by a direct revelation as to their election. Only preaching that offers the Gospel freely points the sinner unambiguously to Christ.

Lastly, there are differing degrees of freeness with which the Gospel may be offered. It is one thing to say, for example, 'All who are heavy-laden may come to Christ'. It is another thing to say, 'God desires your salvation'. It is one thing to say, for example, 'Christ died for the world'. It is another thing to say, 'Christ died for you'. The latter statements in both cases invite responses which might undermine true preaching. The more moderate statements can be justified readily from Scripture (e.g. Matt. 11:28).

The Response to the Gospel *Rev. Keith R. Walker*

This paper is concerned with the *ordo salutis* — the order of Salvation. In seeking to explore the response which the Gospel demands, certain matters may be highlighted.

First, the Word of Life and Regeneration. The Puritans usually stressed God's work in conversion, the soul remaining passive until regeneration. Others have argued that in conversion man is active but that the Spirit of God is the only active cause in regeneration. Some have distinguished regeneration from new birth.

In John 1:12,13, the verb '*gennao*' points to divine monergism in spiritual 'birth' or, rather, 'begetting'. The language of begetting again seems more to the fore in John 3:1-8. Perhaps the ambiguity present in '*anōthen*' v.3, (meaning 'anew' or 'from above') is deliberate. This begetting is also qualified, v.5, as 'of water and Spirit'. Some connect 'water' with purification, others with procreation — for example, the expression may mean 'spiritual seed'. Others link 'water' with Christian baptism. Water is a prominent theme early in John (1:33; 2:6; 4:13, etc.). From such references it appears that water may be used as a metaphor for the Spirit. The idea of purification is also present. The Holy Spirit begets to as new powerful and purified life. Turning to Paul, in Titus 3:5, all the features of Johannine regeneration seem to be present. In Ephesians 5:26, the reference is macrocosmic, but it points to the role of the Word.

Now the Puritans often regarded regeneration as a work of the Spirit without means. What is the place of the Word in regeneration? In James 1:18, the writer seems to be reflecting our Lord's teaching found in John (cf. John 1:13). Even more clearly, Peter has Johannine regeneration in mind. His use of '*gennao*' (James uses '*apokueo*') suggests begetting. In 1 Peter 1:23-2:3, Peter's point is that believers are to obey the truth of that Word through which they were born again — that Word which is imperishable.

From these Scriptures, we can relate the Word of the Gospel to regeneration.

Through the Holy Spirit, the Gospel is a creative fiat, working new life at the deepest level of man's being. There is an aspect of regeneration below the level of consciousness, but the preaching of the Word is indispensable to regeneration.

Secondly, **the Word of God and Conversion**. The Bible teaches us to view conversion as that response which a man makes inwardly and outwardly to the Gospel (Acts 3:19 et al). 'The Word of God having been spoken by the Spirit secretly, below the level of his self-awareness, this man is now both able and willing to respond to that Word.' Consider Acts 26:16-20. Here, illumination is achieved through the Word preached (linked with the inward call of the Spirit) resulting in **turning** and, in consequence, remission of sins. This conversion involves living repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 26:20 and 18).

Modern evangelism studies the relationship between the outward call and the human response. We are tempted to stress the necessity of regeneration. However, we are to look for a response from God which enables a response from man. We need to think not only of how we may bring men to God in our preaching but of how we may bring God to men.

We must consider the response we are to call for and look for. From Acts (2:38; 10:43 et al) two themes are prominent — repentance and faith. Prominence is given to faith (Acts 4:4 et al). There is a theological priority of faith. However, faith disassociated from repentance is not saving faith. Yet the necessity of repentance with faith can be preached in a 'legal' way. To prevent this, we need to realise that the crucial thing about faith is its **object** — Christ and him crucified. Galatians 3 is full of 'faith', as the means of justification — but it is equally full of **Christ**. Furthermore, the apostolic preaching of repentance was linked intrinsically to the preaching of Christ (e.g. Acts 2:36-38).

Confession must also be seen in relation to Christ and him crucified. See Romans 10:9ff and Matt. 10:32. In these passages the subject of confession is Christ and there is a high Christology. So, true confession expresses not so much 'my faith' as faith in terms of its object — a faith evidenced by the fact that confession is made in the context of the known risk of opposition. Despite this, confession arises from the heart as part of the dynamic of the Gospel, echoing the preaching which was heard, leading to the same Holy Spirit-initiated process in the hearts of new hearers.

Thirdly, **Preaching the Word for Decisions**. A deficient presentation of the Gospel leads to a deficient faith, repentance and confession. The question of how we preach with respect to man's response raises the issue of the 'altar call'.

There is a difference between preaching for decisions and decisionism. John 3:36 cries out for a **decision**. However, common to all **decisionism** is the conviction that it is man's act of faith which saves him.

We must ask whether a particular type of altar call tends to be decisionist or not. We must remember that works-salvation is 'the natural man's heresy', and be careful lest our practice does not counteract this. Equally, enquirers'

meetings may be a necessity, e.g. when there are large numbers to be counselled. We should bear in mind that Acts 8:4-25 appears to indicate that there was a deficiency in the response of Philip's hearers in Samaria (not only Simon). Simon had a mechanical view of religious merit and power. There was great religious excitement abroad, probably a counterpart to Jewish Apocalyptic expectation.

To be explicit, any call to an action, supposed to signify coming to Christ, can lead to decisionism. An invitation to an after-meeting may be valuable, but pressure must not be placed on the enquirer. What Dr. Kendall calls a 'public pledge' — making public one's conversion by some physical action — may not seem to be decisionism. However, people may mistake the nature of the appeal being made. The 'public pledge' lacks the content essential to confession and does not seem to fit the category of confession in which Dr. Kendall places it. He also argues that it allows many people to seek the Lord who aren't sure why they are 'going forward'. This sounds like a confession of confusion. Such a 'public pledge' does not have the stigma which baptism originally had. The potential risks are great.

Fourthly, **Preaching the Gospel in the Sacrament of Baptism.** Does the Bible prescribe a physical action which is significant of the individual having come to faith? Yes and No!

The Reformed view has been that the Sacraments are 'visible preaching'. The sacraments signify Christ crucified. They speak of his death and resurrection and only thus of ours (Rom. 6). Baptism speaks of atonement and only therefore, does it speak of regeneration and cleansing.

Baptism is the act of the Church. It is an affirmation by the Church through the one who baptises. Only because baptism is 'visible preaching' is it 'visible faith'. The Church and the one consciously submitting to baptism stand together to proclaim Christ. Baptism is therefore, a public recognition of the faith of the baptisand as a credible faith, pastorally discerned in a way which, though not infallible, is a long way from 'studied gullibility'. This may be contrasted with the 'public pledge'.

Baptism then, points to Christ and the atonement, the spring of regeneration. 'It points to Christ crucified, the object of faith, the pivot of repentance, the subject of confession'.

This summary was written before the conference itself took place and cannot reflect the supplementary development, the nuances and dimensions which emerged from the extended discussion which followed the presentation of the papers. Even the mere preparation of the summary however was a stimulating exercise. May we all, whether able to attend the conference or not, be fired with a new commitment to believe, live out and preach 'the Gospel of God'.

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Male and Female, Part II

Hywel Jones

This article completes the study of the biblical teaching concerning the structure of the male/female relationship commenced in Issue 17. The contemporary relevance of this subject and its potential influence hardly need to be stated given the current turmoil in the Church of England.

Galatians 3:28

This verse should not be overlooked because it is possibly the most quoted single verse of Scripture in this whole debate. It can be regarded as the slogan of the 'Christian Feminist' movement. The fact that there is "neither male nor female in Christ Jesus" is regarded as making it crystal clear that everything which distinguishes male and female and which can be obliterated, has been obliterated by Jesus Christ and the gracious freedom which He has brought. It is a verse, it is claimed, which, on the one hand, sets up a contrasting position with the OT in a retrospective fashion and, on the other, inaugurates something which is subsequently taken up in the NT.

Our consideration of Gen 1-3 has tried to show that Gal 3:28, or rather its perspective, does what is claimed only against the background of the Fall and not Creation. It remains for us to consider the NT material e.g. 1 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:11-15, to see if that construction is borne out in these passages.

Before we can do that however we must do two things. The first is the use made of Gal 3:28. Is it a proper one or not? The second is the evaluation of the Gospel narratives which refer to our Lord's attitude to and conduct regarding women.

a) Gal 3:28 in Context

Michael Griffiths says in 'The Role of Women', while warning people against being too dogmatic about Gen 2: "We can say that there is no necessary implication of the superiority or inferiority of either sex and this is borne out by the clear statements of the NT (Gal 3:28)."¹²

This begs the question 'Does Gal 3:28 of necessity abolish all inferiority/superiority distinctions?' (I am using the terminology chosen by opponents of the traditionalist position.) This question can only be answered by asking another question, viz. 'What was the point Paul was concerned to emphasise in Gal 3:28?'

It must be appreciated that it is not only male and female who are referred to in Gal 3:28. As Paul's conclusion applies to all referred to, it must apply to them all in precisely the same sense. It is therefore enough to ask whether all social distinctions were abolished between Christians who were slaves and Christians who were free, to answer the other question about distinctions

between male or female. To argue that as Christianity secured the abolition of slavery so it works to obliterate headship is analogically false. The parallel to slavery as an institution is marriage. Would we say that marriage should be abolished as slavery was?

What Paul is emphasising, of course, in Gal 3:28 and Col 3:10-11, is that whatever sex, religion, nationality, status or anything else a person may be is no barrier to God's grace being given and received, and that grace puts them all equally in Christ. Gal 3:22 speaks of all being under sin; 3:26 speaks of all becoming children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. This introduces a new dimension and reality which alters their attitudes to each other but it does not obliterate all distinctions. It introduces a new element which transcends but does not destroy.

b) The Gospel Records

The attitude and conduct of the Lord to women as presented in the Gospel narratives is an important factor in the debate over male-female relationships in the Bible. The relevant data are not in dispute. The setting of these passages against the background of first century Judaism is also common ground in the debate and such a study highlights the distinctiveness of the Lord's words and acts on this matter. What could be more different from the Jew who thanked God daily that he had not been born a heathen, a slave or a woman, or from the rabbi who declared that for a father to teach his daughter the law was equivalent to teaching her lechery, than the Lord calling female disciples His sisters and commending Mary for sitting at His feet to hear His word? All this is commonly accepted and delighted in by representatives of both positions being considered.

Where the divide opens up is at the point where our Lord's approach is associated with the OT. It is possible to see what the Lord was doing as a protest and conviction of rabbinic distortion of marriage and denigration of women which Gen 3:16b anticipates and therefore a return to the position described in Gen 1 and 2. On the other hand, it is viewed as an abrogation of all male rule in the light of Gen 3:16 and a return to Gen 1, Gen 2 having been interpreted as not supporting any differentiation of role. Is the Lord opposing male tyranny, i.e. Gen 3:16, and how it was exemplified in His day or extolling mutual submission and equality, i.e. Gen 1 and 2, and how that is understood and exemplified in our day, or extolling mutual submission and equality?

This might seem to amount to a distinction without a difference so perhaps an illustration or an example of the distinction being worked out will help. The example is our Lord's choice of twelve males for His disciples on the one hand (Lk 6:13-16), and on the other the reference to women who accompanied and supported Him and His disciples as they itinerated (Lk 8:1-3). Howard Marshall regards the former as an act done "under the constraint of what was socially acceptable" and the latter as suggesting "a trajectory pointing in a very different direction from that of orthodoxy ... the first step towards a fuller sharing by women in the service of Christ."¹³ The basis for that evaluation, it seems to me, is an incorrect reading of Gen 2 in the light of Gen 1, and a dismissal of the OT record of God's choice of males for the

priesthood to represent other males as well as females as **but** cultural. Why can we not regard what these women in Lk 8 did as the striking but spontaneous response of love to the Lord and no more? To do this sets up no contradiction with 1 Tim 2:11ff.

1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-15

The first two texts listed above have marriage and the home in view and the other two, the Church, or one aspect of the Church's life. However, they can all be bracketed because in one way or another they refer to the elements of headship and submission as structuring the male-female relationships in both settings. These verses form the crux of the debate. Their teaching (together with that of Peter in 1 Peter 3:1ff.) should settle this matter because, in all cases, apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ are speaking authoritatively. But this is not the case.

Two ways of interpreting these passages need to be referred to. In both the hierarchical element in male-female relationships is denied.

The first of these is associated with the name of Paul K. Jewett. In his book entitled 'Man as Male and Female'¹⁴ he posits a flat contradiction between Gal 3:28 and the passages now under consideration. In the former, Jewett sees Paul the Christian and the apostle of Jesus Christ while in the latter, Saul, the rabbinic chauvinist, re-asserts himself. Jewett proceeds to dismiss the latter and the teaching of those related texts. As exegesis, this is a measure of despair, namely to posit such a flat contradiction in the mind of an author which he was himself unaware of, but it is valuable in that Jewett and others do appreciate that Paul does teach headship and submission. But notwithstanding they declare his teaching to be cultural and contradictory of Christianity.

Secondly, the stronger and most popular case for an anti-hierarchical interpretation of Paul's teaching which Evangelicals are presenting follows a different line. Whereas Jewett sees headship and submission against a rabbinic background and dismisses it, these scholars see these passages as set against a hellenistic background and they interpret them accordingly. Culture is an important element here.

We shall consider this approach to the passages listed and do so under the following headings: Paul and Male Headship; Paul and Female Submission.

1) Paul and Male Headship

The nub of the issue here is whether Paul includes the idea of **rule** (to be described later) in his use of the term 'head' in 1 Cor 11:23 and Eph 5:23 or whether by this word he **only** means 'source' or 'origin'. Does 'head' mean 'head over' or 'head of' i.e. the head of a river?

Etymologically, a case can be made out for each alternative. If 'head' is considered in terms of classical Greek then the idea of source comes to the fore. But in Paul's time, i.e. post-Septuagint, 'head' stood for the Hebrew *rosh* which contains the element of authority. James Hurley in his magisterial

work 'Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective'¹⁵ writes: "Head was used in first century Greek as a synonym for the more common words for ruler (*archon*) and for source (*arche*)". He continues: "To say that a man is head of woman may thus be to say that he is her origin (i.e. her beginning is in him) or to say that he is in a position of authority with respect to her. These various meanings are of course not mutually exclusive. We must therefore ask, on each occasion of its use, which sense of head is intended. We must be prepared to accept the possibility of two or three meanings being applicable simultaneously."¹⁶

It follows that what is often said by egalitarians against those who hold a traditional position is not true. Michael Griffiths puts it as follows: "The difficulty here is to disengage that section of our thinking which attributes twentieth century English language connotations to 'head' when trying to understand what the Bible says."¹⁷

Without denying that we have problems in looking as we should at what we read, what Hurley makes clear is that there is a problem **in the text**. He is much more sound and helpful than Griffiths in saying that the question about the meaning of *kephale* (head) "must be answered from the context and from analogy in other Pauline writings".¹⁸

What then does 'head' mean in 1 Cor 11 and Eph 5? James Hurley has drawn attention to a most striking fact from a study of Paul's 'head-body' language elsewhere in the New Testament, i.e. Col 1 and 2 and Eph 4. He says: "It is significant that in those passages which clearly use 'head' (*kephale*) to mean 'source' Paul does not introduce marital imagery. In passages in which he does use 'head' as 'head over' he uses the head language to illustrate the marital relationship."¹⁹

From this datum he draws the conclusion that head means 'head over' in 1 Cor 11 and Eph 5 (the first two texts in our list). To this can be added the fact that Paul does not use the term 'head' when he is speaking explicitly about origins, vide 1 Cor 11:8 and 1 Tim 2:13. On 1 Cor 11:3 Hurley writes: "If 'head' means 'source' in 1 Cor 11:3 Paul's parallelism is poor and he virtually teaches that God made Christ ... but if 'head' means 'head over' a set of parallels can be established ... (which) is self-consistent and does not do violence to either Pauline or other New Testament theology."²⁰

On the other hand he shows that "There is no way to construct a satisfactory set of parallels if we take 'head' to mean 'source' in 1 Cor 11:3."²¹ (By 'satisfactory' Hurley means a view which satisfies the rejection of Arianism.)

In answer to taking 'head' as 'head over' and apart from the culture question, Michael Griffiths writes: "We are ... told that the head of Christ is God (1 Cor 11:3) where we know that the Persons of the Trinity are equal and that 'head' in this sense cannot mean that one party is 'greater' than the other."²² But Paul is not here speaking of the Trinity but of Christ and did not He say, "My Father is **greater** than I"? (John 14:28). In what direction does a refusal to say that point?

It remains of course to consider what kind of headship the Christian husband

has and how he should exercise it. In describing, or rather misrepresenting this, the egalitarians use the terms 'superiority' and 'inferiority'. These are fair terms to use of the post Gen 3:16 situation but not of the Genesis 1 and 2 arrangement. They are certainly a world apart from Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3, passages in which Christian husbands are directed how to act as 'heads' towards their wives.

The husband's headship role is to be conditioned by three factors. The first of these is that both husband and wife are creatures made in the image of God and "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Pet 3:7). They are therefore **equally** beloved children of the same heavenly Father, brother and sister in the Lord and His redeemed servants. The second is that the wife is "a weaker vessel". This reality is a crucial factor in the debate. It is more often dismissed on the basis that women are capable of performing physical and intellectual tasks no less demanding than those which men have to face. But this will not do as exegesis. One way of looking at the expression is to note that its context refers to slaves and suffering and so the reference could be to the woman's subordinate position coupled with a kind of frailty (emotional?) which is peculiarly hers.

The third is the reference to Christ's love for the Church which is to be the pattern for the husband's headship role towards his wife. It is the example of undertaking a responsibility and the giving of oneself to her in love. The husband is to rule in love rather than to love to rule.

John Stott writes: "Headship definitely implies some kind of 'authority' to which 'submission' is necessary ... I suggest that the word 'responsibility' conveys more accurately the kind of headship Paul envisages ... it is a headship more of care than control, more of responsibility than of authority."²³

2) Paul and Female Submission

There are two factors to be considered here, namely the general one of submission and the particular one of women being prohibited from speaking or teaching in the church.

The Duty of Submission

The teaching of the apostles, Paul and Peter, on this matter is not only quite clear but is expressed in terms which are distinctively Christian. The submission of wives is declared to be "fitting in the Lord" (Col 3:18). It is something which is highly valued by the Lord (1 Pet 3:4). It is to be given to husbands by wives "as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22) and it is to be an illustration of the Church's submission to Christ (Eph 5:24).

It is not true that the same word is used to describe the submission of wives to husbands (*hupotasso*) on the one hand and children to parents, slaves to masters (*hupakouo*) on the other. This together with what has been noted above points in the direction of wives' submission being of a distinctive kind.

If the difference in words is important for meaning, then it should be noted that the term Paul uses to describe a wife's submission is the term which Peter uses for the submission required by a state of its citizens.

The term is a derivative from a verb meaning ‘to arrange, put or place’. A preposition is prefixed to it which means ‘under’. The meaning of the verb used is ‘to arrange or put under’, i.e. wives under husbands. God has made this arrangement and has done so for a purpose. Subordination is a useful term here. Its meaning is far removed from subjugation. The latter implies force; the former implies a framework or a frame for working, i.e. husband and wife together. The husband is responsible for providing a framework in which the capable, distinctive but tender, even vulnerable, femininity of the wife may flourish and be protected in every sphere, the church included — just as rulers are to govern for the good of citizens.

The argument which is presented against submission rests on two grounds. First, Eph 5:21 is pointed out in which **all** are exhorted to submit to each other. Secondly the notion of full equality and complementarity is invoked. On this basis people speak of the relation between husband and wife as being one of mutual submission in service after the example of Christ. By this pincer movement the singularity of the command of Eph 5:22 is undermined.

The answers to this approach are well given by James Hurley. In the first place, he points out that this relation between Eph 5:21 and 5:22 is not as construed above. Verse 21 is a bridge verse laying down a general pattern for Spirit-filled Christian behaviour. This is then broken down and Paul indicates how it is to work itself out in the three kinds of relationships, namely marital, parental, social. That wives are to submit to husbands is not contradicted by the fact that all are to submit to each other but is a particular exemplification of it.

Secondly, the verb used does not mean “submit to the needs of, i.e. serve”, but “make yourselves subject to”. Hurley says: “If the debated use in Eph 5:21 is held aside, there is no example at all of the partner being asked to submit himself to the subordinate. Conversely, the subordinate is always so asked. The idea of bending to meet the needs of a stronger or weaker partner in a relationship is present throughout discussions of relations involving subordination, but other words than ‘submit’ are used for the partner to whom submission is due. That partner, be it God, a husband, a parent, the state or master is never asked to submit to the subordinate.”²⁴

The verb ‘submit’ always implies an element of authority which is to be required and responded to. It is used of all Christians in Eph 5:21 because they are over one another in the Lord.

The Prohibition on Speaking

This is probably the most sensitive area of all and we will consider it from a study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 because it is the stronger statement and is full of some of the problems associated with 1 Cor 14:34-35.

In 1 Tim 2:11-12 Paul contrasts two positions, namely learning quietly and submissively on the one hand and teaching on the other. The former he commands; the latter he forbids. The reasons which he gives for this veto are first, the priority of man’s creation and secondly, the fact that the woman, Eve, was deceived. Three questions arise, namely ‘What is teaching?’, ‘Why

may women not teach?', which involves asking 'What is the connection between priority in creation and teaching on the one hand and being deceived and not teaching on the other?' We shall consider these in turn.

What is Teaching?

The structure of this passage indicates that "Quiet learning inversely parallels (verbal) teaching and full submission inversely parallels exercising authority."²⁵

This means that the teaching in view is authorised, i.e. it is the teaching of those appointed by Christ to teach in His church. As 1 Tim 3 makes clear this is associated with the office of eldership from which women are barred.

Why may Women not Teach?

First of all this is because of man's priority in creation as stated in 1 Tim 3:13. Priority is related to primogeniture. The first formed supplies the pattern for the firstborn to whom belonged not only a double share of the inheritance but also, on his father's death, his position of leadership. This supplies the link between priority and teaching — the former is connected with leadership which is denied to women in the church and in the home.

This receives confirmation from the fact that in 1 Cor 11 it is only man who is described as "the image and glory of God" (v 7). This is because of what 'head' means in this passage. To man as male the sovereign God gave leadership and he glorifies God as he exercises it. Woman is man's glory (v 7), that is, she glorifies him as she submits to his leading. She is not termed 'head' in 1 Cor 11 and so being under a head is not to act as if she were a 'head' by engaging in authorised teaching in the church.

Secondly, it is connected not only with Creation but with the Fall. The woman was deceived not the man. Paul is not here excusing Adam, elsewhere he blames him as if there were no Eve (Rom 5), nor is he blaming Eve for the Fall, but just stating a fact. Eve was deceived. Adam was not. What is the significance of this? Is it that, as created, Eve was prone to deception? This, I think, is difficult to square with Eve's being made in the image and likeness of God as was Adam. I think that the explanation lies in the fact that she was more likely to be deceived because God had not spoken personally to her as He did to Adam. She learned of God's provision and the prohibition from Adam. She was therefore not so impressed by the word of God as Adam was when God spoke to **him**. She should therefore have consulted her 'head' instead of conversing with Satan. Doing the latter she was deceived. On this interpretation the prohibition on a woman teaching is related not so much to some innate weakness and proneness to be deceived but is a judgement on her for having exalted herself over her head.

This leads to the word translated "usurp authority" in the Authorised Version of 1 Tim 2:12. By egalitarians the word is understood to mean the illegitimate assumption of authority or its ill-becoming use, i.e. being proud or domineering. Provided the latter is avoided women may be allowed to teach alone or in a team ministry. Howard Marshall and John Stott²⁶ argue in this way, the latter excluding women from the presbyterate or episcopate as ruling

is forbidden to them.

The meaning of this term (*authentain*) is not as easily established along this line as some might want others to think. The verb can mean to exercise authority and so regarded it is a synonymous expression for “to teach” in 1 Tim 2:12. However such teaching is done, for a woman to do it is to elevate herself above her head which is forbidden.

Those are the passages of Scripture which lie at the heart of this debate. It is hoped that this survey will indicate where the disagreements between Evangelicals lie. Their resolution among us is not easy. Though evangelicalism is not (yet) as deeply divided over this as Anglicanism and ecumenical progress is really impeded at this point, it would be a mistake to minimise the difference among us and its bearing on evangelical unity.

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The numbering of these references is continuous with the sequence begun in Part I, Issue 17, pp.35-41.

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23. ISSUES FACING CHRISTIANS TODAY, J. Stott, Marshalls, 1984, p.246.
24. Hurley, op.cit., p.143.
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26. John Stott in ISSUES FACING CHRISTIANS TODAY and Howard Marshall in THE ROLE OF WOMEN.

It is a mistake of method to relativize biblical teaching to the cultural axioms, assumptions and paradigms of this or any age. Scripture discloses the work, ways and will of the unchanging Creator in relation to mankind as such, and all human opinion regarding values, priorities, and duties must be judged and where necessary corrected by reference to this disclosure. Every culture, being an expression of the corporate goals of fallen mankind, has a distorting, smothering, and blunting effect on the biblical truths which, if applied, would change it, and to keep those truths in shape, free from compromising assimilation to the cultural status quo, is never easy.

Chicago Statement on Biblical Application

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**We regret these issues are out of print*

Now Christ is our Redeemer, Deliverer, Reconciler, Mediator, Intercessor, Advocate, Attorney, Solicitor, our Hope, Comfort, Shield, Protection, Defender, Strength, Health, Satisfaction, and Salvation. His blood, his death, all that he ever did, is ours. And Christ himself, with all that he is or can do, is ours. His blood-shedding and all that he did, does me as good service as though I myself had done it. And God, as great as he is, is mine, with all that he hath, as a husband is his wife's, through Christ and his purchasing.

William Tyndale

Book Reviews

Signs and Seals of the Covenant

C.G. Kirkby

£4.00 post free from 'Anworth',
Rectory Hill, Amersham HP6 5HB
193pp

This work first considers the place of baptism within God's covenant of grace, before briefly giving some account of its practice in Christian history. The doctrine of the Church is related to the covenant of grace, and its unity and continuity insisted on. There follows a study of circumcision and baptism, which leads into the topic of Infant Baptism and the Mode of Baptism. Two chapters are then devoted to the doctrine and practice of 'Reformed' Baptists.

This book is commended as a valuable presentation of the biblical arguments for the baptism of believers *and their children*. It is however rather weak in its study of Hebrew and Greek words and apparently restricted in the works consulted. The style is at times repetitious and occasionally there are unnecessary digressions.

The author aims to encourage the biblical practice of Christian baptism as enhancing true scriptural unity. Though the reviewer is wholly in sympathy with such an end, expectation of success is low. However, if those who reject covenant baptism do study the book carefully, it may induce greater respect for those who maintain it.

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1 and 2 Samuel

Robert P. Gordon

Paternoster Press, 1986
375pp (paperback), £12.95

This volume is a useful addition to the literature on Samuel. Its primary purpose is to offer a detailed explanation of the text. As such Gordon is less concerned to uncover formal structures than Klein and makes no attempt to make an application of the book. Paradoxically, however, the author offers a stimulating essay on 'David and Christ' in which he argues that the typological relationship between the two is far more one of contrast than comparison. He says, "However, even when all the good has been put down to David's account it is still a very flawed human being, as dependent upon divine mercy as any other, and ostensibly more than most, who fills the pages of Samuel. If on the other hand, the Hebrew phrase traditionally rendered "a man after his (i.e. God's) own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) actually means "a man of God's own choice" ... then the emphasis is put where it properly belongs — not on any exalted likeness of David to Yahweh, but on the sovereign will of Yahweh who chose David as the instrument of his purpose. Our attention is then more firmly fixed on "the God of David" (2 Ch. 34:3) (p.49). Gordon is an evangelical, though not committed to inerrancy. This has a twofold consequence. On the one hand we are delighted to read, 'While it is true that resurrection is not a central dogma in the Old Testament, there is more chance of establishing its true

place in Israelite thinking if such texts as this (2:6) are not silenced by scholarly presupposition before they have had the opportunity to speak' (p.80). Similarly, he offers a far more critical analysis of many of the traditional theories concerning composition (giving the book a real value for students). On the other hand p.80 also contains a statement that Hebrew cosmology 'represented the world as supported by pillars'. This is an unnecessary concession. It could be better said that the Old Testament is willing to use the mythological language of Canaan without necessarily endorsing it as factually true. This would not then prejudice the question of whether the Old Testament has a pre-scientific cosmology.

Gordon's book will be a welcome supplement to the older work by Driver on exegesis. For theology it will need supplementing with Hertzberg (SCM OT Library, 1964) and/or Klein (1 Samuel, Word Books, 1983). The ordinary reader will, however, probably be content with Payne (Daily Study Bible, St. Andrew Press, 1982).

The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1—39

(New International Commentary of the Old Testament)

*John N. Oswalt
Eerdmans, 1986
746pp, £26.60*

A new NICOT commentary is always anticipated with some excitement since the series has done much to help the preacher and student to understand the message of the Old Testament. The present volume aroused still greater interest in the reviewer since there has been a need for an

evangelical commentary on the prophet Isaiah which inter-reacts with the most recent scholarship. Moreover, when it was discovered that the author teaches at Trinity, Deerfield (the home of so many excellent evangelical scholars) a treat was expected to be in store. This hope was amply fulfilled! Oswalt majors his introductory comments on setting forth the unifying themes of the prophet's message. This, and some powerful supporting arguments, enables him gently but firmly to argue that the entire Book of Isaiah is an anthology of the Isaiah of Jerusalem's utterances. One finds it difficult to believe that anyone in their right senses could come to any different conclusions. Here is considerable help for the theological student.

The exposition is clear and scholarly. It shows theological sensitivity and points up the significance of the prophet's message. Oswalt's explanation of the meaning of 7:14 is also very helpful. He concludes, 'Ahaz's sign must be rooted in its own time and have significance for that time, but it must also extend beyond ... into a much more universal mode if its radical truth is to be more than a vain hope. For such a twofold purpose *ALMA* is admirably suited' (p.211).

The volume is expensive but is surely the first purchase a preacher must make before tackling Isaiah.

To acquire knowledge for its own value is vanity; to have it to edify others is charity; those who desire it so that they may be edified — this is wisdom.

Bernard of Clairvaux