

Foundations

Issue No.20 Spring 1988

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New Dictionary of Theology

The Gosport Academy

Reviews

foundations

Foundations is published by the **British Evangelical Council** in May and November; 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

This twentieth issue is an important milestone for *Foundations* as it represents nearly ten years of life as a theological journal. The first issue appeared in November 1978 but both the format and the content of the journal have steadily improved over the years. *Foundations* has met a real need, especially within the BEC constituency of churches, and many pastors have shared with us their conviction that this journal has made a 'useful contribution' to church life. One complaint regularly expressed, however, is that readers have to wait as long as six months for each issue! Please pray with us that the ministry of *Foundations* will become even more fruitful and significant over the next years.

You can help us, too, by subscribing to the journal yourself and also by commending it to other Christians and church leaders. We need to achieve a wider and better circulation for *Foundations*. Can you help us in achieving this?

The first article in this issue is written by Alan Gibson and is a helpful, biblical assessment of the frightening phenomenon of **Aids**. Our **Exegesis** article is provided by the Rev Murdo Gordon and concentrates on Jeremiah 29:7. **Islam in Britain: Threat or Opportunity?** is our third article and comes from the pen of the Rev Merle Inniger of the International Christian Fellowship.

Also in this issue is my **Review of Theological Journals: 1987-1988** which many of you ask me to include regularly in our journal. This is followed by a brief review of the **New Dictionary of Theology** again by the editor. Noel Gibbard has supplied a fascinating insight into ministerial training 200 years ago in his article on **David Bogue and the Gosport Academy**. We subsequently have two **New Testament Commentary Reviews**, then a **Video Review** before our **Old Testament Update** written by Stephen Dray.

We hope these articles and reviews will be helpful to you.

The statement is so vague that it amounts to saying, in effect, 'We agree to hold hands together in the dark, not knowing either who we are, where we are going, or where we will end up'!

Rev John Shearer
Rector of Nuffield, near Henley, explaining to his parishioners why he refused to read the **Swanwick Declaration** during public worship in October 1987.

Aids, Some Theological Co-ordinates

Alan Gibson

One problem facing Christians confronted by a new phenomenon is how to plot it on our existing map of human experience. Without such a framework of reference we find the moral dilemmas of contemporary life harder to understand. We are then exposed to the peril of accepting the secular presuppositions of those around us without having any consistent alternative as a basis for our pastoral decisions.

It is here that our evangelical perspective comes to the rescue. Biblical Christianity provides a total world-view within which all events and circumstances are subsumed. Not neatly, of course. Life is too complex for that. But the timeless principles of evangelicalism do provide some theological fixed points within which today's problems can be considered. In this article I am suggesting six such co-ordinates to assist our understanding of the Aids pandemic. Elsewhere I have expanded some of them as the only 'good news' we have to offer to a generation confused by this heady mixture of sex and death (BEC Annual Conference 1987, tape available). This is not the place to look for an explanation of the technical details of Aids. Medical laymen seeking help at that level could consult 'The Truth about Aids', Patrick Dixon, Kingsway, 1987, or 'Medicine and Moral Absolutes', Elliott Larson, Rutherford House Tape RHT 152.

Readers will readily recognise that there is nothing original or unfamiliar in the doctrines themselves. They are the bread and butter of our evangelical preaching. What we are attempting is to show the relevance of these to the personal, pastoral and practical challenges presented to our generation by Aids. The six theological co-ordinates are our view of **God as Creator; Man as fallen; Scripture as sufficient; Eternity as real; The Spirit as active and Grace as unqualified.**

God as Creator

This is God's world. Everything in the universe is under his control. In Christ 'all things hold together' (Col 1:17). There is an absoluteness about his sovereignty which brooks no rival. The great depths of astronomy's black holes and the complexity of the tiny substances uncovered by bio-chemistry, all are equally part of Biblical cosmology. The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) has no independent existence apart from its Creator. Some of the alarm about this virus hypes up the language of battle almost as if it has a corporate personality. Its sinister characteristic of hijacking those blood cells which should be defending the body and changing them into factories to reproduce itself is no surprise to God. His divine theodicy either includes

everything in all creation-history or he is not Lord of all.

Our problem, of course, is that creation is marred. Elements alien to God's goodness are now commonplace. Death, as well as life, is an every day occurrence. Some diseases have yielded to modern treatments and are eminently curable. Aids is not. Infected people may feel well for up to five years but they are not mere 'carriers'. They are capable of passing on the virus to others, and all the existing evidence is that they themselves are certain to develop symptoms in the long term. Patrick Dixon prefers to speak of people with Aids feeling well and people with Aids feeling sick. Aids Related Complex (ARC) can include damage to the brain cells alongside debilitating distress calling for regular treatment. Death is usually the result of one of the opportunistic infections which the body is by then unable to fight off. The public health problem of this disease is genuinely horrific, with the World Health Organisation projecting between 50 and 100 million cases by 1991, of whom 75% are expected to die by the year 2000.

Aids is the **problem of suffering** writ large. Very large. The long time-lag between infection and the terminal stage of the disease means that present statistics give only a hint of the time bomb ticking away beneath the surface. UK figures suggest 2 million people infected by 1991. The cost to the National Health Service is reckoned as £100 million for 1988. No one knows how many cases there are in Africa. Everyone knows that from a technical and an economic point of view many developing countries are frighteningly ill-equipped to cope with Aids. The need is greatest where the resources are poorest.

It is never easy to cope with suffering. But unless we start with God and his often inscrutable theodicy we have no hope of coping with the intellectual problems raised. Thank God that scripture has given us some previous glimpses behind the curtain. The Wisdom literature of the Old Testament humbles us with reminder that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. That is where our consideration of Aids must begin, bowed down before the throne of the sovereign Creator. Did we ever expect to understand all he permits to happen to us?

Man as Fallen

From the fallenness of all creation we must move to the spiritual condition of the individual. As rebellion against the authority of God-given norms was the nature of sin in Eden, so it is today. Where HIV originated we do not know but how it is transmitted we now know only too well. The virus is present in body fluids with greatest concentrations in blood, semen and vaginal secretions. Although traceable in saliva, there are no known cases of transmission by kissing on the mouth or sharing a cup (not even a communion cup). 88% of cases in the UK are male homosexuals or bi-sexuals. Aids is medically classified as a sexually transmitted disease. The large number of sexual partners common among male homosexuals and the way in which anal intercourse frequently breaks the lining of the anus, mixing semen with blood, accounts for these figures. Prostitution and the macho image of the profligate

male have spread Aids more widely into the heterosexual communities in Africa. This is the route now being traced in the USA and, to a lesser extent yet, in the UK where figures for female infection are rising steadily. Sharing needles among drug addicts has accounted for only 1.5% of cases in the UK.

The abuse of the body in ways the Creator never intended and expressly forbids remains the overwhelmingly major factor in the **spread** of Aids.

Two further aspects of man's fallenness, however, call for comment. One is the limited expectation we can have that education alone will prevent the spread of Aids. Just because someone knows the danger of promiscuity does not incline his evil heart to avoid it. Millions know the risk of lung cancer yet persist in smoking. So perverse is the sinner that numerous cases are now reported of people reacting to the news that they are 'body-positive' with HIV by deliberately going out to infect someone else. Government policies based on the provision of information should be encouraged, but they can have limited effect. Death from Aids is not the result of ignorance, it is almost always the consequence of sin.

That is the second aspect of fallenness to consider. The innocent do suffer with the guilty, and sometimes because of the guilty. There are 1,200 haemophiliacs in the UK who became infected by contaminated blood products, and 45 have already died. 1,000 babies will be born in New York this year infected by the Aids virus. Drug addiction among prostitutes in British cities means that married men place their own wives at enormous risk by their unfaithfulness, even more so if they are servicemen off duty in Africa or businessmen 'relaxing' in the Far East.

Recent theological work has placed more stress on man's solidarity with his community. He is not a moral island. God does deal with nations and with society at large. Paul Brown has already indicated in a previous issue of *Foundations* (Romans 1, Homosexuality and Aids, Issue 18, pp 2-7) that this is the best way to regard the difficult expression, 'due penalty' in Romans 1:27. God punishes an idolatrous society by removing the restraints of common grace and giving them over to the lusts already present in the human heart. The consequences of this are felt by the whole of society, by some individuals who are culpable and by others who are the victims of such circumstances.

Scripture as Sufficient

To say that 'Scripture is sufficient' obviously begs an important question. Sufficient for what? Certainly not to give one verse solutions to every modern problem. Not even to give such clear guidance that every Christian will come to the same conclusion on disputed matters. What is being preserved in this phrase is the evangelical insistence on the final authority of Scripture. Where contemporary life throws up new social issues it is wrong to discount Biblical teaching as so culturally conditioned that it is no longer relevant, as some have attempted to do (D Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, Longmans, 1955). During the Pope's visit to the USA in 1987 he was confronted by 'gay Catholics' disputing his traditional moral stance. But neither contemporary culture nor Church tradition is sufficient for these

issues. Scripture is.

From biblical revelation we shall find the principles from which to approach our **pastoral practice**. Our Lord's readiness to touch the leper will be our guide for shaking the hand of, or even hugging, the Aids sufferer. His readiness to consort with the tax-collectors who had made themselves social outcasts by their free choice of life-style will indicate that we should be willing to share a meal with homosexuals who have Aids. His refusal either to condemn or to condone the sin of the woman taken in adultery will indicate the moral stance which we should take with our fellow sinners. Study and reflection may be needed to find these principles, but God knew the problems even the 20th Century was going to face when Scripture was given 'so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'

Students of hermeneutics are right to remind us that beneath the moral dilemmas facing the Church lie difficult **exegetical questions**. Aids is an example of this fact. There is earnest debate about whether drug addicts should be allowed to inject each other with HIV by sharing dirty needles or whether a lesser evil would be for the Health Service to provide clean needles. Norman Geisler (Questions in Contemporary Ethics, Baker 1981) dislikes the term 'lesser evil' and prefers to speak of 'graded absolutism'. His approach does not provide pre-packaged ethical solutions but he does show a high regard for Biblical authority in his references to higher and lower moral laws (see Mt 5:19; 22:36; 23:23 etc). An exhaustive list of the exegetical issues raised by Aids is beyond the scope of the present article. All we are insisting on is that neither gut reactions nor the gutter press should determine our attitudes to those living with Aids. It is Scripture.

Eternity as Real

Few things so sharply distinguish our evangelical world-view from that of the secularist as our deep awareness of eternity. The awesome realisation that our conduct in this world is absolutely determinative of our destiny in the world to come is a sure indication that we are learning the truth of God. Materialistic thinking sees Aids as a physical problem to which latex rubber is the technological answer. (But see Gavin Reid's devastating exposure that the only UK manufacturer has no condom they can recommend for anal intercourse! Beyond Aids, Kingsway, 1987). Human beings, however, are not reproduction machines, nor pleasure machines. We are souls made for eternity and for God.

To reduce even the vexed discussion of **judgment** to the mechanistic level of 'playing with fire will get you burned' is just not biblical thinking. As Donald Macleod pointed out in his Rutherford House lecture (Tape RHT 149) the moral order of God's universe is not a concept which exists merely in the heads of theologians, it has objective reality in the world where men cannot sin with impunity. Judgment in Scripture is always related to God's personal moral nature, even when warning sinners of the consequences of their behaviour. Sometimes the Bible speaks of judgment in terms of God's temporal chastening to awaken a sinner to his spiritual need and to lead him to repentance. The term is too varied in its use to admit of the simplistic

generalisations of the tabloid newspapers. (See R T Kendall, Rutherford House Tape, RHT/151.)

What is unambiguously clear from Scripture, however, is that all of us must face a just God when we die. 'According to Jesus, even those who are celibate, whether homosexual or heterosexual, indeed those who are shining examples of marital fidelity, will eventually perish under God's judgment if they don't repent' (Kendall on Luke 13:1-5). The reality of this eternal challenge must qualify all that Christians rightly say about the need to back up Government public health programmes and the need to exercise compassion for those who are dying. Yes, it is too late to moralise with the sufferer once the deed is done, as any pastor knows when he counsels the unmarried pregnant girl. But eternity awaits us all.

Very few cases of what is called 'full-blown' Aids survive more than four years. Most of them are young men. The Terence Higgins Trust, the homosexual agency named after the first person in the UK to die of Aids, has a scheme of 'buddies' to help sufferers through the terminal stages to a dignified end. Such genuine friendship is to be admired. But it cannot be adequate for the Anglican booklet, 'Aids, some guidelines for pastoral care', to report, 'Frank lost the battle against Aids, he bravely fought and won the battle to be fully himself and thoroughly in charge of his life before he died' (page 9). Who will be in charge of his life after he died? That is of even greater moment. Ultimately death must be seen in the light of eternity.

What good news it is that evangelical Christians are taking the initiative in **terminal care**! The former Mildmay Mission Hospital in London already has a specialist nine-bed unit sponsored by CARE Trust, and the Shaftesbury Society are co-operating with Youth With a Mission to provide a hostel with 25 beds for Aids patients. Few places will more need the balance of speaking the truth in love than these hospices. Their unique ministry will be that those facing death will be treated by those who do know what lies beyond death. This is another evangelical distinctive. It must colour all that we say or do about Aids.

The Spirit as Active

It is a weakness of liberal theology that deism is not far below the surface. 'Nature', even if it is viewed as God's creation, is regarded as a self-ordering system into which God occasionally intervenes. But the world is not like that. Christ is the head over everything for the church (Ephesians 1:22). God's Spirit is always at work in human affairs if only we can trace his hand.

In the secular realm, some good things are happening about Aids. By overruling the circumstances and responses of those who make no profession of Christianity, 'common grace' can be discerned. Representatives from 140 countries were present at the conference on the global impact of Aids held in London at the beginning of 1988 and opened by the Princess Royal. Researchers looking for a vaccine to combat HIV have warned us that theirs is a long, and so far unrewarding, search. But it is surely better that they co-operate rather than compete. Publications are mushrooming on Aids. If only

to provide a forum within which Christians may work for the good of their fellow man, exercise the gifts God has given them and express the compassion of Christ, all this secular activity we must welcome.

This compassion is also being seen in the specialised Christian services now emerging to help churches develop a ministry relevant to these issues. **The Evangelical Coalition on Sexuality (ECOS)** co-ordinates the work of bodies like CARE Trust, who have a telephone counselling scheme for parents discovering that one of their family is involved in homosexuality, and two evangelical groups, Turnabout and True Freedom Trust, which can provide appropriate literature and confidential ministry for those concerned to break with their former way of life. The Christian Medical Fellowship have a full-time Aids researcher and lecturer. The Shaftesbury Project have produced a valuable Study Pack containing fact sheets, taped discussion starters and the excellent monograph, 'Aids, a Christian Response'. What may perhaps prove the most fruitful of all is the Wellspring Trust, aiming to encourage a positive, caring ministry at a practical level. Such a body will qualify for Government grants to combat Aids, much of which is currently being used by agencies blatantly furthering their so-called positive image of homosexuality. (For details of all these ECOS bodies, write to the BEC office.)

At another level, it is the Spirit who is prompting Christians to grasp the **evangelistic opportunities** of the Aids crisis. Questions are now being asked about whether the free sex of the swinging sixties went too far. Morality is no longer a forbidden subject. In December 1986 The Times newspaper ran a long piece on how monogamy might be made socially acceptable again! But evangelicals have something much more important to do than point out the pragmatic value of God's creation ordinances. Christians are taking up this challenge, publishing tracts, writing books or preaching sermons which point to Christ as the answer to this and every other contemporary question. We of all people do have some good news to share. We can be thankful that the Holy Spirit is stirring up some of his people to reach out with relevance to our hurt and confused generation.

Grace as Unqualified

By definition, grace is undeserved. No one has to qualify for God to show mercy to him. This must be the distinctive note of our message of hope. Unfortunately, that is not how we have been perceived. We have become known as negative about homosexuality and promiscuity and dismissed as irrelevant. It is the Terence Higgins Trust and the Gay Christian Movement who are the good guys in the public eye, whereas we are seen as unsympathetic and judgmental. Concern that a kingdom theology is drawing some away from evangelism to a new social gospel must not be allowed to inhibit our practical compassion. Our major premise is that **God loves sinners**. While we were still sinners Christ died for us. He came, 'not to judge the world but that the world through him might be saved'. The declaration of the love of God in word and action does not require prior penitence from the person with Aids, however he or she contracted the disease. It is nothing short of tragic that this note has not been more clearly sounded.

This is not to condone sin. His is the grace of a sin-hating God. But it is precisely because he has decisively dealt with sin that we can offer an unconditional gospel which justifies the ungodly. It is by being joined to Christ that sinners receive power to repent and change their life-style. Carol Bebawi on one of the Shaftesbury discussion tapes shows how unrealistic it is to expect those in the grip of homosexuality easily to break with their ingrained habits. She rightly says they need a great deal of supporting care to fill the huge emotional vacuum in their lives. For us merely to preach chastity as a limit to the spread of Aids is not enough. We must also preach the Christ who can change the heart and renew the will, making obedience to God's creation order both possible and pleasurable.

It is the grace of God which enables Christians to get involved in the **service** of Aids sufferers. The shock of a positive antibody test is where the trauma begins. It engages the families of those infected as they wait, perhaps for years, to see if and when Aids symptoms appear. The hostility and discrimination of their former friends and colleagues only add to their pain. Anyone who is in regular contact with them faces some degree of risk right from the beginning if their cuts and scratches are not covered. Most at risk are medical workers and those assisting with personal hygiene in the terminal stages. This is the point at which the motivation of Christian compassion comes in. Suffering is suffering however it was contracted. Even Christians are capable of sin and there is no place here for the patronising Pharisaism which thanks God that we are not as other men are. Our attitude to those suffering the consequences of breaking God's moral laws must be, 'There, but for the grace of God, go I.' Without such humility we are hardly qualified to approach them. Those who do face the risks and pressures of unselfish caring can rely on the promise, 'My grace is sufficient for you.'

The Aids crisis is going to get worse. How are we to regard it? The ECOS statement admits that, 'As Christians we recognise Aids as a warning to ourselves. The Church must be relevant to a society that is confused, frightened and gripped with a sense of helplessness.' When the prophet Daniel expressed his solidarity with God's reproach against his nation, he confessed, 'All this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favour of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth' (Daniel 9:13). Aids is our problem too. If God is permitting it as a judgment on society then that judgment must begin at the house of God. Are our consciences clear? Have we taught our young people a positive sexuality, giving them biblical grounds for it? Are our churches providing sympathetic strength for lonely single people? What about our duty to pray for our lawmakers and our support for Christians in the caring professions? Do we display a clear example of how to shun the subtleties of the entertainment media?

Yet not even the failures of the Church should deter us from praying for God to avert his judgment. His grace in regeneration is for the undeserving. So is his grace in **revival**. A fresh flood of his blessing is not what we deserve. But it would magnify God's grace to grant it. And this is what we can and should be

praying for.

Conclusion

Many evangelical churches have yet to see Aids as a problem for them. But what we can see is not the tip of the iceberg. That is an inadequate model because only nine-tenths of the bulk of an iceberg remains hidden from sight. It is now reckoned that for every patient displaying symptoms of Aids there may be not nine but ninety-nine more already infected and infectious to others. The trouble for the master of the Titanic was that he did not know the co-ordinates of the monster danger waiting to sink his unsinkable liner. Plotting the progress of the Aids pandemic is no mere academic exercise for evangelical Christians. We have a ship to steer.

The Rev Alan Gibson is General Secretary of the British Evangelical Council. This article is based on his address at Pontefract in 1987 entitled, 'Aids, is there any good news?', a shortened version of which was published in 'Evangelicals Now' in January 1988.

Statement on AIDS by ECOS

In the last Parliament Mr John Biffen, then leader of the House of Commons, appealed to the churches to emphasise the moral dimension in the fight against AIDS. In response, the Evangelical Coalition on Sexuality, representing more than one million evangelical Christians from all denominations, are challenging Christians to demonstrate compassion, calling for social behaviour that recognises God's authority and pointing the nation to Jesus Christ.

They say AIDS is a warning to us all.

As Christians we recognise it as a warning to ourselves. The Church must be relevant to a society that is confused, frightened and gripped with a sense of helplessness. The Christian response to AIDS is not to be uncaring condemnation, but love expressed in particular ways.

Genuine love will involve working to hold back the spread of AIDS through education and by continuing to warn of the results of behaviour that ignores any of God's moral laws.

Christians must also demonstrate active concern by providing nursing and counselling for the victims and their families whether the disease has been contracted innocently or promiscuously. This involvement may be risky, costly and will demand self-sacrifice from Christians. But there is no other way to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

AIDS is also a warning to society at large. Our inability to counter the AIDS virus warns us that man is not the self-sufficient controller of his own destiny. Its spread demonstrates the peril of disregarding God's plan for sexual intercourse in the context of life-long commitment of one man and one woman.

Our society promotes casual sex through its education system, by examples in the media and through the entertainment industry. It is now spending millions of pounds trying to cope with the consequences. Society is lighting forest fires, trying vainly to put them out and getting fatally burned in the process.

We are convinced that the whole of society — Government and governed, healthy and sick — faces God's displeasure for our wilfulness and apathy about him. No wonder he calls for an entirely different attitude towards him.

Our hurt world desperately requires a clear declaration that Jesus Christ is the rescuer and friend we need. From him we learn what God is like and what is positive and good in this life, sex included. In him there is the capacity to change what must be changed and the strength to suffer what can't be. Best of all he gives confidence to face death and the judgement to come.

Exegesis 6: Christians and Ungodly Rulers

Murdo Gordon

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers you too will prosper.
Jeremiah 29:7

These exegetical comments are all the more interesting as they are written by a white, Scottish theologian who has worked in South Africa for 28 years.

The message of Jeremiah in the above passage must have been upsetting to the original recipients. They had been exiled, moved from their home in Judea to a conquering country Babylon. These words appeared to encourage disloyalty to their own land and people. Not only so, the Babylonians were a wicked, idolatrous nation compared with Israel. This is well illustrated by the protest of Habakkuk when told of the use of Babylon to chastise Israel, 'O Lord, you have appointed *them* to execute judgment; O Rock you have ordained *them* to punish' (Hab 1:12). Their shocked amazement would have been increased by the prophecy of Jeremiah.

But Israel was God's peculiar people whom he had chosen for himself and protected and preserved ever since he formed them into a nation. They belonged to God in a unique sense. He had plans for them; they were his witnesses and from them the long promised Messiah was destined to come. How could the prophet thus call on them to settle in Babylon and to accept an insignificant role in a pagan land?

Further, what Jeremiah said contradicted what other 'prophets' were saying. They prophesied a short captivity and early restoration for Israel. These prophets predicted prosperity without chastisement or repentance (Jer 23:17). People liked messages of this nature and on the basis of them rationalised their own desire. Jeremiah said they were not to listen to such prophets (Jer 23:16-18 and 27:9,10). He must have seemed gloomy compared to those who prophesied peace and soon-coming prosperity. He told the Israelites not only to accept a trying situation but to seek the **welfare**, SHALOM, of their captors. What he said might even imply that they, the people of God, were to lose their distinctive identity and be absorbed into a godless culture.

But what Jeremiah said was based on the sovereign will of a holy God. God, even in the time of Moses, had warned that Israel would suffer punishment if they forsook God and his ways (Deut 27:15-26). God had threatened them with captivity if they forsook him; indeed by forsaking God they had already behaved like all the other nations and were now experiencing the just punishment for that. It was what Paul later meant when he said, 'God gave

them over' (Rom 1:24, 26, 28). Israel forsook God and now had to live where society was anti-God.

This was God's ordering of things. All nations were to serve the king of Babylon (Jer 27:7). The king Zedekiah had to accept this (27:12ff) and yield to him. Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant, his instrument of chastisement and he and the chastisement had to be accepted as such. Those who remained in Judea had to surrender to him and those already in captivity had to recognise the situation. God is the sovereign Lord of all the earth. He had ordained a situation and who can question the rightness of it? Jeremiah, who had the Lord's message, told the captives to accept God's will and learn from it. Chapter 24 shows that it was the captives in Babylon who were fulfilling God's plan rather than those still in Jerusalem.

Many Israelites did in fact follow Jeremiah's word and men like Mordecai and Daniel accepted high office in Babylon without compromising their worship of the Lord. Daniel and his companions were notable in their loyalty to God *and* their faithful service to Babylon. An earlier example of this outlook was the conduct of Joseph co-operating with the Egyptians and such men teach us we must not be selective in our obedience to government. Governmental powers are **appointed by God**.

Teaching of this nature is found throughout all Scripture. 1 Peter 2:13-17 tells us to submit to every authority instituted among men. 1 Tim 2:1,2 teaches us to seek the welfare of rulers by praying for them. Matt 5:41 shows us we must even co-operate with oppressive rulers by carrying the load an extra stage of the journey. Matt 22:21 enjoins, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.' Loyalty to God does not necessarily mean disloyalty to Caesar. The best known chapter in this regard is Romans 13. This chapter asserts the sovereignty of God who appoints rulers who have to be obeyed and to whom taxes have to be paid. The cause of God is not in rivalry to government as such. It is distinct, not of this world (John 18:36) and hence no earthly fighting to gain power is part of our Lord's plan for his kingdom. The man of God is not an anarchist. Anarchy is disastrous; even tyrannical rule is better than that.

Jeremiah's hard message was not the end of the matter. He also promised a return after 70 years (29:10ff). There was to be repentance and deliverance. We see in Daniel 9 this is precisely what happened. The true prophets did not merely promise restoration. They promised restoration only when the people repented. A repentant, godly people was more important than their restoration to Jerusalem. God's promise was to be fulfilled in Israel but only in a godly Israel and even then it would not be Israel as a whole but only a godly remnant within it who would enjoy the fulfilment.

The message of this verse is most relevant. Our world also has Christians in exile. Is it too much to ask them to accept their lot? Church history gives many examples of Christians who were cruelly carried captive to foreign lands and who there became instruments for Gospel progress. If we were ever in such a situation surely the word of Jeremiah, if followed, would make us more likely

to win our captors than if we refused to co-operate with them. Our main duty is to witness for God, not to be nationally loyal.

Further, have we any right to demand that Christians in some countries, say Soviet Russia, should be disloyal to their nation as a matter of Christian principle? Russia may be atheistic in policy but do believers accomplish any worthwhile Christian work merely by being rebels? They will do far better by being loyal citizens and being rebels only when a distinctive Christian principle is involved. Several incidents of this nature are found in the book of Daniel. Daniel and his companions were loyal to Babylon and only made exceptions when the cause of God was in jeopardy. Notice also the limited areas of disobedience by the Apostles (Acts 4:18-20 and 5:29-32). They disobeyed when rulers went beyond their legitimate sphere and tried to hinder the work of God in the world. Legitimate reasons for **disobedience** to civil powers would be:

When told to sin, as in the case of Joseph (Gen 39:6-12).

When told to be idolatrous, as in the case of Daniel and his companions (Dan 3:18).

When told not to preach the Gospel, as in the case of the Apostles (Acts 4:18-20).

In these cases rulers exceed their authority delegated to them by God and they forfeit their right to our obedience. But when we thus act we must also be prepared to take the consequences (Dan 3:16-18). What we must not do is to adopt rebellion as such to protect or further the cause of God. On the contrary, we have a duty to seek the welfare even of hostile rulers. Jeremiah clearly shows that there is a sense in which the prosperity of God's people is dependent upon the prosperity of the secular society in which we live.

The Rev Murdo R Gordon BD was formerly Principal of the Bible Institute of South Africa and lives in retirement in Cape Town.

The charge of biblical docetism has been levelled against advocates of inerrancy, most notably by Karl Barth. He accuses us of holding a view of inspiration in which the true humanity of the biblical writers is cancelled out by the intrusion of the divine characteristics of infallibility. For Barth it is fundamental to our humanity that we are liable to error. We reply that though it is true that a common characteristic of mankind is to err, it does not follow that men always err or that error is necessary for humanity. If such were the case...then we must ascribe such error to Adam before the fall and to glorified Christians in heaven. We would also have to apply this to the incarnate Christ.

Even apart from inspiration, it is not necessary for a human being to err in order to be human. So if it is possible for an uninspired person to speak the truth without error, how much more will it be the case for one who is under the influence of inspiration.

Finitude implies a necessary limitation of knowledge but not necessarily a distortion of knowledge. The trustworthy character of the biblical text should not be denied on the ground of man's finitude.

R C Sproul

Islam in Britain: Threat or Opportunity?

Merle Inniger

In the early 1960's, in a rather remote city in Pakistan, I was involved with some local Christians in seeking to obtain a building for Christian meetings and for the preaching of the gospel. The town was overwhelmingly Muslim, unevangelized and had known almost no Christian influence. One day, as the case was being considered by some officials of the town committee, one elderly conservative Muslim argued thus against giving these few Christians any facilities: 'This is a new thing. We don't want any such innovations in our Muslim city.'

Surely the gentleman was wrong! Christianity is not a 'new thing'. It pre-dates Islam, and there is evidence that it reached the Indian sub-continent before the advent of Islam. Surely those Christians in that remote Pakistani town had a right to a place of worship.

On the other hand, are we in the West too quick to say, 'There is no place for Muslims in our society?' Islam is a world-wide phenomenon. Muslims first came to Britain in large numbers to supply labour-hungry industries following World War II. Most Muslims are here legally, and should not be denied their rights. Furthermore, can we who are Christians deny them our hospitality? Regard for, and hospitality to, the stranger is an established Biblical principle. Through Moses, the Lord commanded Israel of old, 'When an alien lives with you in the land, do not ill-treat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.' (Leviticus 19:33,34)

Thus far, we admit, we have taken a rather superficial approach to the problem. While the principle of hospitality is surely right according to the Biblical ethic, and it cannot be denied that Muslims have a right to live in this country, this does not deal with some serious problems which have arisen due to the presence of significant numbers of Muslims in this country.

How many Muslims are there in Britain? Different sources vary in their estimates and I have not found any source which claims 100% accuracy. Johnstone, in **Operation World** gives the reasonable figure of 2.7% of Britain's total population, which means the total number of Muslims in the UK is slightly more than 1½ million. The round figure of 2 million is often given.

Cultural, Social, Educational and Political Aspects

Does a small minority like this constitute any threat to the cultural and social values of British society? Undeniably, there are some problems inherent in the

following realities:

Often Muslims are concentrated in communities within larger cities with the result that whole sections of a city, such as Savile Town in Dewsbury, become Islamic enclaves. Since influential leaders and theologians (Ulema) in Islam generally look with disfavour upon the modern concept of artificial birth control, it is possible that such communities will grow much faster than other parts of the city and the percentage of Muslims in the country will increase dramatically in the next decade.

The hold of the Ulema upon such communities and their conservative interpretation of the Quran and the traditions seem to be increasing. Thus, values which modern Western civilization cherishes will increasingly be challenged. There are many aspects to this problem, but one of the most noteworthy is the traditional Muslim attitude to women. For many Muslim women, seclusion behind the four walls of home is a way of life. Many Muslim men could not conceive of allowing their women the freedom and the equality which Western women take for granted.

There is also the area of education. It comes as no surprise that Muslims want their own schools, where not only the Quran is taught, but all subjects are presented with an Islamic bias, and where Muslim cultural and religious values dominate. The right for Muslims to have their own schools is not disputed, but whether these should be aided by public funds is more controversial. Apparently, a precedent has already been established in London's Borough of Brent, where, according to reports, the school founded by Yusuf Islam (formerly pop-star Cat Stevens) has been given voluntary-aided status. This means that such a school receives 85% of its funds from the taxpayer.

We must also remember that inherent in Islam is the close identification of mosque and state. Historically, Islam began very much as a worldly power, and it has always found its truest expression in a situation where it has the power to make the law, and in which it has, politically, the upper hand. We Christians tend to forget that the opposite is true of Christianity (cf I Peter; John 18:36). In Britain, this means that Muslims will surely press demands that 'Muslim law' be introduced for Muslims, and that they will work for a separate 'legal code' allowing for Muslim laws in matters like marriage and divorce, banking, ritual slaughter of animals, prayer observance and the call to prayer, to name but a few.

The Religious and Spiritual Aspect

We come now more specifically to the religious or the spiritual issue. As Christians, we are most likely to see the challenge of Islam in this, that a dynamic religious force has now effectively infiltrated Western 'Christendom'. As evangelical Christians, we cannot accept the 'multi-faith' approach, so strong in the West today, which sees all faiths as so many valid expressions of man's religious nature, all equally acceptable. Nor can we accept Islam as a faith very near and very similar to Christianity, differing only in one or two aspects. Rather we see Islam as a religion which at the very heart has missed the fundamental and the eternal reality. This is not to say, and it is not my

belief, that Islam is totally evil or demonic. God has not left the Islamic world without a witness, and by his goodness, there are those 'pointers' even within Islam which, if they are followed, will lead Muslims towards the truth. God's grace continues to reach men and women even within Islam. However, it is my strong conviction that the central and foundational realities concerning eternal salvation and godliness have been effectively obscured, and thus millions of Muslims are blinded. It is exactly as the apostle Paul stated, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them' (2 Cor 4:3,4).

How is the gospel of Christ obscured in Islam?

As I see it, there are at least four crucial points which tell the story.

An inadequate view of God. The greatest possible stress is laid upon the unity (tawhid) of God. God is 'singular, without anything like him, separate, having no equal.' This formula is endlessly reiterated throughout the Quran. Such a God is therefore hidden to man, and in Islamic theology there is great argument about the exact nature of His attributes and the extent of the knowledge of them to which men can obtain. The ultra-orthodox strictly prohibit too close an enquiry. It is said to be impiety to enquire into the nature of God.

A Prophet instead of a Saviour. The creed (Kalima) of Islam is indeed the source of Muslim theology: 'There is no god but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet.' Note that the first clause is stated negatively and the second positively. The second, then, assumes more and more importance and Muhammed, not Allah, is the Centre of devotion and he approaches divine status for millions of Muslims, if not for Quranic expositors. The Quran offers no support for the popular exaltation of Muhammed. But as a prophet, he warns, exhorts, and directs men to the right path.

A key and extremely sensitive doctrine of orthodox Islam is that although many prophets have been sent for the guidance of mankind (including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus), the Holy Prophet of Islam is the last in this series. Prophethood (nabuwat) ceased with the death of Muhammed, and no new prophet (nabi) shall appear after him. This doctrine is deduced from several Quranic verses, especially Sura 33, verse 40, 'Muhammed is not the father of any man among you but he is the messenger of Allah and the Seal¹ of the Prophets.'

It is the Prophet, then, who is all-important in Islam. There is no provision of a Saviour. In fact, as we shall see later, there is no need of a Saviour for men do not need to be redeemed from sin. They only need to be exhorted and directed in the right way.

Scriptures replaced by the Quran. Certain verses in the Quran seem to testify to the previous Scriptures and to accept them as genuine revelation from God. It appears that early in his preaching, Muhammed did not intend to establish a new religion. His dependence on the existing holy books is seen in Sura 10:94: 'And if thou (Muhammed) art in doubt concerning that which we reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture that

was before thee' (i.e. Jews and Christians).

Is not the Christian, therefore, in a very strong position in inviting Muslims to read the Bible? But it is not that simple! The Muslim who does read the Bible finds inevitably obvious contradictions to the teaching of the Quran. If, as he has been taught, the Quran is the final revelation and contains all he needs to know about God and religion, then he must find a solution to the dilemma posed by the two Books. Sadly, the way out of this dilemma urged by misguided leaders and followed by millions of Muslims is to claim that the existing copies of the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians have been corrupted and are not the Books which were 'sent down' originally. So the Bible is rejected in favour of the Quran, and the message of a Saviour promised through the prophets, crucified, risen from the dead, reigning, and able to save, is unheard and unheeded.

Defective view of sin and salvation. In spite of frequent mention of sins in the Quran, Muslim theologians and philosophers view man as essentially good, free of original sin. The tradition which states, 'Every child is born a Muslim; it is his parents who misguide him,' is often heard among Muslims, and quoted by Muslim writers. A modern and influential philosopher, Iqbal, has written, 'The Quran...while it looks upon Jesus Christ as the Spirit of God, strongly protests against the doctrine of redemption, a doctrine which proceeds upon the assumption of the insufficiency of human personality, and tends to create in man the sense of dependence which is regarded by Islam as a force obstructing the ethical progress of man.'²

It is indeed difficult to frame any doctrine of salvation from the Quran or the traditions of Islam. There is only one occurrence of the word 'salvation' (Arabic: *najat*) in the Quran (40:41), and in that case it is contrasted with hell fire. Salvation seems to be primarily the escape from hell. But there is a great deal of confusion in the thinking of Muslims about this: on the one hand everything depends on the will of Allah, while at the same time a Muslim is urged to keep the obligations of Islam towards storing up merit for the Day of Judgement. A Muslim is never able to say whether he will be saved, and the Christian idea of a present salvation is unknown in Islam.

Christ in Islam

What about Christ? Has not Islam retained him, and given him a place of respect? So, Muslims often urge us to believe. But Christ in Islam is a 'Bound Christ'; Islam wishes to retain him and yet denies his Person and his work. It is as if Jesus Christ has always been an insoluble enigma to Islam, and the preaching of him as Son of God and Saviour, crucified and risen presents a barrier which must be removed at all costs.

So Muslims continue to hang on to a few texts in the Quran, some of which are obscure and others based upon misunderstandings. Because of such texts, and the interpretation of them accepted by many Muslims, **Islam denies:**

The Deity of Christ and his unique Sonship. The stress on God's absolute unity hides from Muslims the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Often Muslims have understood that the 'Father-Son' relationship as held by Christians is somehow a physical one. Muhammed apparently even

thought that Mary was part of the Trinity (Sura 5:116). Muslims therefore are warned: 'Say not "Three": cease!...Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son' (Sura 4:171; see also 6:101, 102, etc.).

The crucifixion of Christ. For this, Sura 4:157,158 is usually quoted: 'And because of their saying, "We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger" — They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain: But Allah took him up unto Himself...' Other passages in the Quran do however speak about the day of Jesus' death and resurrection. The evidence here is certainly anything but clear and straightforward. Compared to this, how overwhelming is the testimony of the Gospel, of those who were eye-witnesses, indeed the combined testimony of all Holy Scripture, which Muslims claim to revere. We can with complete confidence stand with Paul in his declaration of I Cor 15:1-4.

The Holy Spirit. A denial of Christ ultimately involves a denial of the Holy Spirit. While Jesus himself is referred to in the Quran as the Word (Kalimat) of Allah and a spirit from Him, the unique personality of the Holy Spirit, and His work in the world of glorifying Christ, and convicting men of sin, of righteousness and of judgement (John 16:7,14) is completely unknown in the Quran and by Muslim theologians. Instead, Muslims believe that Jesus' prophecies about the coming of the Comforter (*parakletos*) were actually predictions of the coming of Muhammed.³ In one Quranic passage, Muhammed represents Jesus as bringing good tidings of a messenger who is to come, whose name is 'Ahmad' (the praised one). He was obviously referring to himself (see Sura 61:6).

Here then is the religious and spiritual challenge of Islam to the Christian church. A challenge which I perceive as not insignificant or unimportant, but which actually is more serious and more deeply-rooted than the cultural or the political challenge. It is a challenge which cannot be met by word or reason of man, but only by the spiritual weapons provided in the gospel (Eph 6:11-17).

That Muslims are serious about **pressing their claims** against what they perceive as a fading and crumbling Christian world can be clearly seen in these hard facts:

The **building of mosques** and other Islamic institutions goes on apace. In many cases, old buildings are used for Muslim prayers which are not purpose-built mosques, but adapted for this use. According to the Leicester-based Islamic foundation, there are at least 1500 Muslim praying-places in Britain. Larger ones, such as the central mosques in London, Dewsbury and Birmingham, are used also for propagating the faith, library and literature facilities, 'teach-ins' etc.

Many attractive English-language **Muslim publications** are now on the market. The Muslim Educational Trust in London and the Islamic Foundation in Leicester are sources for some of these. Misleading statements about the Bible and Christian teaching are found in many of

these.⁴

Some Muslims are also using the **polemical approach**. The Ahmadiya sect, which originated in the Indian sub-continent, but now has its world headquarters in Putney, London, has thrived on its polemic concerning Jesus. Ahmad Deedat, a South African Muslim, is well known for his debates which centre around either the Person of Christ or the Crucifixion of Christ, two points which Mr Deedat is particularly anxious to attack. Mr Deedat, as most Muslims are, is obviously averse to debating the Quran or the life of Muhammed.

While Muslims expect **full freedom** in Western countries to propagate their faith and win converts, and we believe they should enjoy such freedom, yet it is anomalous that Christians are denied the same freedoms in the heartland of Islam, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries are more and more inclined to restrict the preaching of the gospel of Christ among both nominal and committed Muslims.

It is very difficult to obtain figures which will indicate how successful Islam has been in attracting non-Muslims in Britain. Converts to Islam are highly publicized, and one tends to think there are thousands, while the true figure may be only in the hundreds. At any rate, there seems to be a small but steady stream of people in Britain converting to Islam.

The Opportunity

All that we have said about Islam, and particularly Islam in Britain, might be construed as posing a threat to our faith, our way of life, and our institutions. While we need to see the negative side, and be aware of the dangers of false teaching, I urge every Christian believer to accept the presence of two million Muslims in Britain as an unprecedented opportunity. The Almighty God has brought them here, and if Christians turn their faces away, neglect them, or show a resentful spirit towards them, we will lose the opportunity to commend true Christianity to them, and God's name will be dishonoured.

As regards this opportunity, I wish to comment on our **aim**, our **attitude**, and our **methods**.

Our Aim

Broadly stated, our aim is that Muslims should hear the word of the Gospel, believe, and be saved. In this aim, we are following in the footsteps of Peter, Paul, and many other faithful ministers of Christ (cf. Acts 15:7; 26:17-20; Rom 15:9-12, 18-20; I Cor 9:20-22).

To work towards this aim, I believe the following counsels are important:

We desire to see Muslims **converted to Christ**, not Western culture. It is important then, to seek to understand Muslims, their thinking, and their values. Is our message too much in Western, British, American dress? Do we expect converts to reject their own culture and become like us? This is an area that demands much prayer and consideration, especially by those called to Muslim work.

We **do not desire the dislocation** of the Muslim convert. It does often happen, of course, that following Christ means the rejection by family and

society. But families are very important and so necessary to people who come from a Muslim society. The ideal that should be followed is to see the Muslim inquirer remain as a witness within his family. When this is impossible, then there must be a caring, accepting fellowship of believers who can provide a spiritual home, a new family for the convert. Altogether too often we have seen that our churches are not prepared to provide such a spiritual home for the convert from Islam. Suspicion and rejection tend to drive him away.

Special care should be taken concerning work among **young people**. We recognize that young people who are uniquely placed between the old society of their family, and the new, interesting, and exciting society of their peers and schoolmates, may be very open to hearing the gospel. While recognizing this opportunity, we must also be aware of its pitfalls. Young people who are 'extracted' from family and culture before they are firmly rooted and grounded in the faith, may become misfits with great problems. It is therefore wise to work patiently and cautiously with Muslim young people and not to urge open commitment until they are of age.

Muslims who have come to faith in Jesus Christ have often done so after even years of inquiry, investigation and study. They may seek out the help and fellowship of numerous Christians. We must therefore be prepared to give time, prayer and effort to follow-up and discipling, to be merely a **link in the chain** which eventually leads them to Christ.

Our Attitude

In the prevailing political climate in the world, so many people in Britain and other Western countries have offered Muslims only suspicion, hostility, and even hate. Sadly, many Christians tend to turn away, and keep silent when they are among Muslims. I believe the attitude our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us includes:

Accept the presence of Muslims in Britain as God's time for them. Thank God that he has brought this about. Pray that this may become 'The day of salvation' for many Muslims. 2 Cor 6:2.

Be open towards them. Give time to learn more about them, make contacts, express Christian charity towards them. Let them know that you are not a free-thinker or materialist, but a believer in God and a follower of Jesus Christ.

Expect God to open their hearts. We can and must show Christian acceptance and charity towards them, but only God can open their hearts and reveal to them the truth concerning the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Methods

The intellectual approach. Modern missionaries to Muslims have found this approach of little value. To argue the relative merits of Christianity and Islam too often leads to debate, with each protagonist more and more convinced of his position as the argument goes on. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the profitableness of this approach in years gone by used by such great men as C G Pfander, Henry Martyn and others. Because they argued the truth persuasively and powerfully, minds of some important Muslim leaders

were convinced and hearts yielded. Certainly this method is not absent in the New Testament. Paul used it (Acts 17:2-4), and Peter exhorts us to 'be ready always to give an answer of every man who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear' (I Peter 3:15). But we must understand that this approach requires hard study, intellectual vigour, and perseverance, qualities which seem to be in short supply in the evangelical world in these days.

Testimony. This is most effective when it takes place in an atmosphere of confidence and trust. When we meet Muslims in such an atmosphere, we can invite a Muslim to share a testimony of his faith for a specified amount of time. We may then expect an equal opportunity when, after committing ourselves to the Lord and trusting the Holy Spirit to empower us, we can share with them the length, breadth, height and depth of the love of Christ.

The Word of God. It is important that we introduce a Muslim inquirer to the Holy Scriptures. We need to guide him about what to read, and we can be selective and point out to him passages about prophets whose names are familiar to him: Abraham, Moses, David. We can then lead him to the promises and the fulfilment through our Lord Jesus. In the experience of most Muslims who have come to faith in Christ, the reading of the Scriptures has played a large part.

Friendship at Work. Lionel Fitzsimons has said, 'Friendship, often over long periods, is the main key to Muslim hearts.' This can be on at least three levels: personal, family, and church. On a personal level, it must be man to man, and woman to woman. A friendship with the opposite sex for the purpose of Christian witness would be totally misunderstood by Muslims. A relationship of trust and confidence takes time and patience to develop. It is only in that kind of a relationship that we can expect to sit down with a Muslim friend to study and discuss the Bible together.

In family contacts, if these occur in Muslim countries, Muslim women will often not be free to sit in the company of men. In such a situation, the Christian ladies will have to spend time in the ladies' part of the house, and men will have to sit with men. In Britain, however, many Muslim ladies feel more free, and will be able to sit together in mixed company. Mutual visits to each other's homes for food, explaining each other's customs, helping Asians to understand the ways of the West, will help to break down barriers.

Much can be done also by evangelical churches which are located in proximity to groups of Muslims. While contacts may be made by knocking on doors or passing out literature, we should not be content to leave it there. A method which has been used to some effect by certain evangelical churches is to arrange for a 'Friendship Evening', held preferably not in church premises but in a neutral place, such as a school hall. Backed by much prayer and preparation, Christians can thus show their love and concern to Muslims, make themselves available to those who need help, and thus build fruitful relationships. In some cases, we have seen a Bible study for Muslim women started, and even Muslim children attend Sunday School with the blessing of their parents.

These things cannot take place if Christian churches are lukewarm or unconcerned about winning Muslims to Christ. There must be commitment backed by prayer. There must be a willingness to 'give ourselves' in time spent, building friendships and offering help.

One fears that the great opportunity given by God to the Churches of Britain and the West to proclaim Christ to Muslims may be lost due to the low level of Christian life and spirituality today. There is much Christian activity and yet so much is ineffectual. Fruitful witness comes from churches full of the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The most important thing in Christian witness to Muslims today is to have authentic Biblical Christianity in our homes and Churches once again. I believe that the challenge presented by Islam in Britain will be met when:

God visits his people with a refreshing breath from heaven. Acts 3:19.

God's people are obedient to the Great Commission, and are clothed with power from on high as they fulfil this. Acts 4:23-31.

God's people again put holiness first in their lives. Acts 2:42ff. This will not be a holiness or righteousness which is static, self-satisfied, with a 'holier-than-thou' attitude, but it will be patterned after God's righteousness which ever goes out, loves, seeks, and saves lost men and women.

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References

1. The Arabic word 'Khatm' can mean 'seal' or 'termination'.
2. 'Muhammed Iqbal', 'Ethical Nature of Man', in ISLAM AS AN ETHICAL AND POLITICAL IDEAL. Lahore: Oriental Publishers.
3. The Arabic meaning of Muhammed is 'the praised one', a meaning conveyed by the Greek word *Periclytos*, a word which Muhammed may have confused with *Parakletos*.
4. For example, see Ghulam Sarwar: ISLAM BELIEFS AND TEACHING, Muslim Ed Trust, London, p 30:148-158.

Muslim stories in the media included one which challenged Christian commitment to knowledge of the only Scriptures. In November 1986 the papers reported the phenomenal feat of an eight-year-old Glasgow boy who had become the youngest person in the Western world to memorise the Quran. Studying for up to five hours on week nights and longer at weekends, he memorised the 114 chapters and 77,934 words in two years. And he learned it in the original Arabic, his own languages being Urdu and English. He clearly has an exceptional gift, but he is only one of many who work hard to learn as much as possible of the Quran off by heart. How full and accurate is our knowledge of the true words of God?

Report to the General Assembly of
the Free Church of Scotland 1987

Video Review

Good Neighbours

A video with study booklet on how to witness to other faiths in Britain. BCMS, video, 35 minutes, £19.95 to buy, £5.00 to hire. booklet, 12pp, 50 pence.

BCMS is an evangelical Anglican missionary society and this video is based on two case studies in Preston and Wolverhampton. It features David Bronnert of St John's Southall Southall and Raj Patel of Evangelical Christians for Racial Justice.

The success of one evangelistic outreach centering on the work of a Christian Asian couple is vividly portrayed, stressing the importance of friendship and cultural sensitivity. Our danger of adopting racist attitudes and doing everything in an English way is clearly demonstrated through the two concrete situations. So too is the importance of our being willing to accept Asian Christians as leaders in our churches.

The booklet contains useful basic information on the four major Asian faiths and the Bible Studies consist of about five questions on each of three Scriptures, Deuteronomy 13:1-11, John 14:1-11 and Acts 10:34-48.

The limitations of the video, however, are all too obvious. Although claiming to give help on witnessing to other 'faiths' only

Asians are referred to. What about Jews or Mormons? Even the topics it does handle are not penetrated. Nothing is said about the content of our message nor the crucial points of contact with the Asian mind and concepts which might be misunderstood. Scripture is not used to support the thesis of cultural adaptation and the logical outcome of the film would be for churches in predominantly Asian areas to become English/Asian in their worship cultures.

Overall the cultural issue is overplayed and the failure of many Asians to heed the Gospel is blamed too much on the matter of race. Perhaps the denominational stance of the producers is reflected in their conception of Anglicanism as supremely an expression of English cultural values. They do seem unaware of the fruitful witness of some non-Anglican churches in multi-cultural situations.

Although it is encouraging to see God using Asian evangelists in Britain the film makes no attempt, other than urging friendship, to explain how God can use English people to reach Asians. More is called for if we are to be fired with zeal to take up this difficult challenge.

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"Through Their Eyes" is a study pack designed to help Christians think through their relationships with people of other faiths living in Britain. It concentrates on Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs. Three programmes introduce their beliefs and experiences while a fourth explores the problem of racism faced by Asians in Britain. They consist of fast moving sequences of stills with full soundtrack. The material considers Christian responses through discussion outlines, worksheets and activities. Leader's notes are included with master sheets for producing summaries and worksheets for the group. The pack costs £19.95 (+ £1 p&p) and is available from BMMF INTERSERVE, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT.

Review of Theological Journals: 1987—1988

The Editor

New Testament studies continue to receive a reasonable amount of attention in theological journals. The Themelios issues for 1987 reflect this trend and provide some interesting, useful material. For example, the January 1987 issue (vol 12, no 2) included a detailed, nine-page article on recent methodological developments and debates concerning Synoptic Studies (pp 38-46). The article is written by Craig L Blomberg who, incidentally, has authored a recent and useful IVP publication, **Gospel Truth? Are The Gospels Reliable History?**

Dr Blomberg's opening remarks illustrate the liveliness and dominance of contemporary New Testament studies. 'New Testament Scholarship', he observes, 'continues to overwhelm the student who would keep abreast of its developments, as it deluges him with massive quantities of literature and a bewildering array of methods and tools. Nowhere is this problem so pressing as in the study of the synoptic gospels' (p 38). In his article, Blomberg surveys six popular yet 'often misunderstood modern methodologies and a sampling of the most significant, recent literature in each area'. The six methodologies are Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism, Midrash Criticism, Social-Scientific methods and, finally, other literary criticisms.

Concerning Source Criticism, Dr Blomberg observes that 'the field is wide open for much further study in synoptic source criticism' (p 39) and regarding Form Criticism it is welcome news that the overdue replacement for Bultmann's book, **The History of the Synoptic Tradition**, may have at last appeared in Klaus Berger's **Formgeschichte Des Neuen Testaments**. More welcome news is that 'the arguments supporting the trustworthiness of the gospel tradition continue to be rehearsed, along with the weaknesses of the critical reconstructions of its tradition history...the "guarded tradition" hypothesis of Riesenfeld and Gerhardsson, which proposed that Jesus taught his disciples in rabbinic fashion to memorize many of his teachings and narratives of his deeds, which were in turn carefully passed along to specifically designated students in the early Christian community, remains more defensible' (p 39). While the value of this rabbinic analogy is weakened by the reliance on post-AD 70 parallels and the failure to explain Jesus' uniqueness and the differences remaining among the synoptic parallels, Blomberg reports on the significance of recent research in Germany by P G Müller, A F Zimmermann and Rainer Riesner. These three all agree it is 'virtually inconceivable' that the Lord Jesus would not have taught his disciples to memorise large chunks of his teaching. Riesner's research is particularly valuable. While he establishes the rote nature of elementary education required of all first-century Jewish boys, he also provides five other

key reasons why the teaching of, and about, Jesus would most likely have been preserved quite carefully. These key reasons are:

‘(1) Jesus followed the practice of the Old Testament prophets by proclaiming the Word of the Lord with the kind of authority that would have commanded respect and concern to safeguard that which was perceived as revelation from God. (2) Jesus’ presentation of himself as Messiah, even if in a sometimes veiled way, would reinforce his followers’ concern to preserve his words... (3) The gospels depict Jesus as a teacher of wisdom and phrase over 90% of his sayings in forms which would have been easy to remember, using figures and styles of speech much like those found in Hebrew poetry. (4) There are numerous hints and a few concrete examples in the gospels of Jesus commanding the twelve to “learn” specific lessons and to transmit what they learned to others, even before the end of his earthly ministry. (5) Almost all teachers in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds of that day gathered disciples around them in order to perpetuate their teachings....Jesus...probably resembled them in this respect’ (p 40).

Redaction Criticism is ‘the most thriving discipline in recent years and, despite excesses, remains ‘a valuable tool’.

Blomberg’s conclusion to this article is interesting: ‘If there is one lesson to be learned from recent criticism, it is that today’s assured results do not remain assured for very long, and that specific methods stay in fashion scarcely longer than styles of clothing’ (p 43). In this same issue D F Wright reviews J D Crossan’s recent book, **Four Other Gospels** (Winston Press: Minneapolis, Chicago, 1985, 208 pp, £13.95) which deals with the increasingly popular subject of non-canonical gospel traditions. Wright reports that ‘Crossan’s conclusions fall in with the growing tendency, particularly among American scholars, to regard non-canonical gospel traditions like those embodied in his four as basically independent of the canonical four. He writes for the general reader as well as for the specialist...and cannot avoid resting a good deal of weight on more substantial studies by other writers...’ (pp 56-57).

In vol 13, no 1 there are another two articles dealing with New Testament Studies. The first article, written by Richard N Longenecker, is entitled, ‘**Who is the prophet talking about? Some reflections on the New Testament’s use of the Old**’ (pp 4-8). Melvin Tinker authored the second and lengthier article on **The Priority of Jesus: A Look at the Place of Jesus’ Teaching and Example in Christian Ethics** (pp 9-18). Both articles are worth reading.

Turning to the **Evangelical Quarterly**, I was interested in what Nico S L Fryer wrote concerning **The Meaning and Translation of *hilasterion* in Romans 3:25** which he rightly claims ‘remains a crux for the interpreter’, (vol LIX, no 2, April 1987, p 99). After comparing as many as eighteen translations of the word, Fry shows that the word *hilasterion* ‘confronts us with at least three basic problems’, namely (a) the grammatical form of the word. Should it be taken as an adjective (NAB) or a substantive (AV, RSV, NEB etc.)? (b) the theological overtones included. Does it include the idea of propitiation or expiation or both? and (c) the translation of the word. Fryer concentrates on

the first question but I am unhappy with some of his reasoning and conclusions, especially when he says that the translation in Romans 3:25 of 'propitiatory' or 'expiatory' or 'atoning sacrifice' is no more than 'a remote conjectural possibility' (p 113). Fryer suggests that the word *hilasterion* is 'most probably a neuter accusative substantive, employed as a nomen loci. Despite arguments to the contrary the typical interpretation where the Apostle ascribes to Christ-on-the-cross certain properties of the *kapporet* still seems to offer the most natural and most satisfactory solution.' At least, the article is thought-provoking and challenges us to do our homework well!

About ten publications bearing on New Testament studies are reviewed in this same issue of EQ including Don Carson's **From Triumphalism to Maturity: An Exposition of 2 Corinthians: 10—13**. The reviewer, Stephen Travis, describes it as 'a fine exposition which gets to the roots of Paul's vigorous argument and applies it tellingly to today's church...this book shows superbly why the study of Paul takes us to the heart of the gospel' (pp 174-5). Another of Carson's books reviewed here by Travis is **Exegetical Fallacies** (Baker, 1984, p 153). Although I have not yet read the book, the review has made me put this book on order for priority reading over the next months. Carson discusses forty-eight kinds of fallacies, 'organised into four groups: word-study, grammatical, logical, and presuppositional and historical fallacies...the range and accessibility of examples here make it a very welcome guide-book. He points out things about the aorist tense...He notes fallacies in discussions of several crucial doctrinal passages in the New Testament, eg, in treatments of the verb 'to be' in the phrase 'this is my body' and in John 1:1. He notes several logical fallacies in the WCC statement on **Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry**. Perhaps this book should be essential and regular reading for all preachers! Carson's main aim in writing the book is that 'the Bible may be used more honestly and powerfully in preaching and writing...'

At this point I want to refer to RTJ, that is, the **Reformed Theological Journal** published by the Reformed Theological College of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. In the November 1987 issue there is a useful exegesis of Matthew 4:1-11 by Professor Edward Donnelly and several other helpful articles and reviews. For example, Professor Douglas Macmillan (one of our own Associate Editors!) has an historical article on **John Knox, Preacher of the Word**. Other articles are entitled **Karl Barth, Evangelicals and Revelation**, **Preaching from the Song of Solomon**, **Contextualization and the Integrity of the Gospel**.

But we are not yet finished with the subject of New Testament Studies. I refer again to **Evangelical Quarterly** (this time vol LIX, no 1, Jan 1987) where there are two more articles which merit careful reading and appraisal. The first article is by Linda L Belleville and entitled, **Continuity or Discontinuity: A Fresh Look at I Corinthians in the Light of First-Century Epistolary Forms and Conventions** (pp 15-37). Mrs Belleville's conclusion deserves to be quoted in full here if only to stimulate us to read the article: '...definite structural, thematic, and formal lines of continuity can be traced in 1 Corinthians. The

overall impression is one of deliberate structuring and organisation. An analysis of epistolary formulae indicates that the opening and closing *parakalo* formulae set forth Paul's main reason for writing and place this letter in the classification of the Hellenistic non-literary petition. The single other point of significant epistolary weight, the *peri de*/vocative/disclosure formula in 12:1ff, sets forth the theological basis on which the *parakalo* depend. The major problem which confronts Paul in this letter is the problem of spiritual arrogance and licence which manifests itself in the speech divisions in chs. 1-4, the question of immorality in chs 5-6, the issue of idolatry in chs 8-10, the disorder and social/charismatic divisions in worship in chs 11-14 and in the contention that there is no resurrection in ch 15. Paul's approach in chs 1-4 and 16:15-18 is one of request, while his approach in chs 5:1-16; 14 is one of command. This results in a basic request — command — request structure for the letter into which Paul integrates his responses to the Corinthian letter' (pp 36-37) and shows it to be 'unique among the Pauline letters'.

The second article by Alan Padgett is much more controversial as you can probably guess from the title: **The Pauline Rationale for Submission: Biblical Feminism and the Hina Clauses of Titus 2:1-10**. Arguing for the equality of men and women in home and church, Padgett thinks that the 'rationales of the *hina* clauses of Titus 2 demonstrate...that Paul's concern was not to lay down a law for all time, but to give temporary marching orders for the church, so that the gospel could go forth to all peoples' (p 52). I am unhappy with his assumptions, exegesis and conclusion.

Theological News continues to provide informative, thought-provoking material concerning theological work and teaching by Evangelicals worldwide. **TN** is an invaluable help to those of us who want to keep abreast of developments on the Evangelical theological world-scene. Vol 20, no 1 (January-March 1988) is no exception either. It contains up-to-date news of the World Evangelical Fellowship, Theological Conferences and Consultations, news and concerns from different countries as well as theological colleges.

Two Consultations met, for example, in Singapore in November 1987 with 145 theologians and theology teachers participating. One was the Asia Theological Association Consultation which met to discuss '**Theological Education for Urban Ministry in Asia**'. The other was the Pan-Asian Consultation on Theological Education, with its theme '**The Urban Church, Called to Ministry**'.

News reported in this issue of **TN** included the Bible Society of India under attack, the Islamicization in Malaysia which now worries the neighbouring governments of Singapore and Indonesia. 'Islamicization in Asia is a growing threat because of the growing influence of Iran in Asian Muslim countries, and the economic support of the petrodollar' (p 7). Other disturbing news concerns a feminist theologian, Elga Sorge of Kassel, West Germany, who claims that 'women need a goddess, not the masculine God of the Bible...I need this goddess because I am her. I need her because I need myself.' The Ten

Commandments, she claimed, were written only for men, since in Jewish culture only men were allowed to participate in religious/spiritual activities. In the place of the Ten Commandments, Elga Sorge proposed ten 'permits' including 'you may commit adultery because you cannot help it...But you may also be faithful'. Thankfully, the General Secretary of the German YMCA, the Rev Ulrich Parzany, spoke for the other evangelicals in describing Sorge's ideas as 'utter paganism'.

The Evangelical Review of Theology has also now established itself as a worthwhile and satisfying journal which is not afraid to face contemporary issues from a thoroughly biblical perspective. I look forward to reading each issue and also find them extremely useful for reference purposes. Three issues particularly in the last year deserve mention in this review.

Vol 11, no 1 (Jan 1987) dealt with the basic question, why do theology? Klaus Bockmuehl wrote about **Three Horizons for Theology** (pp 5-20) which he pinpoints as being the church, humanity and God.

Concerning the church, Bockmuehl stresses that 'theology is to serve the church, to help towards the edification of the 'Temple of God' which is made up of human beings. Theology serves to expand and constantly to restore that building, the church.' Bockmuehl then expresses the need of 'a new dedication and commitment' to the church which applies in two ways. One, that we distinguish between the 'macro' and the 'micro' aspect of the church. We must learn to concern ourselves both with the present and with the prospects of the whole of Christianity, the macro-aspect, and with the welfare of our immediate fellow-Christian or our own congregation, the micro-aspect. Secondly, commitment to the life of the church may mean that we put its welfare and prosperity before all other considerations. If we all now apply ourselves to social ethics: to the poor, to race relations, and to the problems of peace, who will make the well-being of the "vineyard" his overarching purpose?' (p 7).

But Christian theology has a commitment also to humanity as a second horizon and this is seen in three directions. First of all in the 'basic work of sustaining people in times of material need'. Secondly, the task of 'teaching and maintaining God's creational ordinances and commandments and so helping to fulfil God's cultural commission to sustain human life. Without this ongoing work, nations will sink into Godlessness, anarchy and self-destruction...' (p 8). Thirdly, another contribution of theology towards the preservation of culture and human existence lies 'in the practical presentation of regenerate men and women who have a distinct and regenerating effect on the life of society also'. The final horizon of theology is God. Not only is God the object of theology but theology must be 'divine service, service of God' (p 10).

Another helpful article, **The Justification of Theology with a Special Application to Contemporary Christology**, was authored by Robert L Reymond. The burden of this article is summarised in the conclusion: 'our task as theologians is simply to listen to, to seek to understand and to explicate

what we hear in the holy scriptures in their entirety for the health and benefit of the church and in order to enhance the faithful propagation of the true gospel. With a humble spirit and the best use of grammatical/historical tools of exegesis we should draw out of Scripture, always being sensitive to all of its well-balanced nuances, the truth of God revealed therein.

If we are to imitate our Lord, his Apostles, and the New Testament Church, that and that alone is our task. As we do so, we are to wage a tireless war against any and every effort of the many hostile existentialistic and humanistic philosophies which abound about us to influence the results of our labours' (p 36).

I found three other articles in this issue of **ERT** absorbing and informative. One was **The Evolution of Evangelical Mission Theology since World War II**. The author, Arthur F Glasser, traces the major phases in the development of Evangelical Missiology over the last few decades.

Some of the shifts in thought and emphasis which Glasser thinks have characterised the evangelical debate on mission theology since 1947 include the affirming of the Great Commission (eg, individual responses to 'the call' and the challenge of Matthew 28:18-20 by students etc in the late 1940s and early 1950s as well as the stress on discipleship, eg, Dawson Trotman and the Navigators), discovering Church Growth (Donald McGavran and his epochal work in 1955, **The Bridges of God**, who argued that 'the key to worldwide evangelisation was the multiplication of churches, not the multiplication of evangelists', p 56), the challenge from Ecumenists (eg, the radicalization of the World Council of Churches in the 1960s, Vatican II 1962-1965) and the struggle for an Holistic Gospel (eg, 'which came first, evangelism or social responsibility? Then came...1974 Lausanne...the International Congress on World Evangelisation...which affirmed the validity of both mandates in its Covenant...but evangelicals almost immediately thereafter began to divide over the issue of priorities', p 60), also listening to the 'Third Force' of Pentecostals/Charismatics... Part of Glasser's conclusion is 'that evangelicals have no alternative but to enter the arena of public debate on the mission of the church in our day. They must listen as well as speak. They must expose their insights to the scrutiny of others. Only thereby will they make any significant contribution to the maturity of the church in our day' (p 63). There are aspects of Glasser's survey and conclusions which I am unhappy with but the article is nevertheless a valuable one.

Another similar and provocative article deals with **Evangelical Theology in the Two Thirds World** and the author is Orlando E Costas. His basic argument is that while the western theological development was shaped almost exclusively by the formal principle of the Reformation (the *Sola Scriptura*), the corrective from the Two Thirds World is to use also the material principle of Reformation, namely, salvation by grace through faith. 'The ultimate test of any theological discourse,' concludes Costas, 'is not erudite precision but transformative power' (p 77) yet he concedes that Evangelical Theology in the Two Thirds World is represented by 'many voices with divergent views...it has

a long way to go, and in the process it will have a lot to learn from its counterpart in the One Third World.'

The other article which merits mention concerns an **Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism**. This is the second of the two parts of the 38-page document prepared by the task force of the Theological Commission which was asked to study Roman Catholicism. The document was adopted by the World Evangelical Fellowship General Assembly when it met at Singapore in June 1986.

Seeking to avoid compromise on foundational, biblical doctrines, the task force honestly acknowledges, 'We have encountered obstacles in Roman Catholicism as it manifests itself today, which seriously impede fellowship and co-operation between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics and are unsurmountable as long as there is no fundamental reformation according to the Word of God in the Church of Rome. It is our fervent prayer that such a reformation may take place. Unity and co-operation among Christians is highly desirable, but not at the expense of the fundamental evangelical truths...there is only one way...the road that beckons is not 'come back to Rome', nor 'come across to Wittenburg or Geneva', but 'come together in Jerusalem', the historical-redemptive anchor point of the Christian faith' (p 93).

This is an historical as well as a significant document which deserves wide and detailed attention by churches and pastors.

Missiology, as we should expect, dominates **ERT** and another issue — vol 11, no 4, October 1987 — is devoted to the theme, **Mission of the Future**. Some of the articles make for compelling reading.

The resurgence of other world religions raises the question of the relationship of other religions to Christianity and this, writes Ajith Fernando in his article **Truth in Other Religions**, 'remains the crucial issue of mission of the future' (p 292). From his commitment to general and special revelation, Fernando emphasises that we must 'approach the issue of truth and goodness in other faiths from the basis of our belief in the uniqueness of Christ...The good points in a religion that have their base in general revelation, may be used by the Christian evangelist as points of contact and stepping stones in preaching the gospel' (p 299). However, Fernando also warns 'that these same good features in a religion can also lead people astray' (p 300).

Are there common causes in which we can co-operate? Fernando answers with a cautious yes but warns 'that such co-operation is fraught with numerous pitfalls...We must remember that our supreme task, evangelism with conversion in view is repulsive to most non-Christians. Co-operation with non-Christians must not result in a blunting of our evangelistic emphasis. Sometimes evangelistic organisations downplay their evangelistic emphasis in order to get assistance from the government or a non-Christian foundation for some social venture. This practice can be very dangerous. We must make know the fact that along with our social concern is an evangelistic concern which we will not drop in order to get funds' (p 300).

Fernando then illustrates the extent of co-operation with regard to his own experience. 'Following the recent racial riots in Sri Lanka', he writes, 'I participated happily in a neighbourhood peace committee chaired by a Buddhist and of which most of the members were Buddhists. I found that what I did in that committee did not conflict with my Christian principles. But I could not participate in some ventures organised by some Christians, such as an ecumenical rally at which the chief speaker was a Buddhist chief priest; I felt I could not take part because true Christian ecumenicity cannot extend to other religions. I also could not participate in many united services of prayer for peace...held all over the land in Christian church buildings...These ecumenical rallies and united prayer services were hailed as great steps forward in the quest for interreligious understanding and harmony. But a biblical Christian, in his search for harmony with others, cannot surrender the scriptural teaching about Christ's uniqueness' (eg, I Timothy 2:1-8; p 300). Would that many more would read but also heed Fernando's warning!

In the most recent issue of **ERT** (vol 12, no 1, January 1988) I especially enjoyed Gerald Bray's article, **Recent Trends in Christology** (pp 52-63).

Before I leave the subject of mission, **Christian Arena** devoted four articles to the subject in its December 1987 issue (vol 40, no 4). Basil Scott in his article, **Fruit for Export: The Church's Responsibility** seeks to remind churches of their responsibility for mission. 'Each church', he writes, 'is like a pebble dropped in a pond sending out ripples to the farthest bank. It is impossible to confine mission to your own backyard. The Spirit knows no geographical limits' (p 6) but mission begins at home. 'The world is here as well as overseas.'

Basil Scott then considers the practical question of stimulating interest in mission among our churches. One important place to start is with the pastor for 'he is the key person. Without his enthusiasm and commitment it will be difficult for any church to fulfil its role as an active sending body.' The advice is clear: 'if your Pastor has never been abroad, send him! He could visit missionaries from your church or those your church is linked with. If he has Bible teaching gifts he may be able to use these and, as well as learning much himself, be a blessing in return' (p 7). Churches, what about following this advice?

An important issue of **Christianity Today** during 1987 was — for me at least — vol 31, no 5, March 20, which included a special feature on **universalism and annihilationism**.

Roger Nicole begins the feature with a useful historical survey and biblical summary of universalism. Clark Pinnock of McMaster University in Toronto examines the teaching of annihilationism (pp 40-41). It is obvious where Pinnock's sympathies lie. 'The traditional understanding of hell', he says, 'is unspeakably horrible...the popular tradition concerning the nature of punishment that some of the wicked will have to suffer is morally and scripturally flawed, and is accelerating the move towards universalism...If the only options are everlasting torment and universalism, then I would expect

large numbers of sensitive Christians to choose universalism.’ Pinnock then takes comfort in a third option, namely that the ‘fire’ of God’s judgement consumes the lost so that extinction is the second death. He thinks this view is biblical and morally more acceptable. As to be expected, Pinnock attributes the more traditional view to the influence of ancient Greek philosophy.

‘Is this belief of mine heretical?’ asks Pinnock. His answer seems to be based on four basic facts. First of all, some Christians regard annihilationism as being heretical and Pinnock acknowledges this fact but reluctantly. Secondly, Pinnock goes on to the offensive by talking of the ‘moral horror and exegetical flimsiness of the traditional view of hell; I am not surprised’, he adds, ‘that some would rather not reopen a question for which they have few answers’ (p 41). Thirdly, Pinnock refers to British evangelicals like John Wenham, Frank Guillebaud and Basil Atkinson who have all espoused the view of annihilation. His interpretation, therefore, he feels ‘is not altogether outside orthodox Christianity’. Finally, as the pace quickens ‘toward accepting the error of universal salvation’, Pinnock feels that his alternative view ought not to be regarded as heretical.

David F Wells of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary offers a more satisfying and orthodox position. Professor Wells exposes the weakness of Pinnock’s case by a detailed look at Matthew 26:46. ‘In this text, the existence of believers and that of unbelievers are set in parallel. Both forms of existence are said to be ‘eternal’, the same word — *aionion* — being used in both instances. Pinnock arbitrarily claims that in the case of believers, the text is talking of eternal *effects*, but in the case of unbelievers, only of eternal *actions*. In their case, the judgement is eternal only in God’s mind and not in their experience since they do not exist; in the case of believers, ‘eternal’ means the experience of endless life. This produces two, competing meanings, of ‘eternal’ — all in the same verse!’ (p 41).

Furthermore, he claims that ‘by direct assertion and by implication, unbelievers are described as being “eternal” and the same language is used of them as is used of believers: see, eg, 2 Thess 1:9 and 2:16; Heb 5:9 and 6:2; Mark 3:29; Matt 18:8; Rev 14:11, cf 20:10.’

When discussing the charge of some that everlasting punishment is disproportionate to the offence of unbelievers, Professor Wells concludes that annihilation proponents have ‘a diminished view of sin, a modified notion of divine righteousness, a restructured Atonement...it is a gospel that has lost its nerve because it has lost its majesty. Pinnock has tried to revive the old argument that the judgement of God raises moral problems. I assert the opposite: God’s judgement *settles* all moral problems!’ How refreshing to find a competent evangelical theologian advocating so strongly the traditional, orthodox doctrine of everlasting punishment. Thank you, Professor Wells.

The final article in this special feature is by Kenneth S Kantzer and deals with **Troublesome Questions** concerning the whole debate. His article is brief but firm. Quoting from Matthew 25:31f, Kantzer writes: ‘Other parts of Scripture convey the same solemn message. Christ is the eternal judge who will burn up

the chaff with unquenchable fire. Gehenna, hell, is described as everlasting punishment, everlasting fire, the fire that shall never be quenched, everlasting flames, eternal fire, etc. That awful word appears 12 times in the New Testament: 11 of those references come from the lips of our Saviour...Those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord cannot escape the clear, unambiguous language with which he warns of the awful truth of eternal punishment. No universalism, no annihilationism, no probation in the hereafter satisfies his word. The awful stark destiny of man is this: the soul that rebels against God and chooses to remain unrepentant throughout this life will separate himself from the kingdom of God' (p 45).

May God enable us to preach faithfully and zealously His glorious gospel which alone is able to save men and women from everlasting punishment.

Details of Journals

Themelios (TSF) and Christian Arena

38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP

Evangelical Quarterly, Evangelical Review of Theology and Theological News (World Evangelical Fellowship)

Paternoster Press, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW

Christianity Today

MasterPlan Publishing, Thames House, 63-67 Kingston Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3PB

New Dictionary of Theology

The Editor

An article reviewing the New Dictionary of Theology

Editors: Sinclair B Ferguson and David F Wright

Consulting Editor: J I Packer

IVP, pp 738, 1988, £17.95

The appearance of a competent, theological dictionary is a rare event for it involves a great deal of preliminary planning, supervision, work and expense over several years. We are grateful, therefore, to IVP for their vision and initiative in providing us with this theological dictionary which now complements their **New Bible Commentary** and the **New Bible Dictionary**.

All the contributions are concise, although varying in length, but they usually provide a competent, comprehensive outline of a subject/person from both an

historical and biblical perspective. Contributors also offer a critique or, more frequently, suggest areas and ways in which evangelicals have criticised a particular theology or responded to a problem. An excellent reference system is adopted in the Dictionary and the bibliographies appended to the articles are worth their weight in gold although I have one complaint. Many of the bibliographies do not mention books published later than 1982 which means that some significant, influential publications of more recent years are not included. I appreciate some of the publishing problems involved and that the articles were written, probably, 3/4 years ago and that contributors may not have had the necessary time to read or refer to later publications. However, a final updating of bibliographies immediately prior to printing would have enhanced their value considerably!

This Dictionary is reasonably priced. Compared with **A New Dictionary of Christian Theology** edited by Alan Richardson and published in 1969, then again in 1983, by SCM at £19.50, the IVP Dictionary is a bargain at £17.95 and has 738 pages compared with 613 in the other. By contrast, Marshall and Pickering's **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology** (edited by Walter A Elwell) published in 1984 has as many as 1204 pages but is priced at £24.95. The choice for pastors and others will be between the latter and the IVP Dictionary and, because of the lower price, IVP may win. However, I am impressed by the **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology** and, apart from the bibliographies, it is often more thorough and, on issues like immortality, hell etc, more orthodox than the IVP **New Dictionary of Theology**. I will return to this comparison again shortly but I would caution readers against ignoring the **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**.

The **IVP New Dictionary of Theology** is quite comprehensive in the subjects and people it covers. Its aim is 'to provide the enquiring reader with a basic introduction to the world of theology — its themes, both majestic and minor, its famous formulations and its important historical moments, its distinguished — and notorious — exponents, past as well as present, its sources, disciplines and styles, its technical vocabulary, its ebb and flow in movements, schools and traditions, and its interaction with other currents of thought and religion' (p vii). This aim is admirably fulfilled in many of the contributions; subjects like **ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY** will promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the problems faced by our Asian brethren. **Black Theology** is also handled well and is informative. Controversial theological subjects are also handled such as **FREE WILL** and the **EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT**. The latter subject is handled better in the IVP Dictionary than in the EDT and is certainly more reformed. G L Bray also provides a good outline of **New Testament, Classical and Modern CHRISTOLOGY** and is well worth reading. Professor Clowney writes well on **THE CHURCH** but he accepts uncritically the distinction between the 'invisible' and 'visible' church (p 141). Donald Macleod's section on **CHURCH GOVERNMENT** is useful though some would quarrel with his opening statement that 'it is debatable whether the New Testament presents us with one, final, uniform pattern of church government to serve as a norm for

all ages' (p 143). Nor does Professor Macleod appreciate or indicate the different nuances of the term 'independency' when he talks of 'an increasing number of independent churches...' (p 146).

The doctrine of the VIRGIN BIRTH is handled well (pp 708-710). Commenting on the paucity of NT passages (Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38) relating directly to the subject, a fact which is used sometimes by critics, Tony Lane observes: '...the virgin birth is almost the only point in common between the two infancy narratives, a clear indication that it is based on an earlier, common tradition. It should also be noted that, in view of the gospel record, the alternative to the virgin birth is not a normal birth within wedlock...but an illegitimate birth...' (p 709).

Similarly, there is a helpful article on the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT and a necessary reminder that ecumenism is not restricted to the World Council of Churches (eg ARCIC and other denominational discussions/mergers, etc). The main criticisms by evangelicals of the WCC are summarised: 'The imprecision of its language...; its abuse of biblical terms and concepts (starkly exemplified in Uppsala's use of "Behold, I make all things new", Rev 21:5, but frequently seen in the use of "peace", "salvation", "life", etc); its quest for consensus rather than truth, made inevitable by taking the Churches' standpoints rather than the Bible as its basis...; the subtle pervasiveness of universalist assumptions, tending to embrace other faiths in the pursuit of world community and so soft-pedal evangelism as liable to interfere with inter-religious dialogue...: political one-sidedness, with Marxist social analysis to the fore and the neglect of personal, as distinct from social, ethics; the justification of violent revolution in some forms of liberation theology; and excessive deference to feminism' (p 220).

Concerning EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY, the Dictionary tells us that 'from the middle of the 20th century, a revitalisation has been taking place within evangelical theology. British scholars have contributed a serious and scholarly exegetical approach; Americans have been hard at work in areas of systematic theology and its adjunct disciplines such as apologetics and ethics; the Dutch and the Mennonites have been developing theologies of social action from significantly diverse starting points, and the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement has been enunciating a theology of the Holy Spirit...' (p 240). There are exceptionally good contributions, for example, on LIBERATION THEOLOGY and PREDESTINATION. The conclusion at the end of the latter entry is correct but sad; 'the contemporary evangelical church has become largely Arminian often as a result of anti-doctrinal bias rather than careful theological reflection'. The contributor, Professor W R Godfrey, however, adds that 'The historical Augustinian doctrine of predestination remains biblically and theologically compelling' (p 530). Although useful and compelling reading, FEMINIST THEOLOGY was one of the longest contributions in the dictionary and only just beaten for length by the sections on GOD, JESUS and the HOLY SPIRIT! I felt that some entries were disproportionately long compared with other more important subjects. For example, the first contribution in the Dictionary is by Tony Lane on PETER

ABELARD (1079—1142) and is given well over double the space of the second entry on Abortion which is of greater contemporary relevance to us. This may be explained solely in terms of the contributors themselves and their discretion but sometimes the difference is glaring.

There are more serious criticisms, however, which I would want to make. On the APOSTLES, we are given a good, biblical assessment of their office, qualifications and work, but it does not refer at all to the Restorationists' view that there is a third class of apostles. This is a serious omission and reduces the value of some otherwise good material. I also found Dr Packer's brief treatment of BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT disappointing, and the item on the FALL was predictably lacking in conviction concerning its historicity (pp 249-250) while the WRATH OF GOD item was defective with no clear reference to the holy character of God and its relation to other attributes (p 732). BIBLE TRANSLATIONS, too, seems to have avoided one or two of the basic questions hotly disputed today while the BAPTIST THEOLOGY contribution was too brief and far from being comprehensive or satisfying. The author omits some Baptist distinctives (eg, Church-State attitude) and does not take account of the revival of Reformed Baptist theology over the last decade or two.

Allow me one other criticism. Conditional Immortality, I am sad to say, is assumed and openly advocated in some of the relevant contributions. Dealing with DEATH, M J Harris is unnecessarily brief but also vague at certain points. He clearly assumes conditional immortality then, in his contribution on IMMORTALITY, he openly acknowledges where his sympathies lie, concluding 'that the Scripture teaches conditional immortality'. Harris's statement of his position is certainly forthright and he does not do justice to the orthodox position. Stephen Travis of St John's College, Nottingham, writes on ESCHATOLOGY and, while he is a conditionalist, his treatment of the subject is reasonably fair. His personal view, however, does come across in this section. Harris writes, too, on the RESURRECTION, GENERAL and on the INTERMEDIATE STATE. On the latter subject, Harris rejects universalism and 'soul-sleep' and brings several biblical arguments to bear against it, insisting that all believers at death enjoy 'conscious communion with Christ' (p 339).

At this point, the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Marshall's Pickering) is more satisfying and orthodox when it deals with subjects such as death, immortality, eschatology, resurrection and hell, etc. I was personally encouraged and refreshed by re-reading these sections in EDT after seeing in NDT the position of conditional immortality assumed and left unchallenged. Will the IVP provide an opportunity in the future for a competent and biblical presentation in print of the orthodox, traditionalist doctrines of immortality and everlasting punishment? I hope so.

Despite these criticisms, the New Dictionary of Theology is going to be a useful tool for pastors and for those eager to obtain a better grasp of theology in general. Over 630 articles are included by 210 international contributors and there is a full cross-reference system, too, which is most useful.

David Bogue and the Gosport Academy

Noel Gibbard

David Bogue (1750—1825),¹ a native of Berwickshire, moved to London in 1771, and in 1777 was ordained as a Congregational minister at Gosport, Hampshire, where he served until his death. Gosport was a port of 5,000 inhabitants, very cosmopolitan in character as the Dutch, English, Welsh, Scots and the French mingled together. For many of them it was a port of call, but a number settled down there, and Bogue must have welcomed with open arms those who came from his native country, the families of Geddes, Campbell, McLeod and McDonald.² In 1789, after a period of twelve busy years, Bogue received the first three students to prepare for the ministry of the Word. In 1800 the academy came under the auspices of the London Missionary Society.

This work of **ministerial training** was made possible through the kindness of George Welch,³ a wealthy London banker, with the help of two other gentlemen. Welch was concerned with the spread of the gospel and was one of the principal supporters of the 'Societas Evangelica'. In a discussion with William Jay, Welch lamented the presence of an 'unregenerate ministry' and was moved to support students under the care of three ministers in three different places, David Bogue of Gosport being one of them.⁴ The tutor was to be paid ten pounds a year for each student during a three year course. After Welch's death, others carried on the good work, and were anxious to enlarge the academy at Gosport. James Bennett, a former student, took up the matter with Robert Haldane, who with Robert Spear,⁵ a Manchester cotton merchant, offered the LMS five hundred pounds to pay ten pounds per annum for each additional student at the academy. The fruit of the discussion was the establishing of Gosport as a missionary centre for training men for overseas work, as well as for the home field.⁶

Life and Work of the Academy

Bogue was an able man, well read, cultured, but not an outstanding scholar. His aim was to prepare men for the task of preaching the gospel. Like William Jay, he distinguished between an educated ministry and a learned ministry. Candidates had to be educated as thoroughly as possible, but only a few could excel as scholars. All the work of the academy was based on the Bible, the Word of God. As far as Bogue was concerned the Scriptures were the divine oracles, and one of his students referred to the reverence Bogue had for them: 'For the inspired Scriptures David Bogue entertained a deference the most profound';⁷ they were the source of truth and authority and the Bible was always open in front of him. As he lectured a great deal on the New

Testament, he made use of helpful sources, especially Griesbach's critical edition of the New Testament.

The tutor laid a firm foundation for the work, but there were many uncertainties and difficulties. There was no purpose-built building, and they met in the vestry adjoining the red brick chapel, in a room thirty feet by eighteen feet. There was a table and a chair for Bogue, and benches for the students. The tutor did not have much help in terms of teaching. David, his son, helped for a while, but the only continuing help came from Thomas Eastman. This was partly Bogue's own fault, however, and he was guilty of taking on too much work himself. The library facilities were inadequate for a theological college. Indeed, for the early period, the only books available were those in Bogue's own library. Also, the differences in age and ability posed a real problem for teaching in class. Some of the students came with a little knowledge of Greek and Latin, while others came having had hardly any education previously.

Bogue made an effort to meet the needs of the students. They were given a general education, a knowledge of Greek and Latin while Hebrew was left until the third year, and he succeeded in this work: 'The theological lectures were especially adapted to remedy this evil. For they were remarkably simple; and though they often contained the result of much learned reading and close thinking, they were as far as possible, level to the understanding of all who possessed the indispensable prerequisite for the ministry — 'good sense, genuine piety and respectable acquaintance with the Bible.'⁸

The former student was referring specifically to the theological lectures, and in the same context said, 'Theology was the alpha and omega at Gosport', while another former student referring to Bogue, commented that '**His forte was theology**'.⁹ He drew up a course of a hundred and twenty lectures,¹⁰ reflecting the influence of Doddridge and as he lectured Bogue would recommend particular matters to his students. Pride of place went to Jonathan Edwards, who had greatly influenced Bogue personally and he had studied the **Religious Affections** in detail. Others who were recommended included John Owen, John Howe, William Bates and Witsius, and Richard 'for powerful application to the heart and conscience'.¹¹ The students had to work on their notes and their reading, then present them to the tutor for inspection and advice.

Attention was also given to Homiletics and during the lectures Bogue emphasised simplicity and clarity in the presentation of the gospel, urging the students to wait upon God for unction on their ministry. He did not give too much attention to the finer points of pulpit behaviour and was criticised by some of his contemporaries for this neglect. They could also draw attention to the fact that Bogue himself had deliberately hidden his Scottish accent.¹² However, his ministerial experience was evident as he prepared them for the ministry, and he would point out the difficulties of the work: from the work of the ministry; from the opposition of enemies; from the professors of religion; from friends; from personal enemies and from self.¹³

All aspects of their lives had to be regulated in such a way as to honour God and promote the gospel, even the dress of the students. He advised them: to guard against extremes; dress should be regulated to the place in which the minister lives; it should be suitable to station; suitable to years and it should not be mean.¹⁴

The students stayed in Gosport and district and with members of the chapel if at all possible. Consequently, they were separated from each other for some time during the week. Bogue overcame this problem in two ways. First of all, he held prayer meetings for students and tutors. This he did regularly, and occasionally, especially at the beginning of a new term, devoted a whole morning to prayer and 'on such occasions the awe of the divine presence has been very powerfully felt, and the most devout and profitable intercourse has been maintained between the tutor and the students, as well as between them all and God'.¹⁵

Missionary Emphasis

From the very beginning of his ministry David Bogue was outward looking in terms of preaching the gospel. He thought of the academy as an instrument of evangelism and it is no surprise that he was a co-founder of the Missionary Society in 1795. The new missionary emphasis in the academy from 1800 gave him a wider sphere of activity. In Hampshire itself there was a great need to visit declining causes and pioneer work in rural areas. A less experienced student would be sent out with a more experienced person, and they would report on their work to the tutor.¹⁶ There was a measure of success with the pioneering work and a number of churches were planted.

Bogue worked with others in the county, especially John Griffin, and the two men, their congregations and the students gave themselves to the work of evangelism whole-heartedly. For one period during 1797 David Bogue was ill in bed but took the opportunity to draw up a plan for the propagation of the gospel in Hampshire. It was due to the providence of God that he was still in Gosport, for a year earlier he had discussed with Haldane the possibility of going to India. They were prevented from going there and Haldane was led to Geneva, and Bogue stayed in Gosport. His plan for the county was accepted by others and the students became a part of this more organised work. In 1814 the Hampshire Association took another step forward when it decided to prepare preachers to work in the county. Members of the association were to look out for single men, under thirty years of age, those who were men of piety, of good natural powers, prudent, of a public spirit, able to persevere, apt to teach, and capable of labour and study. Such men would enter the academy at Gosport for six months; 'Their education is generously offered by Mr Bogue to be given them free of expense.'¹⁷

Hampshire, however, was only part of his parish, and Bogue travelled in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France. The course in the academy included a study of a number of countries and their languages. Bogue wanted to see as many as possible going overseas, but he did not want to see them going unprepared.¹⁸ Dealing with the 'Office and Qualifications', he had five

main points to make and then dealt with each one in fair detail: 'Office and Qualifications', he had five main points to make and then dealt with each one in five main points to make and then dealt with each one in fair detail:

Natural Qualifications (eg good temper)

Knowledge (of doctrine, of the heart, of customs)

Spiritual Disposition (10 examples, eg peculiar affection for souls)

Generous, liberal principles

Continued aims and ends.¹⁹

It was made quite clear to the students that there was no short cut as far as reaching the natives of a country was concerned. Bogue believed that the gift of 'tongues' had ceased and, therefore, there was need to work at languages. He knew of the work of David Brainard and urged the students to read his life story, but in terms of preaching he was, according to Bogue, the exception.

The work was spiritual although some attention had to be given to the natural and cultural needs of the people. The main task, however, was **to win men for Christ**. Bogue advised the future missionaries concerning preparing a sermon: let a pagan be before you; write as you would speak to him and represent to yourself how Paul would have spoken to him.²⁰ Nothing should stand between them and the work of rescuing perishing souls.

Bogue kept reports of the students and it is interesting to find references to well known missionaries. Most of the early missionaries from Wales went to Gosport, including the first two missionaries to Madagascar, David Jones and Thomas Bevan. William Milne went there too and Bogue reported concerning him, 'designed to assist Mr Morrison in China, is well qualified for that arduous task'. He commented on John Le Brun, 'a peculiarly zealous young man, and likely to be useful in a situation where the French language is spoken'. C Frey went to the academy and he did much to reach the Jews with the gospel — a work which was very close to Bogue's heart.²¹

Vision

The tutor at Gosport was absolutely convinced of the inspiration of Scripture and the power of the gospel. He was convinced that the gospel would triumph, and he was taken up with the glory of the latter days. During one period in his ministry he preached a series of twenty sermons on the millennium, that period of unusual blessing which would precede Christ's coming in glory. Bogue himself says, 'one effect of these predictions on every true disciple of Jesus is to invigorate his zeal in promoting the christian religion.'²² He saw his work in an **eschatological setting**. Bogue saw his work in this way because of the nature of Christ's work on the cross. He died to save his own, but they were to be called in time. The Lord Jesus Christ was to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. The soteriological and eschatological aspects meet in Christ.²³

Bogue was wise enough to see that what the academy was doing was a part of what God has in mind for the world. Consequently he was flexible, always ready to find new ways for the academy to reach out to others. It never became a storehouse where knowledge was heaped up, but a channel of blessing to

those in need. As he saw that need Bogue never deviated from making preaching central in the work of the academy and the church. The whole curriculum was related to preaching. The tutor himself was an eminent example of zeal and industry and in this context was referred to as an Origen. Frequently Bogue would say that the Christian's rest is in heaven.

There were criticisms of Bogue and the academy. John Angell James believed that students were sent out to preach at too young an age. Because of the range of ability the more able tended to be neglected. Although 'missionary aspects' were introduced they were not developed as fully as possible and the work could have been more effective if Bogue had shared the work with others.

It is amazing, however, that Bogue had such a vision of the great work from that small, ill-equipped chapel vestry. Bogue gave himself to the work and the students, and most of them loved and even adored their tutor. This is just one of many tributes to the work at Gosport: 'No one could leave Gosport without a deep impression of the grandeur and responsibility of the ministry and an awful anticipation of the day when each shepherd of souls must render up his account to the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep'.²⁴

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Book Reviews

According to Luke

David Gooding

IVP 1987

362pp (paperback) £5.95

Possibly the reader has exactly the same mental reaction as the reviewer when the term 'Form Criticism' is mentioned. Shutters fall across the mind to protect it from the often sterile and seemingly worthless debates that characterise text-book student days. To add to the description, names such as Thucydides and Aristotle may even produce emotional tensions to the point of discomfort!

Yet these are amongst the terms which David Gooding uses as he tries to explain the principles of his exegesis in this book. There is a danger that the introduction could put some readers off the rest of the work, and if it does, it will be a very great pity.

David Gooding is former Professor of New Testament Greek at Queens University Belfast and brings to his commentary on Luke a method that very much reflects that of R H Lightfoot's commentary on St John. It is neither an approach which gets bogged down unnecessarily with textual detail, nor a verse by verse

exposition, but concentrates on the themes, movements and goals of the writer.

To achieve his analysis, Professor Gooding uses the methodology of Form Criticism. It must be emphasised that having explained and justified his use of this approach it has little prominence in the text of the commentary. Like a steel girder giving strength to a concrete pillar, so the method is buried away in the exposition. It is only noticed when the author deliberately reminds the reader of its presence.

To identify the movements of the arguments and events, Professor Gooding divides Luke into two parts. The Coming, 1—9:50 and The Going, 9:51—24:53. Each part is further subdivided into five divisions. In these divisions such exciting themes as 'Christ's way with sinners', 'Christ and the goal of redemption' and 'Preparing to reign with Christ' are explored.

The commentary is liberally scattered with charts which are inserted into each of the ten subdivisions to make sure the reader can see the overall theme of the division and how it links in with the whole.

Perhaps one note of caution might be

sounded; there might be a danger of assuming that the pattern which is presented is part of the inspired Gospel itself. This would be an unfortunate trap to fall into as there are parts of the Gospel that could have a different interpretation or perspective and possibly be even more convincing than that suggested by Professor Gooding.

The commentary ought to be read by Bible Class leaders and lay preachers through to pastors and academics to remind them of the richness and fulness of the love of Christ. May it become a model for future generations to copy in how to handle the scriptures.

Colossians and Philemon

N T Wright

Tyndale N T Comm

IVP 1987

192pp (paperback) £5.95

Tom Wright is a young Anglican theologian. The distinctive feature of his commentary is that he challenges the long accepted position that the Colossian heresy is the product of a range of Oriental/Greek religious and philosophical concepts. Most commentaries over the past hundred years have sought to establish the precise nature of the heresy and have assumed the truth of the accepted origin.

Like a breath of fresh air Tom Wright challenges this long held position. He demonstrates the weakness of the argument which has been long accepted and proceeds to place the Colossian letter into the same arena as that of Galatians and Corinthians. He claims that the problem is due to the presence of Judaisers who are trying to entice the

young Colossian converts into the legalistic and ritualistic demands of Judaism. Wright argues that the master stroke in Paul's argument is that he warns ex-pagans against Judaism by portraying Judaism itself as if it were just another pagan religion (p.24, see also p.101). In other words, Paul refused to concede any divine origin to Judaism as it had betrayed the principles of the Old Testament revelation.

Tom Wright has some very useful insights for the preacher. Commenting on Chapter 1:5 he says, 'The gospel, for Paul, is an announcement, a proclamation whose importance lies in the truth of its content. It is not, primarily, either an invitation or a technique for changing peoples lives. It is a command to be obeyed and a power to let loose in the world (cf Rom 1:16-17) which cannot be reduced to terms of the persuasiveness or even the conviction of the messenger' (p.52). Another of his helpful statements is, 'their knowledge of God and their thanksgiving to him is to be Christ-shaped' (p.56). Many other such truths throughout the book encourage the preacher in his task and clarify the issues he has to deal with.

Wright argues for the unity of 1:15 to 2:10. He demonstrates how Paul sees Christology to be at the heart of an adequate response to pagan seduction. It is who Christ is and what he has done that demolishes the appeal of man-made religion, whether they be Jewish or Hellenistically orientated. Commenting on 2:9, 'have been given fulness in Christ', Wright says, 'The parallels in Ephesians (1:23; 3:19) suggest the

meaning that God intends to flood the lives of men and women, and ultimately the whole creation, with his own love, power and richness, and that he has already begun to put this plan into effect through Christ and by his Spirit. That is the Colossian's inheritance in Christ and they can want nothing more from any other source'.

Wright also claims that the traditional view of Paul's method, that is, first to lay out all of his theological arguments as his foundation in the first part of the epistle and then to make his practical application, is incorrect. He claims there is a much closer interaction between doctrine and practice: more of a quantum interaction. Paul's great difficulty is to resist the significance of a truth and so he immediately launches into its application. Thus Wright argues for a more dynamic flow of argument, which excites the doctrine through its more instantaneous application.

Tom Wright's commentary is full of refreshing theological and practical insights which stirred my mind with some of the excitement its author obviously feels. He makes valuable application to the twentieth century situation in both church, home and private life.

What of the commentary's weaknesses? I found the inevitable woolliness over his dealing with baptism. I felt it was to some extent patronising. I also felt that, in his eagerness to demonstrate the Judaistic background to the Colossian heresy, he spent, for the size of the work, rather a lot of time on related issues to support his thesis. What he says in these related issues is often excellent but it is a pity he did not give the

same energy or space to exploring aspects of Christ's work in depth which the epistle so readily lends itself to. Finally, I was left uneasy with the apparent suggestion that hell was possibly nothing more than the total demoralization of the sinner, such as the total loss of self respect (pp135-136).

I found the commentary one that excited my mind and left me wanting to preach on the marvellous themes in Colossians, and that is what I look for in a commentary.

The Rev Tom Holland BD is pastor of Grange Baptist Church, Letchworth.

Old Testament

Numbers

*B Maarsingh
Eerdmans, 1987
122pp £6.50*

A simple, unadorned and fairly conservative explanation of the book of Numbers in the Text and Interpretation series. The volume shows, perhaps, rather less interest in the literary and theological structure of the book than might be expected in a modern commentary. A useful addition to the growing literature on a much neglected Bible book. However, Wenham remains the best all-round work especially for preachers.

The Covenants of Promise

*Thomas Edward McComiskey
IVP, 1987
259pp (paperback) £7.50*

The relationship between biblical

theology and reformed dogmatics has had its tense moments. In particular, biblical theology has been seen as a challenge to some of the fundamental tenets of covenant theology. This volume is an attempt to show that, while biblical theology demands some refinements be made to covenant theology, the latter has a secure biblical foundation.

Basic to McComiskey's thesis is his assertion that we can distinguish between two types of covenants in the Bible: the promissory and the administrative. The former is eternally valid, the latter administrate the promise in a variety of historical contexts and show some diversity. The promise is rooted in God's words to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3 etc.) and the antecedent word in Genesis 3:15 (where the singular 'seed' is regarded as a collective). It is appropriately called a covenant in view of the flexible usage of the word *BERITH* in the Bible. The covenant of circumcision, law and even the new covenant are administrations of the one eternal promise. He emphasises, then, that the law is a response to promise: it is not an impediment to the unity of the covenants. The Bible is opposed to legalism not law.

The author seeks to interact with some of the major issues that this raises, especially with covenant theology in mind. He concludes that it is best, with Murray, to view God's dealings with our primal ancestor as the 'Adamic Administration' and that it is wrong to view the 'covenant of works' as an offer of life but rather as maintaining an already existing relationship: 'the prospect of death, not life, was set before Adam' (p218). Finally, he concludes with

some suggestions on preaching from the Old Testament: 'The Old Testament must be viewed within the grid of the new covenant. The preacher will not want for Old Testament materials if he does this' (p231).

This is a valuable book which will be welcomed by both biblical and dogmatic theologians. Helpfully, it offers a basis for fruitful interaction. It is clearly and simply written.

New Bible Atlas

J J Bimson et al
IVP/Lion, 1985
128pp £9.95

A splendid atlas. It provides many attractive maps and some useful photographic illustrations to accompany every period and major event of the Bible. A conservative commentary which is both brief and yet comprehensive and interesting accompanies the maps. Of atlases recently published this is the best value for money, especially to the Old Testament student. If you want an atlas buy this one!

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