

# Foundations

**Issue No.22    Spring 1989**

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The authors' personal views are not necessarily endorsed by all the churches of the BEC.

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# Foundations

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**A Theological Journal  
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Not Being Nice  
The Gospel of the Kingdom  
Gospel Universalism  
The Just War  
The Nuclear Threat

**foundations**



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**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

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'**The Importance of Not Being Nice**' is the title of our opening article by the Rev Neil Richards. He reminds us, 'There are times when for the sake of the gospel and for the cause of truth, Christians must be narrow and exclusive; fierce in their resistance to error, and altogether "earnest contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints"'. In this article the author comments pertinently on a recent book, **ESSENTIALS, A LIBERAL-EVANGELICAL DIALOGUE**, written by David L Edwards and John R Stott.

Principal A C Boyd provides our Exegesis article on '**The Gospel of the Kingdom**' from Matthew 4:23. This is an appropriate place for me to convey the prayerful good wishes of the Editorial Board and readers of **Foundations** to Mr Boyd on his recent appointment as Principal of the Free Church College, Edinburgh. We are sorry, however, that these added responsibilities have compelled Principal Boyd to stand down from our Editorial Board but we hope he will have time to write for us in the future.

A significant and worthwhile Study Conference was held by the BEC in March 1989 at High Leigh on the crucial theme of '**The Gospel and the World**'. The Rev Keith Walker has summarized the five Conference papers for us and I am sure that many will find the consideration of pluralism and universalism both stimulating and informative.

We also have a major article by Dr David Sullivan on '**Christianity and the Idea of a Just War**'. Dr Sullivan concludes that in order to avoid even greater evils, some wars have to be fought and can be regarded as just. However, 'fighting in such wars may bring moral dilemmas which cannot be resolved without incurring guilt, because all wars ... are fought by sinful men in a sinful world.'

Complementing this, we are also including an article on '**The Nuclear Threat**' which uses Biblical principles to raise questions Christians today cannot afford to ignore. It is the first published form of an address given by Pastor Robin Dowling and Dr Nigel Halliday.

Reviews of some recent Banner of Truth publications complete this issue of the journal. If you enjoy reading **Foundations** and find the articles helpful, why not encourage your friends to subscribe?

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# The Importance of Not Being Nice

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*Neil Richards*

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A desire to get away from a negative, confrontational image has sometimes led evangelicals to be comprehensive where they should be exclusive; irenic where they ought to be polemic; and diplomatic where they ought to be bold and unyielding. That is the main thesis of this article. It is not always a virtue to be nice. There are times when for the sake of the gospel and for the cause of truth Christians must be narrow and exclusive; fierce in their resistance to error and altogether 'earnest contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints'.

All this was highlighted in a book published last year entitled 'ESSENTIALS — A LIBERAL-EVANGELICAL DIALOGUE', by David Edwards and John Stott. David Edwards, Provost of Southwark and a liberal, presents an appreciation and a critique of the published works of John Stott, Rector Emeritus of All Souls, Langham Place and an evangelical, who then responds more briefly. The subjects dealt with include the Authority of Scripture; the Atonement; the Miracles and Resurrection of Christ; Christian Morality and Eschatology. The book has been widely reviewed in the evangelical press and all are agreed that Stott's response is just what we have come to expect from him — strong in its commitment to Scripture, crystal clear in its perception and warmly evangelical in its spirit. There are disappointments, the most serious of which is his strongly argued case for the annihilation of the wicked and his agnosticism over the plight of those who have never heard the gospel. There are times when he concedes too much to science — for example over the creation of man, and too much to cultural considerations — for example, in the case of women taking a teaching and leadership role in the church. However, in spite of these reservations I go along with the reviewer who wrote, 'On the whole John Stott's contribution is a masterly restatement of many gospel essentials.'<sup>1</sup>

## **How serious are the differences between evangelicalism and liberalism?<sup>2</sup>**

David Edwards, himself a moderate liberal, has this to say:

'Yes, a great sacrifice will be required, for the ideas which I shall criticise are very dear to many conservatives. I shall be asking whether the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are infallible or inerrant; whether Christ died in order to propitiate the wrath of God by enduring as a substitute for us the punishment we deserved; whether in order to believe in God as a Christian it is necessary to believe in all the miracles reported in the Bible; whether the Bible authoritatively offers us detailed teaching about our behaviour or about the future; and whether it is necessary to respond to the Christian gospel before death in order to be saved by God. That is asking a lot!' (p31).

It certainly is. At the heart of liberalism lies the refusal to submit to the authority of Scripture. Stott quotes Luther's words to Erasmus, 'The difference between you

and me, Erasmus, is that you sit above Scripture and judge it, while I sit under Scripture and let it judge me.' Every issue that Edwards takes up confirms this. The evangelical view of the Cross as Sacrifice, Substitution and Propitiation is rejected as being unbiblical and uncommunicable to modern man; and it is this second consideration that is most weighty in Edwards' mind. The final authority is *our* sense of the meaningfulness or otherwise of any particular teaching — whether it agrees with our sense of justice or has any meaningful place in our experience. The miracles of Jesus are dealt with in the same way. They are rejected because they are unacceptable to the modern mind. For the same reason Edwards regards the Virgin Birth as 'probably fictional'. Even in the case of the bodily Resurrection of Christ which Edwards accepts (with 'much puzzlement and doubt'), the reason for acceptance is not the authority and trustworthiness of the Scripture record, but his own judgement of that event. Moreover he does not regard belief in the empty tomb as an essential part of the Christian faith — all that is essential is to believe that Christ lives on in the hearts of believers. When we come to issues of Christian morality we find Edwards passing moral judgement on the judicial acts of God, ie in the Flood and in the slaughter of the Canaanites. Our Lord's teaching is not accepted as permanent moral legislation. 'Jesus was not a legislator but a poet' who 'taught by vision and not by law'. Moreover His teaching reflected the prevailing culture of the society in which He lived. All this enables Edwards to give to our Lord's moral teaching as much, or as little, authority as he chooses to give it.

There is nothing new here. It is the old spirit of liberalism against which Gresham Machen wrote over 60 years ago.<sup>3</sup> Edwards simply reminds us how far apart liberalism and Christianity are. They are profoundly and radically different. Their location of authority is different. Their gospel is different. All this appears clearly enough in this book. The question is, **how are we to respond to liberalism?** It is interesting to compare Stott's response with that of Machen — they are very different. Machen saw liberalism as 'the chief modern rival of Christianity ... An examination of the teachings of liberalism in comparison with those of Christianity will show that at every point the two movements are in direct opposition.'<sup>4</sup> He wrote his book with the aim of showing his readers what is at stake in this controversy. 'If Christianity, in its historic acceptance, is really to be abandoned, it is at least advisable that men should know what they are giving up and what they are putting in its place.'<sup>5</sup> The book is a first-class defence of historic Christianity. Machen saw no place for liberalism in the Church of Jesus Christ. The two could not live together; there was a mutual antagonism. Stott's approach is essentially different. To him liberalism is a form of Christianity, albeit a defective form. So whilst Stott is prepared to defend the evangelical faith — and I do not question his sincerity and zeal for a moment — he is willing for evangelicalism and liberalism to co-exist, and even to treat such a staunch proponent of liberalism as David Edwards with evident love and fraternal regard. Bear in mind that Edwards is not a novice who has temporarily been blown off course. He is a false teacher who is seeking to draw others from the true gospel. We must, of course, love our enemies, even those who are the enemies of the Cross, but there is a difference between the way we show our love to our enemies and the way we show our love to our brothers

in Christ. Fraternal regard and warmth are not for those who proclaim another gospel.

There is another factor which heightens the seriousness of these issues, and that is that **the fruit of liberalism can now be clearly seen**. This teaching has been at work in the church for a hundred years or more. C H Spurgeon faced it in the 'Downgrade Controversy'. As long ago as 1887 he wrote,

'The house is being robbed, its very walls are being digged down, but the good people who are in bed are too fond of the warmth, and too much afraid of getting broken heads, to go downstairs and meet the burglars ... Inspiration and speculation cannot long abide in peace. Compromise there can be none. We cannot hold the inspiration of the Word, and yet reject it; we cannot believe in the atonement and deny it; we cannot hold the doctrine of the fall and yet talk of the evolution of spiritual life from human nature; we cannot recognise the punishment of the impenitent and yet indulge the 'larger hope'. One way or the other we must go. Decision is the virtue of the hour.'

The years have passed and the church has reaped the fruit of liberalism; the long steep decline in church attendance; the widespread ignorance of the true gospel; the unbelief and apostasy of many of the church leaders; the deep moral and spiritual confusion in the church; the loss of authority; and the withdrawal of the Spirit's power. We cannot say, as men did in the 19th century, 'We can take in these new enlightened views of Scripture and yet hold on to the old evangelical faith and life.' We know that is not true.

**What guidance does the Scripture itself give us** regarding our attitude to liberalism? It certainly is a matter with which Scripture deals at length. Most of the Epistles were written, at least in part, to combat various forms of false teaching which troubled the young churches. The test to be applied to all teaching was apostolicity. The Apostles' ministry was a continuation and a completion of the ministry of Christ. They taught with His authority. They had no hesitation in requiring the churches to obey their teaching, and viewed any departure from the truth as something very serious and with grave consequences.

**They proclaimed only one gospel.** The New Testament does not countenance for a single moment the idea of a plurality of gospels, each one as valid as the other (Gal 1:6-9). The gospel in the New Testament is a recognisable defined entity which can be stated plainly in propositions of truth. Paul calls it 'a pattern of sound words' (2 Tim 1:13); the idea is of a standard of truth. In the following verse he refers to the gospel as 'the good deposit' which has been entrusted to us. The gospel is a priceless treasure which God has deposited with His church and which we are to 'guard' tenaciously against all thieves and robbers. Again, Jude exhorts his readers to 'contend for the faith that was once entrusted to the saints' (Jude v 3). Liberalism is an assault on the gospel. Where liberalism has triumphed the gospel has perished. It has been replaced by another gospel which is really no gospel at all. They are as mutually exclusive as light and darkness.

**The Apostolic approach to error** was complex because it took account of different degrees of error and the different circumstances of those who fell into error. A comprehensive paper was given at the 1985 BEC Study Conference by the Rev R

J Sheehan.<sup>7</sup> He set out several categories of error and the different ways in which the Apostles dealt with them. For example, there are the sincerely ignorant who simply need to be more fully taught in God's truth. Or again, there are Christians who have been deceived and led astray by false teachers. The Galatian letter deals with this situation. The question is, where does David Edwards fit in to the Apostolic response to error? Clearly he does not belong to the sincerely ignorant or even to those who have been deceived by false teachers. The relevant N T passages are therefore those that deal with false teachers such as the Judaisers. Paul and Barnabas were confronted by these men at Antioch (Acts 15), and came into 'sharp dispute and debate with them'. But it did not end there. Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to discuss the matter with the Apostles and elders, who entirely supported the stand they made. A letter was then sent to the church at Antioch conveying their conclusion and making it clear that these Judaisers were without Apostolic authority. The whole issue was handled with the utmost seriousness and clarity. The sad fact is that the Judaisers refused to submit themselves to the Apostolic doctrine and continued to trouble the church with their heresies. Therefore the Epistles contain a number of directions to the churches as to how to respond to false teachers. The churches were urged to be watchful and to be on their guard. (Rom 16:17; Phil 3:2; 2 John 7:8)

Those who are elders and who teach the church must, whilst avoiding futile arguments, set the truth before those who oppose them in the hope that God may grant them repentance and deliver them from the snare of the devil. Elders must not be quarrelsome but forbearing and gentle in their dealings with those who fall into error (2 Tim 2:23-26). However, it is noticeable that other passages are more severe. In the letters to the seven churches (Rev 2 and 3) the Lord commends Ephesus because it would not tolerate false teaching. The language of Galatians is most severe: 'If anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned' (Gal 1:9). And in Romans Paul urges the church to 'watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.' (Rom 16:17) In the same way, writing to Titus, Paul instructs him to warn those who are divisive, once and then twice, and then have nothing more to do with them. (Titus 3:10,11)

All this leaves us in no doubt that **the N T expects the leaders of the churches and the members to take a very clear stand against false teaching.** And when due allowance has been made for the different degrees of error and the varying circumstances, liberalism represents a well-established, highly dangerous and destructive attack on the Apostolic gospel; and those who are its established teachers are not to be tolerated in the church. It must be remembered that David Edwards is not simply a private member of the church but a teacher and a leader. It is John Stott's acceptance of him as such that is so disturbing. The question is not whether David Edwards is a Christian, but whether he has any right to be a minister in the Christian church or any claim to that respect and fraternal regard that is due to a gospel minister. When the members of our churches see that these men are accepted in a general atmosphere of friendship and fellowship they must conclude that the differences between liberalism and evangelicalism cannot be too



great. The failure to take error seriously is one of the saddest features of the present time. How different it all is from the attitude we find in John when he wrote, 'If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.' (2 John vv 10,11). Or in Paul in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders when he warned them that after his departure 'grievous wolves' would enter in among them 'not sparing the flock' (Acts 20:28).

Finally, **all this has a bearing on the present church situation** and in particular on John Stott's own ecclesiastical position. Until the 1960's evangelical Anglicans were uncomfortable with their position in the Church of England. They recognised that their true unity and fraternity lay with other evangelicals within and without Anglicanism. But in the 1960's a change took place; that sense of unease was replaced by a sense of belonging and involvement.<sup>8</sup> One of the leading figures in those days was John Stott. It is interesting to notice in 'ESSENTIALS' that John Stott's definition of 'fundamentalism', from which he seeks to disassociate himself, includes this point, 'a separatist ecclesiology, together with a blanket repudiation of the Ecumenical Movement and the World Council of Churches'. Is that inconsistent with historic evangelicalism? Surely not. What is inconsistent is Stott's inclusivism.

There is much about 'ESSENTIALS' that causes us to fear, and I believe these are apostolic fears.

'But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.' (2 Cor 11:3,4)

*Rev Neil C Richards is minister of Wheelock Heath Baptist Church, Winterley.*

## References

1. Review by Rev R Burrows in CHURCHMAN, vol 102, no 3
2. Burrows, op cit does draw attention to this. 'Liberalism is seen as being destructive to the Gospel. But the book's courteous and gentlemanly tone hides the enormity of the issue.'
3. CHRISTIANITY AND LIBERALISM, 1923
4. J Gresham Machen in a biographical Memoir NED B STONEHOUSE, p 342
5. CHRISTIANITY AND LIBERALISM
6. THE FORGOTTEN SPURGEON, Iain Murray, p 143
7. See a review of this Conference in FOUNDATIONS Issue 15
8. This change was emphasised in the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele in 1967. See the official Statement, entitled KEELE '67.

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# Exegesis 8: The Gospel of the Kingdom

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*Archie Boyd*

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*There is one gospel in all Scripture and the heart of that gospel is Christ as the Scriptures reveal him. This article is an extract from Principal Boyd's paper on 'The Content of the Gospel' given at the BEC Study Conference in 1987. By considering the text of **Matthew 4:23** it demonstrates the relationship between the gospel and the kingdom.*

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In this verse Jesus' ministry in Galilee is described as 'teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom'. Again and again throughout the Synoptic Gospels Jesus' preaching is described in these terms, e.g. Matthew 9:35 and Luke 8:1. (Sometimes the kingdom is referred to as kingdom of God, sometimes kingdom of Heaven. There is no ground for making a distinction in meaning between these two descriptions). In Luke 4:43 Jesus is recorded as saying 'It is necessary for me to preach the kingdom of God in other villages also for this purpose was I sent.' The parabolic teaching which accounts for so much of his public preaching is regularly introduced by some such phrase as, 'The kingdom of heaven is like...'. When we compare the accounts of Jesus' own explanation of the key parable of the sower given in Luke and Matthew we find that the word of God (Luke 8:11) is equivalent to the word of the kingdom (Matthew 13:18).

In Acts, Luke is telling us that in the period between the resurrection and ascension Jesus is still speaking to his disciples 'about the kingdom of God' (Acts 1:3). Philip's preaching in Samaria is described as 'preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ' (Acts 8:12). It has also to be noted that although Paul does not in his Epistles use the terms 'kingdom of God' or 'kingdom of heaven', Luke describes Paul's three-month ministry in the Synagogue at Ephesus in terms of 'arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God' (Acts 19:8 NIV). Twice over in Acts 28, verse 23 and verse 31, Luke describes Paul's ministry in Rome in similar terms. Nor can it be concluded that this description of Paul's preaching is relevant only when Paul is addressing Jews. We would rightly conclude in the light of his own application of the Isaiah prophecy, recorded in verses 26-28, that during these two years his hearers were largely Gentile. And with reference to the ministry at Ephesus we have his own testimony when later he speaks to the Ephesian elders at Miletus and reminds them of his ministry to both Jews and Greeks. This ministry he describes first as a call 'to repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21) and then as 'preaching the kingdom'. Here in Acts we have witness from both Luke and Paul himself that his gospel was the gospel of the kingdom just as Christ's was. And although Paul in his Epistles, when he describes his gospel, does not use the synoptic kingdom terminology we, in the light of the statements in Acts, are justified in under-

standing him as setting forth the same gospel of the kingdom as we find in Jesus<sup>7</sup> (and John the Baptist's and Philip's) preaching.

We see therefore that throughout the New Testament the gospel is presented as **the gospel of the kingdom**. What is the significance of this description?

When John as Jesus' forerunner came calling for repentance because the kingdom of God had come near (Matthew 3:2) and when Jesus himself takes up the same message (Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:14,15), and subsequently sends out the twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to declare the same message (Matthew 10:7), they were obviously using language that had some meaning for their hearers. Their contemporaries to whom they spoke had some expectation of a kingdom. That expectation may have taken a variety of forms due to a whole range of different influences. The expectations may have been wrong in all sorts of ways. But Jesus was confirming that it was not wrong to expect a kingdom. Further, he was saying that the kingdom had drawn near, or even, had come, and had drawn near or come in such a way that the appropriate response was repentance and belief, and that that was his gospel. When, subsequent to his resurrection and in the light of his exaltation, Jesus commissioned his disciples to go, not just to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but unto all the world it was with the same gospel.

The description of the gospel as the gospel of the kingdom is the most comprehensive description we have. It says so much. **Everything else that we may point to in Scripture as belonging to the content of the gospel is comprehended in this description.** For that reason we can here do little more than list some main points.

When we go back to Jesus' first preaching the gospel of the kingdom we hear him say, 'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has drawn near (or has come)' (Mark 1:15). Here we are deliberately refusing to be dogmatic about the translation of '*engiken*'. If to translate it as 'has come' bound one to a concept that left no room for any future coming we would, of course, have to reject it as flying in the face of the clear teaching of other Scriptures: but it does not. 'Has drawn near' has much to commend it in the light of the sense the verb '*engizo*' regularly has. But if that translation was used to undermine the idea of what has actually come into being we would have to protest. That '*engiken*' here is accompanied (in a way in which it is not in John's proclamation in Matthew 3:2) by *peplerotai* is not to be overlooked. Together they speak of actual fulfilment, accomplished reality.

### **Fulfilment**

Fulfilment here indicates the coming to pass of what God promised. This idea of fulfilment as a present reality runs all through the New Testament. The fulfilment may have been very different from what many of the Jewish people were looking for. It may even have puzzled John the Baptist as it ran its course, or, to John, seemed not to run the expected course. But Jesus' answer to John and his words to the crowds about John and what was happening since John's ministry had ended, only emphasise the fulfilment that has actually taken place.

### **Theocentric**

Jesus' words emphasise that it is God who is at work. The kingdom is what God himself has done. It is the fulfilment of prophecy such as Isaiah 64:1.

## **Manifestation of God's Power, the Exercise of God's Authority and Rule**

It is true that Scripture does encourage us to think of the kingdom in terms of a state that can be entered into, in terms of a possession to be enjoyed, even in terms of a spatial, material realm. Yet in the primary sense the kingdom of God is the divine kingly dominion exercising itself. Jesus' own explanation of the significance of his casting out demons (Matthew 12:28, Mark 3:27, Luke 11:20) is only one of the ways in which Jesus makes this clear. It is the truth Paul highlights when he says, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God to salvation' (Romans 1:16) and when in the next verse he says that 'in it the righteousness of God is revealed.' Paul's use of the verb *'apokalupto* here as elsewhere means not just the bringing into view, but rather the effective, mighty demonstration in action.

## **The Kingdom Come in the Person of Jesus as the Messiah**

When John the Baptist came preaching that the kingdom had drawn near he pointed away from himself (Matthew 3:11, John 1:19-27, 29-33). When Jesus comes speaking about the kingdom as having come he points to himself (Matthew 12:28, Luke 11:20). The meaning of the kingdom of God in Jesus' preaching cannot be answered without reference to the question, Who is Jesus? It is in this light that we are to understand Jesus' words to the disciples in answer to their question about his teaching in parables. When he said 'To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God' (Luke 8:10, cf Mark 4:10) Jesus was not speaking about anything other than the fact that they had been given to recognise who he himself was and had received him. Not matter what was lacking in their understanding and faith, they had come to know who he was. He himself is the 'mystery' — the truth of God now revealed and in action. In exactly the same vein Paul writes in Colossians 2:2. In the same way we are to understand Galatians 1:11. Paul is not just saying that he received his gospel by a revelation from Jesus Christ but through Jesus Christ being revealed to him (cf verse 16). The gospel is the gospel of the glory of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:4.

It is true that Jesus did not use the designation 'the Christ' of himself during his earthly ministry and forbade others to proclaim him by this term. He had reasons for so doing, based partly, at least, on false conceptions of the Messiah. But there is absolutely no doubt he saw himself as the Messiah and led his disciples to confess him as such and accepted that confession (Matthew 16:16). **It is because he is the Messiah that the kingdom has come.** The New Testament speaks with one voice with the Old in that the coming of the Messiah is essential to the kingdom of God. The concepts of Kingdom of God and Messiah are inseparable. So much of the contents of the early chapters of Luke make this so very clear and the identity is reaffirmed throughout the New Testament as it takes up and expounds the Old.

## **Two-Fold Significance**

Throughout the preaching of the prophets of the old dispensation the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the kingdom, has a two-fold significance. Isaiah 61, from which Jesus read and which he declared fulfilled in his preaching in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), is typical. The year of the Lord's favour is the day of vengeance of our God. The same two-fold note is found in John the Baptist's preaching (Matthew 3:11-12). In the light of the totality of John's testimony to Jesus his reference

to Jesus baptising with 'fire' is not to be taken as explicatory of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, but as a prediction of judgment. In Matthew 3, verse 12 is to be taken as indicating what the baptism with fire involves. This two-fold aspect of the coming of the kingdom is seen in Jesus' ministry. It is true that judgment is not immediately or finally executed. That caused problems for John, as we have seen. To others too it seemed inconceivable that the kingdom could in any sense have come before the great judgment. But the element of judgment is already clearly there in Jesus' ministry. The demons were aware of that. 'Are you come before the time to destroy us?', they asked. The intensity of Satan's attacks on Jesus is to be understood in the light of his knowing that failure to tempt Jesus away from obedience meant judgment for him. Jesus' words in John 12:31 are highly important.

Jesus' words and actions demonstrate that the coming of the kingdom in him brings blessing. The Son of Man (completely identified with the Messiah in Jesus' teaching) has power 'on earth' here and now to forgive sin (Mark 2:10). As Jesus sends back the messengers sent by John to report to John what they had seen and heard John is having his attention focussed on the present blessing of the kingdom. At the same time John is reminded of the enigma that is the coming of the kingdom in Jesus (Luke 7:23). To all sorts of people Jesus is a stumbling-block. To some at one time because he did not bring judgment. Later to others because of the judgment demonstrated in himself. The coming of the kingdom in the person of Jesus throws men and demons into crises. Its coming marks the fulfilment of the promises of salvation. It also means judgment for all who are the enemies of the king; for Satan and for all who belong to him. It calls for decision, for repentance and faith.

### **Present and Future**

Much of what we have already referred to indicates that with Jesus' coming the kingdom is a present reality. But is not a perfected reality. Perfection lies in the future. Even between the period of Christ's earthly ministry and the sending out of the Apostles into all the world after Pentecost there is development. John pointed to Jesus not only as the one who was baptised with the Holy Spirit but as the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit (John 1:32). When the risen, exalted Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit John's prediction is fulfilled and with that there is a further stage of development of the kingdom. The disciples are equipped to take the gospel of the kingdom into all the world. Still the consummation lies in the future.

In all sorts of ways the coming perfection of the kingdom is referred to in the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles. In direct prediction (e.g. Matthew 7:21, 24:30-31, 25:31, Luke 13:22-30, 17:20-24) and by use of parables (Matthew 13:24-30, Matthew 13:47-50) Jesus points to the consummation. What Jesus points to in such sayings is taken up by the Apostles. Its certainty is the basis of exhortation to faithful service, perseverance, and endurance (1 Timothy 6:14, 1 Peter 1:3-6, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10, Titus 2:13).

When all the predictions and descriptions of the future manifestation and consummation of the kingdom are studied we find that there is nothing essentially

new. It is all based on, and is the outcome and the full flourishing of, what has already been brought into being with the kingdom as already manifest in the coming, the life, the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It is highly significant that the same term '*epiphaneia*' is used of what we call 'the first coming' and 'the second coming' of Christ (2 Timothy 1:10 and 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 4:1,8, Titus 2:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:8 respectively). **It is more accurate to speak of one coming in two stages.** As the kingdom was manifest when Christ came to earth, so its consummation comes with the revelation — revelation in the sense of active demonstration — of his glory at the end of time. Then the two-fold aspect of the kingdom, salvation and judgment will have their final manifestation (John 5:27-29, Romans 16:20, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). The reference in John 5 speaks of the resurrection of good and evil. The predictions of the future gave us no detail about the nature of the resurrection bodies of those outside Christ, but again and again the importance of the resurrection bodies of the redeemed is emphasised. Their qualities are spelled out in detail in 1 Corinthians 15:35-37. Their quality and their connection with Christ's glorified body are referred to in Philippians 3:21 and that connection with Christ's resurrection referred to again and again (eg 1 Corinthians 15:23).

These predictions of the future manifestation and consummation of the kingdom include the transformation, renewal and bringing into harmony of all creation. There are many direct statements to this effect, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:20, Romans 8:19-22, 2 Peter 2:7-13. In these statements this renewal, reconciliation, this bringing all things into harmony, are accomplished in Christ. As the first Adam was made in God's image, for Adam to glorify and enjoy God in his creation, so God has given his Son to be the second Adam and in him there is secured 'the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Peter 1:11) in which those who are in him renewed in the image of God will glorify and enjoy him in a creation into which sin will never again be permitted to enter (Matthew 13:40-43, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Revelation 21-27).

**It is this kingdom in all its final perfection that Jesus taught us to pray for.** The name by which he taught us to draw near to God and the first three petitions of the Lord's prayer are inseparably connected. It is his own eternal, saving, reconciling purpose revealed in the title 'Our Father in heaven' and the fact that that purpose has already been fulfilled in the One who teaches us so to pray that makes it possible for us to take up these following petitions knowing that they shall be answered. In the answer God's glory and our blessing will be conjoined. He who taught us to pray is the one who also assures those who believe in him, 'Don't be afraid, little flock, because the Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom' (Luke 12:32).

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# The Gospel and the World

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*Keith Walker*

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*This article summarises the papers written for discussion at the BEC Study Conference, 'The Gospel and the World', held in March 1989. Written before the Conference, the article makes no attempt to reflect discussion of the contributions.*

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In numerous places phrases and sentences are lifted from the papers without the intruding of quotation marks. It is hoped that the authors will not take this amiss in what attempts to be a summary of their work. And where this reader has failed to convey their intention, all he can do is plead their forgiveness. No attempt has been made to hide the inevitable overlaps between the papers.

The five papers written for this Conference address issues such as the relationship of the Judeo-Christian religion to other religions; the theology of the Kingdom of God; 20th century universalism, with especial reference to Pannikar and Hick; the idea that adherents of other religions may be saved in Christ without knowing him; biblical universalism and particularism as it effects the composition and task of the church.

Observers of the BEC may wonder why we have been so slow to take up these matters. Other evangelicals have already written very fully. Perhaps we are slow, but the boat has not been missed. These issues remain very current. On the other hand this is not a case of belatedly jumping on a band-wagon. Readers of these papers will find something new and distinctively 'BEC'. Their great strength lies in the place they afford to the discipline of Biblical exegesis. Writers of Study Conference papers are asked to pay especial attention to exegesis, and are pointed in the direction of certain passages. Arising from this is the robust case which is made for the uniqueness of the God of the Bible and of faith in him. Yet this is achieved with biblical sensitivity, reflecting the divine unwillingness that any should perish.

## **Jehovah and the Gods of the Nations**

*Prof John L Mackay*

Paper 1 addresses some major OT questions. Scholars agree that the faith of Israel in the time of the major prophets was monotheistic, but was it always so? Our answer to this question is inextricably bound up with our view of the nature and content of the OT, and the relationship between the Judeo-Christian religion and other faiths. Is polytheism an ancestor of biblical religion? Is Jehovah a relative of the gods of the nations or an opponent?

**The evolutionary paradigm** or model of religious history dates back to Hume in the 18th century and his contention that religion had developed upwards from the

primitive beginnings of polytheism. Modern theorising with regard to Israel traces a progression from animism, through polytheism and monolatry to monotheism. Monolatry (virtually synonymous with henotheism) is the exclusive worship of one god without denying the existence of others.

In this scheme Moses appears before the emergence of montheism, which in view of texts like Deut 10:14 and 4:39 demands the denial of Mosaic authorship and dating of the Pentateuch. The evolutionary model is thus inextricably bound up with critical dissections of the Pentateuch.

**A biblical history of religions** may be drawn from Pauline material. Rom 1:18-32 describes the degeneration of the Gentile world including its religion. An original revelation was deliberately ignored and man fell into idolatry and polytheism. From texts in Gal 4, Col 2, 1 Cor 8 & 10, Paul's view of the connection between idolatry and the demonic can be assessed. The contention that Gal 4 posits the existence of pagan deities, not as gods but as demons is rejected. For Paul pagan deities have no objective reality, but 'heathen religions emanate from malignant spirits' (according to Godet on 1 Cor 10:20).

**Exodus 6:2,3** is the crux text for critical reconstructions of the early faith of Israel. Its apparent assertion that the name Yahweh was unknown to the patriarchs is at variance with what precedes it in the Pentateuch. J A Motyer identifies at least 45 instances where Yahweh is used, either in divine speech to the patriarchs or in human conversation, between Gen 12:1 and Exodus 3:12. These have been felt by liberal critics to be in fundamental conflict with Exodus 6:3, resolvable only by positing at least 2 tradition sources behind the Genesis narratives one attributing the introduction of the name Yahweh to Moses' day, the other tracing its use back to the beginnings of the human race.

In avoiding this conflict some exegetes have favoured understanding Exodus 6:3 as a question, despite the absence of any interrogative particle. The case rests upon the implications of the Hebrew word *V'GAM* 'and also' in v 4, but is not strong.

The traditional Jewish and Christian interpretation has been most ably defended by Motyer who argues for 'name' to be understood as indicating something of the character of Yahweh. So the new departure in Moses' day is not the use of the name Yahweh but the revelation of its significance. Recent attacks on this view by G J Wenham are found wanting.

**Patriarchal knowledge of Yahweh** is denied by Wenham who sees references to Yahweh in Genesis as later interpretations of the writer, additions identifying the older names, El, Adonai, with the new Yahweh or otherwise suited to the editor's theological purpose.

All this begs general questions with regard to a redaction critical approach. Were inspired authors at liberty to insert words into reported speech? How may we be so sure of the theological purpose of an author as to warrant such conclusions? Why did not such a perceptive editor remove the inherent problems in Exodus 3 & 6? Why resort to redaction criticism when other adequate explanations of textual phenomena exist?



Mackay concludes that the patriarchs religion revolved around the worship of the one God, El, especially in the character of El Shaddai. El was also known to be called Yahweh, but the redemptive nature upon which that name was based was all but unknown.

**Mosaic revelation** is set against a background of Israelite idolatry. Its monotheism is thus seen to be of the nature of normative revelation rather than the expression of maturing religious consciousness. Yahweh's status is expressed both in the denial of the existence of other gods and in the assertion of his incomparable superiority over other deities (Deut 4:39, Exod 15:11). But does such language concede the reality of other gods so as to make Israel's faith monolatrous?

A consideration of the first commandment, and especially the expression 'before me', leads to the conclusion that such language does not grant the existence of other gods apart from the subjective projections of their devotees. Liberal arguments that 'the first word' implies at least a dynamic monolatry which had the seeds of monotheism within are weak in that they ignore the divine dimension of revelation and view OT faith as a purely human phenomenon.

**The OT's terms for other gods**, 'ELIL (meaning perhaps 'weak/worthless' or 'godlet') and *HEBEL* (vapour), emphasise their unreality. The biblical identification of the idol and the god reflects the fact that the idolatrous mind actually does conceive of the idol and the god as one.

When we come to consider **the relationship between the gods and the demonic** some passages may be thought to suggest a link, but Mackay concludes that they do not establish such a link in the Pauline sense (see above).

The paper concludes with a lengthy section discussing the presence and more importantly the significance of references to **Ancient Near Eastern myths in the OT**. It is not necessary to deny that passages exist containing such allusions. Such passages need not be seen as reflecting Israel's polytheistic past. In many cases they appropriate the language of myth in order to assert Yahweh's superiority over the Canaanite pantheon. Some references are no different from the Puritans' classical allusions.

Two areas are more difficult. **The Sons of God and the Divine Council** mentioned in passages like Gen 6:2, Ps 82, and Job 1 & 2 is the first. The expression 'sons of God' permits of varying interpretations in varying contexts. In Job the reference is to the angelic host, in Ps 82 it is to human judges. Gen 6:2 is more difficult and 4 solutions seem possible, angelic/demonic beings, demoniacs, Sethites, antediluvian kings.

The second area is **the dragon myth** and its relation to passages in Job, Psalms, Isaiah and Ezekiel. It needs to be noted that distinctly different emphases from the pagan parallels emerge. So in Is 51:9f the slaying of Rahab is not set in the context of creation but of redemption, as if to say to a world subject to evil and chaos, 'this is the answer, not creation, but redemption in Yahweh.'

# **The Kingdom of God and its Universality**

*Rev Tom Holland*

This paper tackles the theme of the Kingdom of God which, it reminds us, is shared by almost all the biblical authors. It begins by asserting that the Bible concept is not of the kingdom as a thing, but that 'kingdom' speaks of God's 'reign' or 'sovereignty'.

**The kingdom of God in the OT** speaks of man's relationship with his Maker. The history of man has been dominated by the question as to what kingdom he will seek out of the two opposing kingdoms, Satan's and God's. First Abraham and then Israel the nation were called to submit to God as their king.

The demand for a human king represented a rejection of God and led to confusion as to the nature of the kingdom. The political entity became synonymous with the spiritual reality and began to supplant it.

**The Servant of the Lord** in the OT (known to Jeremiah and Zechariah as the Branch, and to Jeremiah as the Son of David also) is to be related to the kingdom via the promised New Covenant. This covenant promised blessings to Israel, but would also bring about the universal display of the glory of God.

Morna Hooker's argument that the Servant is to be understood only as a corporate personality, even in Is 53, is inconsistent with her contention that the exilic and post-exilic prophets shared a common tradition. Ezekiel and Jeremiah both anticipate the coming of an individual through whom God will bring about his purposes. The Servant combines facets of both the corporate body, the remnant, and the individual through whose sufferings God would establish the ideal kingdom. In that kingdom the character of God will be realised in the life of his people.

**Liberal theology** has focussed its interest in the kingdom upon those passages in which God's people are delivered from tyranny, slavery or oppression. It has thus justified Christian involvement in revolution. This is to fly in the face of the exilic prophets whose criticism of the Mosaic covenant was that it was external and thus would be replaced by a covenant which would deal not with man's *conditions* but his *condition* (Jer 31:32-34 is here cited, but without reference to Hebrews). The new covenant was not primarily about political power, but about spiritual mercies. The prophets and the Messiah himself demote man's political aspirations to a very much second place.

That said, we may share the concerns of the liberals, even if not their theology, for the plight of millions of sufferers under evil governments and systems is appalling.

**OT eschatology** focusses on the universality of Yahweh's government, and Israel's prime agency in his rule. Is 2, the kingship Psalms (96-100), Dan 2 and Mal 1 all declare the universality of God as creator, the one true object of worship, judge and Saviour.

**The kingdom of God in the NT.** The NT material is much more complicated than the OT, but again 'kingdom' refers not to the realm of God, rather to his

authority and power. It is progressively revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and in the work of the Apostles. The church, the community of those submitted to their Redeemer, is the kingdom of Christ as distinct from the kingdom of God, of which it is but a part.

Examination of the Matthew 13 parables of the kingdom, which explain its mystery, emphasises the total contrast between popular expectations of the Messiah and the reality of what he had come to do. The parables tell of submission, obedience, death, the apparently unchecked work of a hidden enemy, the obscurity of God's kingdom, the need to labour on in the face of the lack of visible success. Membership was conditional upon repentance, the plea for God's mercy and submission to his rule.

The use of the Servant Songs in Mt 3 & Luke 4 demands that we consider the nature of Christ's mission in relation to the bringing of 'justice'. In particular, does 'justice' imply social justice? Against the back-cloth of the coming New Covenant, justice should be understood as God's setting right of whatever has harmed the relationship between God and his people, and therefore whatever harms their communal welfare. Whilst in his ministry Christ did perform acts of healing and deliverance which literally fulfilled some of these prophecies, we must be careful to understand the Songs as bearing spiritual rather than literal significance. Neither Christ nor the Early Church set about a programme for social justice. Kingdom Theology is in danger of compromising the exclusiveness of the kingdom.

**The scope and the means of entry into the kingdom of God** is discussed in relation to Pauline statements which bear upon the matter of baptism — 1 Cor 6:9, Eph 5:5, Rom 6:3-4, 1 Cor 12:13, Gal 3:23-29. It is contended after lengthy discussion that these references are not to water baptism but to the moment of the death of Christ when the Holy Spirit united all believers of every generation into unity with their head. By means of this baptism we are in the kingdom of Christ and destined for the kingdom of God. This secured position is appropriated through faith and repentance.

## **The 'Unknown Christ' ?**

*Dr D Eryl Davies*

Our third paper interacts with those contemporary theologians who derive from the NT's *Logos* teaching the idea that Christ is to be found hidden, incognito or unknown in world religions. Raymond Pannikar is foremost amongst these, whilst John Hick, rejecting Pannikar's Christocentric universalism, urges a theocentric universalism based on the idea of a transcendent God common to all religions.

Twentieth century universalism, the belief that all will be saved, has roots deep in Christian history. It was current in the second century, was defeated at Constantinople in 553 AD, but re-emerged in early Protestantism. It was at the end of the eighteenth century, however, that the floodgates of universalism opened and a hundred years later a tentative universalism had become acceptable in the churches.

**Universalism in the twentieth century** was for sixty years more an under current than a main stream. Wilfred Cantwell Smith espoused a cautious universalism.

Ernst Troeltsch and others, whilst expressing sympathy with other faiths, insisted on the superiority of Christianity. Influential in these decades were Kraemer, Barth (who seems to have held to a kind of latent universalism) and Tillich. Tillich paved the way for the development of the concept of a single 'God' common to all religions and for the relativising of claims to particular revelations of that Being.

From the 1960s onwards the pace quickened. In Roman Catholicism Vatican II opened the door wide to universalism through its statements on the sincere untaught. In Protestantism universalism flowered in the context of the World Council of Churches against the background of an increasing consciousness of the vast numbers of people of other faiths worldwide and in our plural Western society. Will over two-thirds of the world's population be damned?

Two main approaches are current amongst inclusive universalists.

**The Christological Approach.** The influence of Barth's christology, evident in William Barclay, Visser't Hooft, T Torrance, Newbigin, etc led them to maintain the uniqueness of Christ even when deeply sympathetic towards other faiths. This influence may account for a slow uptake in Western European churches. By 1975 the christological approach was losing favour in ecumenical circles. It is by Roman Catholic authors (eg Pannikar, Rahner and Küng) that it has been pursued most vigorously.

Pannikar, born of a Hindu father, has proposed that Hinduism and Christianity meet at the existential level of union with the Absolute. This 'ontic intentionality' is ultimately inexpressible. The differing terms employed by the religions reflect just one 'ontic' goal. Christians and Hindus are aiming at the same thing. Both religions meet in Christ. He is present *incognito* in Hinduism, which is not so much a false religion as 'a vestibule of Christianity'.

Rahner propounds three theses. 1 — Christianity is the absolute religion for mankind. 2 — Other faiths contain elements emanating from divine grace on account of Christ. 3 — Members of other religions must be regarded as *anonymous Christians*. This last thesis demands an unbiblical doctrine of revelation, and both Pannikar and Rahner compromise and relativise biblical truth.

Küng, whose christology is based upon a critically reconstructed 'historical' Jesus, distinguishes between the 'ordinary' way of salvation in world religions and the 'extraordinary' way in the church, the former being an interim path until the implicit faith of other religions becomes explicit in Christ. But for Küng, Christ is not the 'true God' of Chalcedon, the Bible is not unerring and of supreme authority and the NT contains conflicting christologies.

**The God-centred approach** is yet more radical. It has been expounded by J T Robinson whose base point is the omnipotence of God's love, and by John Hick. Hick wished to see a shift from the Christo-centric model of the universe of faiths to a theocentric one. Crucial in the achieving of this was the non-literal understanding of the incarnation expressed in 'The Myth of God Incarnate' (1977) which he edited. By 1980 his attack upon the uniqueness of Christianity was well-developed. He has two main arguments.

1. 'GOD' alone is at the centre of all religions, including Christianity. The

world's religions exhibit a common core of practice and theology, albeit that they employ different languages and names for the same Ultimate One, whose infinitude renders impossible any authoritative or unique description of him. Hick adds to this the thought of mankind's unity, the equality of God's love for all, and the impossibility of a universal revelation prior to this century. This one world, one God view has been espoused by Dr Runcie.

Hick may be faulted at a number of points. His reading of the history of religions is suspect. His presuppositions about the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the authority of Scripture, the impossibility of verbal revelation, the reality of a holy God's wrath, are unacceptable. Moreover, it may be doubted that the world faiths do exhibit a common core of belief about the nature of God.

2. Most significantly, Hick's theology requires the denial of the unique Person of Christ, whom he sees (as a result of NT critical studies) as a largely unknown man of Nazareth. The NT has no single christology, that of the Early Church is the conception of Christians and not to be viewed as normative. Denial of Jesus' deity rests also on Hick's view of religious language. He argues that to assert that Jesus is literally God is meaningless, like saying a circle is a square. But we may doubt that Hick has really understood what Nicaea and Chalcedon were saying.

A concluding discussion of **Contemporary views of Scripture passages** deals with *logos* in John 1:1; Acts 17:23; the 'Cosmic Christ' in Eph 1:10 & Col 1:15; and the significance of 1 Cor 15:24-28.

**John 1:1** does not support universalists' uses of the *Logos* motif. John's use of *logos* is not an attempt to syncretise with Greek thought. Certainly there is a Greek background to the concept of *logos*. However, there has been a shift of emphasis from Greek to Hebrew sources in recent interpretation of the Gospel. It is Jewish OT background which dominates John's use of *logos*. The context points to Jesus' three-fold relationship, with the Father, the world and people, all of which universalists misunderstand. These relationships identify Christ as pre-existent; personal; divine; the universal creator; the cause and preserver of all spiritual and physical life; and, as such, the source of general (ie not salvific) revelation. Christ, as *logos*, is both God and God's revealing and accomplishing utterance.

**Acts 17:23** speaks of an UNKNOWN GOD. Universalists infer that all sincere worshippers are worshipping the one, transcendent God. Howard Marshall claims that 'Paul hardly meant that his audience were unconscious worshippers of the true god', rather he tells them about the only God (v24).

**Eph 1:10 & Col 1:15** speak of the cosmic significance of Christ and some have argued from them for universalism, but to do so is to fly in the face of their immediate contexts and the context of the Bible as a whole. Ephesians makes much of being 'in Christ' and the doctrine of election, while in Colossians the Person and Work of Christ are inseparably related to his universal pre-eminence.

**1 Cor 15:24-28** does not teach universalism. In the immediate context, a parallel is drawn between Adam and Christ assuming the solidarity of all humans in Adam and of the church 'in Christ'. The 'alls' of v22 fail to support universalism when seen against the background of other Pauline uses of 'all', the technical nature of the phrase 'in Christ', and Paul's explicit particularism elsewhere (eg 6:9-11).

## The 'Anonymous Christian'

*Rev Mark G Johnston*

How will God judge those who have never heard the Gospel and so have never had opportunity to respond to Christ? That is the central question of this paper. Is there such an animal as the 'Anonymous Christian'?

**Traditional Roman Catholicism** grappling with this question against the background of its avowal that outside the Church there is no salvation, has appealed to the doctrine of **Baptism by Desire**. Charity is an act of the love of God. In the adult sinner such an act always contains at least an implicit desire for baptism, even where there is no knowledge of God beyond that minimum defined in Heb 11:6. Such Baptism of Desire is deemed equivalent to the sacrament in its essential effects.

**Some early liberal contributions** are found in the debate between Kraemer and Hogg. The former's position on the fate of the unevangelised is hardly different from the above Roman view. 'Hunger and thirst for righteousness is the sign of the active presence of him who is the Source of the world's life.' For Hogg faith can never be judged right or wrong: it is entirely subjective. The missionary task needs to be drastically redefined.

**Karl Rahner's concept of 'Anonymous Christianity'** arose in the context of 4 theses propounded in 1966.

1. 'Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognise any other religion besides itself as of equal right.' This robust statement is, however, severely weakened by Rahner's qualifying riders.
2. Non-Christian religion contains elements of a natural knowledge of God, but also supernatural, grace-filled elements.
3. Christianity should confront the member of an extra-Christian religion as one to be regarded as an Anonymous Christian. Yet missionary endeavour is valid in order that Christian grace may be incarnated, and to afford the 'Anonymous Christian' greater chance of salvation.
4. The church must see herself no longer in exclusive terms, but as the explicit vanguard of grace.

Rahner's weakness is presuppositional. His definition of a Christian is existential/philosophic not biblical. He assumes that our position as Christians entitles us to know and declare what is God's final judgement upon other people. The objectivity of revelation is undermined in that saving faith demands no knowledge of the historical, biblical Jesus; faith in some ephemeral, shadowy 'incognito Christ' will do. All this leads to a moralistic gospel. Empirically, when these so-called 'Anonymous Christians' eventually do hear of Christ, they do not seem to rush to embrace Him (cf Jn 1:11).

**Vatican II and the current stance of Roman Catholicism.** Rome has made several pronouncements bearing on the fate of the unevangelised. Whilst regarding highly what is 'true and holy in other religions', she maintains that it is only in Christ that men find the fullness of their religious life. God's means of salvation include the religious efforts of men as they seek to touch and find him. However, these efforts need to be enlightened and corrected.

**Recent developments in Liberal Protestantism** have been encouraged by this Roman shift. Hick, who may act as spokesman for the constituency, is open in calling for a revolutionary change in the church's presuppositions not least in the area of revelation. On the one hand he relegates the authority of the Bible, on the other he grants the Bhagavad Gita revelatory status.

**The Evangelical dimensions** of this debate are complex. At least five positions are adopted.

1. The unevangelised are lost ('exclusivist' position). This view preserves the logic of mission (Mt 28:18), denies any salvific value in general revelation (Rom 1:18) and takes seriously 'exclusive' gospel statements (Jn 14:6, etc). Its weakness is that it endeavours to put a very definite interpretation on the Bible's silences on the fate of those who do not hear.
2. The unevangelised are saved or lost depending on their response to the light God has given them ('inclusivist' position). This position argues that 'to call upon the name of the Lord' (Rom 10:13) does not necessarily imply knowledge of Christ: to what extent did OT believers know Christ? But it is wrong to draw direct parallels between God's self-revelation in OT times and His dealings with those who have had no contact with the completed canon.
3. God will give the unevangelised a future chance after death. This view rests much upon the highly controverted passage, 1 Pet 3:18-4:6 and upon more general theological extrapolation.
4. The 'typological' approach, asserting that God uses individuals in pagan culture as He did, for example, Cyrus in the OT, rests on unwarranted assumptions about such OT Gentiles.
5. The fate of the unevangelised is a matter best left to the wise mercy of God. This is by far the least complex of these alternatives and seems to pose the least number of exegetical and theological difficulties.

**Biblical considerations** make up the last third of this paper, discussing some individuals who are candidate 'Anonymous Christians' and passages which are controverted in this debate.

**Melchizedek** seems a strong OT candidate for an 'Anonymous Christian', but that is to forget his context within revelation history. God had not yet established the covenant community in the organised sense of the people of God, and as we are not told how he came to be a servant of God we too must be silent on that point. Advocates of the Documentary Hypothesis suggest that **Jethro** was priest in a pre-Mosaic Yahweh cult, but his exclamation in Ex 18:11 is best understood as indicating a quantum leap forward in his knowledge of God. Moses played missionary to him rather than *vice versa*. **Balaam**, upon whom it can hardly be said God's favour ever rested, also fails the test as an 'Anonymous Christian'. **Naaman**, on the other hand, despite his fulfilling of his duties when his king worshipped Rimmon, is no 'Anonymous Christian'. He is a man converted through a personal encounter with God when confronted with His powerful Word. Likewise the **Ninevites** responded to the Word of God proclaimed through Jonah. **Cyrus**, though used by God for His eternal purposes, was not necessarily a saved man. 'It is amazing how the dramatic story of **Cornelius** in Acts 10 is sometimes 'thrown in' to support the idea that sincere pagans can be in a right and acceptable relationship

with God without knowledge of Christ, when the whole point of the story is to show the opposite.' (Christopher Wright).

Each example falls into one category or other, saved or lost, without the introduction of some kind of *tertium quid*. Save for Melchizedek, we know how the message of salvation came to those who did respond positively.

**John 1:9** is the first key text for consideration. Its translation is not easy, but the NIV rendering is satisfactory, 'The true light that gives light to every man, was coming into the world.' But then how does Christ give light to every man? Those favouring 'Anonymous Christianity' understand 'gives light' salvifically and apply it universally. But this results in a moralistic gospel and a diluted mission. Avoiding this, others understand the verse in terms of Christ's role in general revelation. But better still is the Augustinian view which takes 'every man' in the sense of every man who believes. This approach retains the grandeur of the coming of Christ as the bringer of salvation for people of every nation and takes nothing away from the normal means of propagating the Good News of that event.

The interpretation of **Romans 2:6-11** hinges upon *kata ta 'erga 'autou* in v6. For some it justifies works salvation (but see Rom 3:3, Eph 2:8,9). Some take 'erga as a reference to faith, but Paul does not use it in this way elsewhere. It is best to take the good works (vv 7,10) as the evidence of saving faith and therefore to see those who perform them as the redeemed.

In **Acts 10:34,35** the problem is the statement that God accepts 'the man who fears him and works righteousness'. Yet evidently, for Cornelius salvation came through believing in the name of Christ whom Peter preached to him.

**Concluding**, how will God judge the unevangelised? We do best to leave the matter to the wise mercy of God, a position supported by the Westminster Confession (10 (iii)). To adopt this position means that we are committed unequivocally to the task of bringing the gospel to those who have not heard of Jesus, but we also realise that the limitations imposed by history and geography and by the Church's shortcomings and failure will not limit the gracious saving purposes of God.

## **Evangelical Universalism**

*Rev Derek Thomas*

'God loves the world' proclaims the best known text of Scripture. For universalists it means all will be saved. For various hues of Arminian it means that Christ has died for everyone, and that their salvation will depend upon their freely-willed response. But the emphasis of the Scriptures, whilst they affirm a universal love of God, falls upon the electing, covenant love of God.

There are two doctrinal constraints leading us to reject the idea that all will be saved and constituting the cornerstones of evangelical particularism. Firstly, **the constraint of Christ's uniqueness** demands a gigantic 'NO' to universalism. He is unique, the one and only Son of God, the only Mediator and Saviour. The title, 'only-begotten' (Jn 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 Jn 4:9), whatever the import of 'begotten', implies that Jesus is God's *only* Son. The principle thought of the John 14:6 is of Jesus as '*the way*' by which men come to God. Christ travelled the way back to Eden along the path of expiation, propitiation and redemption. The way of



reconciliation is by coming to Him, 'the way'. The early disciples were often referred to as followers of 'The Way'. He is also 'the truth', the true representation of God, the one whose word is true. Whether He is speaking of himself, the Bible, salvation, the division of mankind into the saved and the lost, or the reality of Hell, He is trustworthy. He is 'the life', the life given for the sheep, the giver of life full and overflowing. There is no other mediator (1 Tim 2:5,6) no other name (Acts 4:12) by which we must be saved.

Secondly, **the constraint of faith** demands the rejection of universalism, because the Bible proclaims the absolute necessity of faith in Christ in order to be saved. Faith, itself a gift, is an instrument of reception, not a means of merit. Most commonly 'faith' is construed with 'eis + accusative, implying motion into. So faith in Christ is an absolute transference of trust from ourselves to Him.

In universalism, all men are redeemed and justified, so justification is before faith and apart from it.

Calvin proposes seven essentials for an understanding of justification by faith alone:

1. All men face the judgement-seat of God.
2. All are sinners, deserving God's wrath.
3. Justification is God's judicial act of pardoning the sinner.
4. The sole ground of justification is Christ's vicarious righteousness and blood-shedding.
5. The means of justification is faith (*fiducia* rather than *fides*) in Christ.
6. This faith is evidenced in a life of good works.
7. The sole source of justification is God's grace.

(A lengthy footnote deals with the problem of those who have not heard against the background of discussion about deceased infants. Rom 2:14ff; 10:12-18; and Acts 10:34f are relevant. The note quotes W G T Shedd to the effect that the Divine Spirit exerts his regenerating grace, to some extent, within adult heathendom without the Redeemer having been presented historically and personally as the object of faith.)

Next, **evangelical universalism** is considered. God's love is universal. It is not limited temporally, racially, religiously, economically, socially or culturally. Firstly this universalism is seen in the **will of God** as expressed in 2 Pet 3:9. But what will is this? If it is His decreative will, then the verse implies that everyone is saved; if His preceptive will, then God does not allow people to perish; if it is the will of His disposition, then God is not pleased when men perish. Given that hell is not empty, only the third of these options is open to us. Further consideration of the text and interpretation of this verse demands the conclusion that God does not wish that any man should perish.

Universalism is seen in **common grace**. God is longsuffering to all sinners (2 Pet 3:9). He is good to all sinners (Rom 2:4; Mt 5:45). There are the natural blessings of food, health, etc (Ps 145); the laudable qualities of human existence; the achievements of the natural man, be they artistic, scientific, etc. There is the restraint of sin in society; the external call of the gospel. 'God is good to all men in some ways and to some men in all ways.' He longs for everyone to be saved.

In this context, however, 1 Tim 2:4 needs consideration. In view of the expression of 'all men' here we must face up to **the constraints of particular redemption**. This doctrine is defended in another lengthy footnote, arguing from Jn 10. It needs to be understood properly. It does not undermine the free offer of the Gospel. It is not saying that Christ is unable to save all, but that the prerogative to save is the Lord's. Nor is it saying that Christ's death is insufficient to save the whole world. Moreover, there are benefits which do issue from the death of Christ to all.

For many John 3:16 collapses particular redemption. Two points need to be made. First, *kosmos* is best understood as denoting something ethical, the world as containing nothing to attract God's love. Second, in relation to the design of vv 16 & 17 is to assume that all men will believe in Christ and be saved, a position contrary to the teaching of our Lord.' Christ came to secure and purchase the salvation of all those who had already been ordained to eternal life.

The use of 'world' in 1 John 2:2 presents another category, **eschatological universalism**. The verse presents two problems. The first is the understanding of *hilasmos*. 'Expiation' is preferred by those for whom wrath demanding appeasing is unthinkable when predicated of God, but OT uses of *KIPPER* and NT uses of *hilaskomai* indicate a personal, Godward and thus propitiatory aspect. The second problem concerns the extent of the propitiation. J P Lange argues that the verse 'renders any and every limitation (of the atonement) inadmissible'. But if propitiation has been made for all sinners, for what will unbelievers be punished? For unbelief? But is not unbelief a sin? And has it not therefore been atoned for?

The solution is to view John as an 'eschatological universalist'. He teaches the salvation of the whole world, not just of Christians in Asia Minor. Christ's purpose in his death is to save a whole world — not every individual in it, but a world.

These papers close, fittingly, with a section on **evangelical universalism and the church's task**. Our Lord's final words to the church, prior to his ascension (Mt 28), are intended to impress her with the largeness of her task. 'All authority' reflects the extension of the authority of Christ resultant upon His resurrection. So the disciples are now impelled on a universal mission, to all people (including Israel), *panta ta 'ethne*. The church owes the gospel to the whole world. She has a fourfold message:

1. We are to say to all, 'there is good news for you'.
2. The LORD is God. Jesus is God. Jesus is Jehovah, the only God there is.
3. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, and finally — though not everyone will be saved. The Gospel is a fragrance of life to some, and of death to others —
4. Whoever believes will not perish but have everlasting life.

*May God help us to proclaim that Gospel to this needy world. May He grant us a new outpouring of His Spirit. May many from all nations be brought into His kingdom. And may it be to His eternal praise and glory.*

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# Christianity and the Idea of a Just War

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*David Sullivan*

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'Wars and rumours of wars.' It seems all too often that this phrase sums up the contents of the foreign reports in our newspapers. We live in an age when warfare, and the preparation for it, are rife, and the recent changes in Soviet military policy, with their avowal of a policy based on defence rather than offence, only heightens the uncertainty — should we trust their policy declarations, what response is called for on the part of the West, and so on? How should Christians react to these issues — how, in particular, should they think about war in the light of the teachings of Scripture?

We might expect the answers to these questions to be complex, and indeed they are, but Christians have thought about the subject for two thousand years, and their legacy, although ambiguous, is both rich and illuminating. In particular, there is the just war theory, a body of teaching which has a long and prestigious history and which even seems to some people to provide a complete solution. I intend to make a good deal of use of this theory in the course of the discussion though it will not be entirely uncritical. For all its insights, the just war theory has flaws and it will be important as the argument develops to stress some of the dangers which are present. I will also indicate where it seems important to depart from a certain influential strand in the theory's tradition.

Before we look at the details there are some more immediate problems. After all, the very term 'just war' might seem a travesty to some; a gross misuse of terms. War is one of the most terrible of human activities. Even the most limited of wars involves suffering and misery, pain and violent death. **How can something so dreadful, so inhumane, ever be regarded as just?**

This apparent paradox is confronted head on by the Christian just war theory which begins not with the discussion of justice but with the recognition of evil in the world. It accepts that the whole of creation has been subjected to futility until the restoration of all things in Christ<sup>1</sup> and sees the violence of war as an expression of that futility. Because of the fallen nature of the world, resistance of evil by force is justifiable. A war is just if it has the aim of restraining an enemy from carrying out his evil intentions against an innocent state.

These simple statements bristle with conceptual problems, but before addressing them directly it is important to distinguish the concept of the just war from a theory with which it is often confused, and from which it has sometimes drawn too much. This is the theory of the holy war or crusade, and it is a concept which many assume is central to Christian teaching in this area. Certainly it has a long tradition in religious thought and yet, as we will see, it is alien to the teachings of the New Testament.

A crusade is fought to promote an ideal, and also to destroy what is perceived to be evil in the enemy. Thus the Christians of the High Middle Ages went crusading to spread the gospel and destroy the infidel or — in the Albigensian crusade — to destroy the apostate. Because a crusade is fought to further what are taken to be the interests of God, those who have advocated crusading have argued that those who kill the enemies of the crusaders — and by extension the enemies of God — are absolved from all guilt. Indeed, in most theories of the crusade those who die in battle are especially pleasing to God, and are rewarded by Him accordingly. There is a sobering reminder of this in the reports from the recent Iran Iraq war of Iranian zealots going to a war which they regard as blessed by Allah dressed in death shrouds and seeking martyrdom on the battlefield.

This is not the place to discuss the morality of crusading in detail but there are two points to make in passing which will help to clarify some aspects of the just war theory.

The first is that although the advocates of crusades in the Middle Ages argued that there was a precedence in the Old Testament — such as the commandment which God gave to the people of Israel to utterly destroy the tribes in the Promised Land<sup>2</sup> — there is no justification for treating these Biblical cases as being anything other than exceptional. *Moses and Joshua saw themselves as being directly commanded by God and they had a clear instruction as to what to do:* the medieval crusaders, by contrast, had not been given divine guidance and were acting from their own sense of what should be done.<sup>3</sup>

The second point is that the crusading spirit is in direct conflict with much that the New Testament has to say about becoming a Christian. *To propagate the gospel by means of the sword is at variance with the basic New Testament teaching* that a person becomes reconciled to God only through personal repentance and faith. To force men and women to profess faith in Christ at the risk of death or enslavement has the potential of creating not so much a community of godly Christians as a group of people who, while outwardly confessing the faith, inwardly bitterly reject it for what they see to be its harsh, imperialistic domination of their culture and society. Even if no such reaction took place it would still be wrong to force someone to profess Christianity, because to do so encourages an outward observance of forms and ceremonies rather than an inner commitment of the heart.

We can begin to sketch the outlines of the just war theory by seeing how it contrasts with the crusade on these two issues.

Unlike crusaders, politicians and soldiers engaged in what they regard as a just war do not claim that the war is directly sanctioned by God. If they are Christians, they will argue that they are fighting a war for which God has granted permission: but they will not claim more than that. Indeed, a Christian just war theorist may accept that non-Christians can fight a just war, providing only that the circumstances under which they fight meet the requirements of justice. Concerning the aims of the war, the just war is always limited in scope to military and political ends — it does not seek to impose a new religious or moral order on the world. It seeks only to redress the balance and to ensure that the rights of aggrieved states are defended.

The preceding comments have only shown what the just war theory is *not* like. How may we characterise it positively?

Because the theory is very old it has had many exponents and defenders, not all of whom have been in anything like full agreement. Consequently, it will be useful to take one writer and examine the theory through his work. I have chosen **Thomas Aquinas** for two principal reasons. The first is that Aquinas' version of the just war theory was, and very much continues to be, highly influential. This is so not only amongst theologians and philosophers but also among soldiers and politicians — and not only Roman Catholics. The second reason is that Aquinas' theory is a very illuminating one — it penetrates to the heart of much that is crucial to the idea of a just war. Given its long and continuing influence it is perhaps not surprising that it should have this quality but, as I shall be arguing in a while, it does not follow that Aquinas was correct in his view of war; indeed part of the importance of examining Aquinas' version of the theory is that it helps prepare the ground for a more satisfactory version.

Aquinas lays down three conditions which must be met in order for any war to be regarded as just.<sup>4</sup> The first condition is that the war may only be declared by a properly constituted government. The second is that there must be a good cause for fighting the war; it must be the case that, in Aquinas' own words, 'those who are attacked are attacked because they deserve it on account of some wrong they have done.'<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, those who wage war must do so from correct motives, 'they must intend to promote the good and to avoid evil.'<sup>6</sup>

In my view these three principles do set out certain of the necessary conditions which must be satisfied if a war is to be regarded as just; but as they stand they are in need of clarification and development. Aquinas' argument that **a war may only legitimately be waged by a properly constituted authority** is an important one because it addresses itself to a fundamental problem about the relationship of the Christian to war. One of the central principles of the New Testament is that the Christian is called upon to love his enemy and to turn the other cheek if his enemy strikes him. How can this be reconciled with the claim that Christians may justly participate in war?

Aquinas' answer is that *there is a distinction between the activities of the individual and those of the state*. The individual has no right to seek vengeance against someone who does him harm, but the state has a duty to try and prevent that kind of harm being done — or, if it cannot prevent it, it has a duty to punish the offender. In this context Aquinas refers to Paul's argument in Romans 13, that 'he (the ruler) beareth not the sword in vain for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil,' and comments that the ruler may, 'lawfully use the sword of war to protect the commonweal from foreign attacks'.<sup>7</sup>

This idea that the state has an obligation which transcends the duties — and rights — of individuals is an essential part of Thomist political theory. A contemporary Thomist, Joseph Mackenna, expresses the concept in a clear and illuminating manner:

'One moral characteristic of the state is its obligation to seek the common earthly welfare of its citizens. Linked with this is a second, its right of self-defence.

'If the evil could, with impunity impose their will upon the innocent, social life would be reduced to chaos; for the good of its citizens, then, a state unjustly attacked by force may resist by force.'<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of this argument, Mckenna goes on to argue that a Christian has no need to regard fighting in a just war (on the right side) as in any sense evil: 'an act of self-defense or an act of vindictive justice, although imposed by circumstances which are regrettable, is morally good.'<sup>9</sup> He contrasts this view with the Protestant and humanist views which maintain that war can only ever be the lesser of two evils, a view which he regards as being far 'bleaker' than the Thomist position.

Despite its impressive pedigree this view of the state is not without its problems, especially in the context of the just war theory.

Aquinas is quite right to point out that Paul is making a distinction in Romans 13 between the moral duty of the individual to turn the other cheek and the right of the ruler in the state to bear the power of the sword.<sup>10</sup> Yet there is a tension here that the Thomist position is unable fully to come to terms with, namely that the state is composed of individuals who are in themselves evil by nature. It is not an entity which is independent of them, and it therefore reflects their moral values and nature. Mckenna highlights the way in which the Thomist position fails to appreciate this problem when he talks of the state as having 'moral characteristics', or when he speaks of the state's 'obligations' and 'rights'. In fact, of course, only people can be said to have moral characteristics, obligations and rights.<sup>11</sup> When we translate Mckenna's language out into talk about people the situation becomes far more complex than it first appeared. To take one example, when Mckenna writes that 'one moral characteristic of the state is its obligation to seek the common earthly welfare of its citizens' is he talking of the moral responsibility of the ruler — or the members of the government — to defend the people or is he referring to the rights which individuals have as members of a community to defend their shared way of life?

If we return to Romans 13, it seems at first sight that Paul is thinking only in terms of rulers. If this is so it would seem to follow that if an individual is instructed by the ruler to fight in what the ruler regards as a just war the individual's sole moral responsibility is to obey the ruler. Consequently he need not be concerned about the morality of the way in which the war is fought, or even whether his country ought to be involved in the war at all.

This interpretation of Romans 13, in which the emphasis is placed on the obligations of those who are governed provides a view which is too one-sided, because there are implications in what Paul says for the rulers too. There is even a sense in which Paul's discussion at this point can be reduced to one of the formal nature of the power-relationships within states, although clearly that was not his express intention when writing.

The essential element here is that Paul talks of the governing authorities as having been instituted by God. In saying this he is not arguing that God has appointed particular individuals but that He has instituted a political role or office. Those

who hold such office are entitled to respect, honour and obedience in virtue of their office — and in virtue of their office alone. From this it follows that if rulers exceed the powers of their office, or go further and try to claim authority and power as private individuals, they are no longer entitled to such respect, honour and obedience. This seems to accord well with Paul's contention that 'rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad.' The only sensible way to understand this (in the light of the fact that many rulers in the past clearly have been a terror to good conduct) is to accept that Paul is talking about rulers as they ought to be, not necessarily as they are.

A ruler who governs rightly and justly is carrying out his true role as God intended it, and is the agent of God in providing peace and harmony within the society. Such rulers are highly desirable, and Paul tells Timothy to urge his congregation to pray 'for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.'<sup>12</sup>

This reading of Romans 13 has significant implications for an understanding of the role of the individual in times of war. The ruler of a state has a right by virtue of his office to declare war if he considers that the circumstances justify it, but *his decision is not to be taken uncritically by those over whom he has authority*. If the people over whom he rules believes that he is wrong in his understanding of the situation, or if they believe that he is acting from evil motives, they have a duty not to obey him. By the same token, if they believe that he is right in his understanding of the situation, and that he is therefore justified in declaring war, they will be obliged to participate in the war.

Things are not normally quite so straightforward as all this might suggest. There are, in particular, very significant differences in the levels of understanding between the ordinary citizen and the much better informed ruler. There will be many occasions when, having done all that he can to find out the truth about the situation, the individual citizen will have to give the ruler the benefit of the doubt. As long as the evidence which he has been able to acquire convinces him that it is right to fight he must follow the lead of his government. Of course, governments may seek to deceive — and often succeed. Where they are successful in misleading their people they carry a correspondingly higher burden of guilt.

The implications of all this for the individual who is confronted with the possibility of fighting in a war is that he is far more intimately responsible than the Thomist position admits. There are different levels of awareness which imply different levels of responsibility, but each is responsible for what he is in principle capable of understanding and controlling.<sup>13</sup>

This discussion of the extent to which the individual can judge the rightness of the war to which his government is committed leads into the second condition which Aquinas lays down for a war to be just. **There must be a good cause for fighting the war** and those who are being fought deserve to be fought because of some wrong they have done. This is a very reasonable and necessary condition, but it raises the difficult question of who decides which side is right. Some people have seen this as providing an irrefutable argument against even the logical possibility of there ever being a war which could be seen as objectively just.<sup>14</sup> Despite such

confident assertions the problem is not as formidable as it seems.

All combatants in time of war obviously claim that their actions are legitimate and that those of their opponents are not. But it does not follow from this that there are no objective criteria for judging who is justified in fighting and who is not. The argument that it is always impossible to judge between the claims of the combatants is a variation on the argument that all values are relative to the societies in which they are produced, and that all the combatants in a particular war may be justified because the criteria are internal to their society.

The idea that no moral judgements can be made about particular wars is an old one in Western culture, but it has come to special prominence in the last two hundred years. The most important statement of this position is that of **Carl Von Clausewitz**, whose major work, *ON WAR*, has exerted a profound influence on the study of warfare in the modern world. *It has also provided the most important challenge to the just war theory.*

War, according to Clausewitz, is an act of force to which, 'there is no logical limit.'<sup>15</sup> The purpose of war is to overthrow the enemy and render him helpless, to place him in a position where he has no choice but to submit to your demands. In this context there can be no limitations, short of those imposed by military and geographical factors, on the manner in which war is fought. Most emphatically, there can be no restrictions imposed by international law, which Clausewitz dismisses contemptuously as 'imperceptible limitations hardly worth mentioning'.<sup>16</sup> Nor can there be any moral restraints, for, he says, 'moral force has no existence save as expressed in the state and the law.'<sup>17</sup>

It is almost impossible to overestimate the influence of Clausewitz's thinking among the foreign policy makers of the modern developed world, both in the capitalist and the communist blocs.

From Marx and Engels onwards, Marxists have frequently quoted Clausewitz as an authority on military matters. In particular they have adapted his celebrated phrase that 'war is merely the continuation of policy by other means'<sup>18</sup> to fit in with their argument that war between Socialist and Capitalist/imperialist powers is part of the necessary development of history. In such a conflict, morality has no place; all that matters is the victory of the proletariat, and the foreign policy of socialist countries can only be judged by their service to that cause.

Clausewitz's ideas are scarcely less important in the West. The highly influential school of **Realism** argues from the same Clausewitzian premiss that because war is the continuation of policy by other means only the interests and securities of the state are of any importance. Again morality is of no concern.<sup>19</sup>

In the views both of Soviet and Realist defence analysts, morality in foreign policy in general, and war in particular, is not only out of place but meaningless. When Realists analyse wars they do so not in terms of the morality of the situation but in the context of the political and strategic advantage to their own states, even though they often seek to hide their true intentions under the cloak of moralistic language. Thus the United States justified its involvement in Vietnam — which in reality was concerned with matters of global strategy and international trade — in terms of defending the people of South Vietnam from a foreign, communist



aggressor. In similar fashion, the Soviet Union justified its invasion of Afghanistan in terms of support for communism against reactionary forces, although it is clear that its concerns were for its own security and the defence of its own interests in the region.

Despite the great influence of this relativistic stance in the way in which people have thought about war and international relations it rests upon a notion which to the Christian is obviously false. This is the argument that there is no such thing as an objective morality. *The Christian just war theory argues that there is an objective morality* and that it holds good for all men in all places and at all times. This is the morality which has been given to mankind by God.

The Christian doctrine that there is an objective morality which is in principle accessible to all men does not imply that they are always aware of it, nor does it claim that those who are aware of it are correct in their interpretation of it at all points. It is quite conceivable that two Christians might disagree fundamentally on the implications of Christian morality for fighting a war.

What a belief in an objective moral code does imply is that men are bound to obey that morality to the best of their ability and according to their understanding. So a Christian who is faced with the problem of whether or not he should fight in a particular war is obliged to examine the situation in the light of the objective morality as he understands it. That involves not only thinking through the issues as carefully and as precisely as possible, but also approaching them in a deeply prayerful manner.

The answer, therefore, to what seems the unanswerable question, 'how is it possible to find some neutral standpoint from which to judge which side is right?' is that the Christian may appeal to the law of God. Stated in this way the claim might seem to the relativist to be no more than a cynical, or perhaps self-deluded, way of disguising what a hard-headed rationalist would see to be obvious. Christians disagree over the interpretation of the law of God, and they do so particularly when they are on different sides in a war. That is because their beliefs serve the interests of their state (or, in the Marxist version, their class). But such criticisms miss the point. Of course Christians disagree, but their understanding of the law of God is not merely theoretical. Christians believe that the God who has given this law will also judge men according to it. The Christian who fights in what he takes to be a just war must do so in the knowledge that God will call him to account for all his actions, not only in deciding to enter the war but in how he fights the war as well.

This is what makes the Christian position here a moral one. The judgements made in time of war are not to be seen purely in terms of how they deal with the present, and they are most emphatically not to be understood as having been arrived at on an *ad hoc* basis. They are made in the context of deeper, universal principles, which have implications far beyond the requirements and demands of the immediate situation. Above all, they look beyond the circumstances of the war, and even beyond the interests of the state, to an order of values which has eternal roots.

This talk about values and motives clearly separates the just war theory from the heirs of Clausewitz, and marks them off as two separate traditions. It also brings

us to the third condition which Aquinas lays down in order for a war to be just. **Those who wage war must do it from the correct motives**, they must, 'intend to promote the good and to avoid evil.'<sup>20</sup> Here Aquinas is reinforcing the point that it is not enough that the cause be just, it must also be the case that the person who claims to wage a just war must do it from the right intentions. Why does he wish to make such a distinction? Surely, it might be argued, the objective features of the war which make it just also guarantee that anyone who fights in the war will be acting justly. This is not so, but to show why it is not we need to look at the distinction that is made in just war theory between the justice of a particular war and the justice of particular actions within that war, the distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*.

An example might help at this point. Let us assume that the British were fighting a just war against the Germans in the Second World War. Even granted that the war itself was declared by a morally acceptable authority, for the purposes of resisting evil, it does not follow that every action in which the British forces engaged was thereby morally sanctioned. Take, for instance, the decision on the part of the British government and Bomber Command to attack Dresden in 1945. This was the culmination of a series of attacks on German cities which the allies had been conducting throughout the latter part of the war. The attack on Dresden was particularly bad because the British government knew that the city was full of refugees and because the bombers dropped incendiary bombs which, as expected, caused firestorms to rage through the city. The attacks on Dresden and other German cities were carried out with the prime intention of terrorising their populations, with the hope of a consequent collapse of morale and a consequent shortening of the war. It is estimated that 25,000 people died in Dresden, most of them refugees.

It seems clear that the bombing of Dresden was unjust. The civilian refugees were not able to defend themselves, represented no threat to the allies and in no sense presented a legitimate military target. So this particular action was unjust, even though the war as such was a just one. *The ability to make a distinction between the justice of a war and the justice of the actions within it is a crucial one.*

But while the bombing of Dresden is a fairly clear cut example of a military action carried out from evil intentions, and is therefore impossible to justify, there are many occasions when the issues are by no means so well defined. What judgement are we to make, for example, of the bomber crew who attack an enemy military camp knowing — but not desiring — that their actions will lead to the deaths of innocent women and children in the refugee camp next door? Many just war theorists have sought to deal with this problem of the foreseen but unintended evil consequences of a good action by evoking **the principle of double effect** (PDE).<sup>21</sup> This principle plays a central role in Thomist just war theory and it will be appropriate at this point to discuss whether it is capable of bearing the weight which is often put upon it.

*The PDE seeks to show that it is morally permissible to carry out acts which are morally good in themselves but which have morally bad consequences, even when those consequences have been foreseen.* Clearly, to be of any practical value this

cannot be meant to apply indiscriminately, not just any good act with foreseen bad consequences is permitted. We can distinguish **three conditions** which help to clarify the issue.

The first is that the consequences which are to be judged must result from an act which is itself intrinsically good, or at least morally neutral. It does not allow the performance of an evil act from which good may come.

The second is that the good consequences must be positively intended and the bad ones merely foreseen. The bad effects must not be desired at all — neither as the end nor even as a means to the end, and all reasonable steps must be taken to avoid them.

Thirdly, the foreseen evil consequences must not be disproportionate to the good which is intended. If a great evil is foreseen as an unintended but unavoidable consequence of an action which is intended to bring about a comparatively minor good then the action is not justified.<sup>22</sup>

Much of the burden of the argument falls on the second condition, that the good consequences must be positively intended and the bad ones merely foreseen. This proposition has often repelled people by its apparent equanimity in the face of the suffering of the innocent. It is all very well, it is said, to say that the bomber crew did not intend to kill and maim the refugees in the camp next to the military target, but that does not alter the fact that innocent people are dead and maimed.

I think that this repulsion is justified. The great problem with the PDE as applied to war, along with the general Thomist theory of a just war, is that it excuses too much and fails to take seriously enough the responsibilities which people have for their actions. Against the PDE, it seems that the bomber crew who foresaw that their action against a military target would have as one consequence the death of innocent people were faced with an intractable moral dilemma. It was right to attack the military base but wrong to kill and maim the innocent civilians, who would not have been harmed if the raid had not taken place. This last phrase needs to be emphasised because it underlines the point that the crew brought about the deaths. This is not to say that the military base should not have been attacked under any circumstances, only that those who planned and executed the attack cannot escape the responsibility for killing the civilians.

One possible way around this problem is that suggested by the idea of moral hierarchicalism. According to **Norman Geisler**, an influential proponent of this view, it is possible to grade absolute moral values into an order of greater and lesser importance. Lying, for example, is lower down the order than causing the death of innocent people so although it is normally wrong to lie this principle may be waived if telling the truth would cause the death of an innocent person.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, even if we accept that ethical hierarchicalism works in helping us grade different principles it does not offer any assistance where two alternative courses of action lead to a conflict with the same principle, and in war this is precisely the dilemma that often occurs. The example of the airmen who killed the refugees as an unintended consequence of bombing the military base is a case in point. Should they break the principle that it is wrong to cause the deaths of

innocent people in their own country?

In a way ethical hierarchicalism is similar to the PDE in that it supposes that there must always be a way out of the moral problems that men face. But that is wrong; *because of the fallen nature of the world we sometimes encounter situations where there is no perfect solution.* War provides perhaps the clearest examples of this.

This is a messy solution to the problem because it provides no clear answers. It leaves combatants with the knowledge that even in a just war dilemmas of the kind that have just been discussed may be present. But that is not an accidental part of the conclusion, because any Christian version of just war theory must accept that war itself is messy and confused. War is the result of evil in the world, and evil is an ever present reality against which all participants in war must be continually on guard.

The Thomist version of the just war theory fails to appreciate this seriously enough and allows that the combatants in such a war may, at least in principle, remain innocent of any moral guilt for their actions. This view is in part a hangover from the different but related theory of the crusade, where it was held that those who fought for the cause of the gospel would not only be absolved from guilt if they killed the infidel or heretic but would actually be rewarded by God for having taken part in a holy war.<sup>24</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from our discussion of the Thomist theory of the just war is a sobering one. *There are wars which must be fought to avoid a greater evil, and these may be regarded as just. But fighting in such wars may bring moral dilemmas which cannot be resolved without incurring guilt, because all wars, even just ones, are fought by sinful men in a sinful world*

If a Christian wishes to fight in a just war he must be aware that he cannot fight without frequently facing moral dilemmas. He may face intolerable moral conflicts during the war, but he also knows that it would be wrong not to defend the innocent and to prevent a greater evil. Having realised that there is the constant danger that he will give in to the temptations which war brings he may still take up arms, but with a heavy heart and deep foreboding.

Mckenna is right to point out that this view of war is a bleak one. But he is wrong to criticise it thereby, for we live in a bleak world and war is a horrible manifestation of that bleakness — **a step of last resort** taken only to prevent an even greater darkness. A theory of the just war which does not take that into account is neither realistic nor Christian.

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## References

1. See, for example, Romans 8:18-25
2. Deuteronomy 7:1-5, 20:16-18, Joshua 6:20&21, 24-26. The requirement to fight a holy war was rare even in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 20:10-15 lays down humane guidelines for the conduct of ordinary warfare, and the

instructions for fighting a holy war in 16-18 are clearly seen as exceptions to these general rules.

3. It has often been pointed out that the crusades were fought as much for political and economic reasons as for religious ones. This point can be overstated, to the extent that the religious motivation is sometimes made to appear almost irrelevant, which it was not. The general point is, nevertheless, an important one, and further stresses the contrast with the godly warriors of the Old Testament.
4. Thomas Aquinas *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* translated by Thomas R Heath O P, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1972, Volume 35, Question 40, article 1, pp 81-85.
5. *Ibid* p 83.
6. *Ibid* p 83.
7. *Ibid* p 83.
8. Joseph Mckenna, 'The Just War' in Rachels and Tillman (Editors), *PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES: A CONTEMPORARY INTRODUCTION*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, p 264.
9. *ibid* p 265.
10. Aquinas was by no means the first Christian writer to use this distinction as an important part of his moral and political theory. He acknowledges his particular debt to Augustine on this matter and in his discussion of war generally.
11. The general concept of rights is problematic in itself and has been much discussed in recent years. For a general introduction to the literature see Jack Donnelley, *THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS*, London: Croom Helm, 1985. For a Christian perspective see Ian Shaw 'The Right Balance (Christian thinking about human rights)', *FOUNDATIONS* 14, Spring 1985, pp 10-15.
12. 1 Timothy 2:2.
13. This also raises the thorny question of revolution. What happens when the government acts so badly that the people feel they need to overthrow it? What is the moral status of revolutionary and civil wars? This is too large a subject to be adequately dealt with here, but see my *POLITICAL ALIENATION*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, 1978, especially chapters 5 and 6, and 'Liberation Theology', *EVANGELICAL TIMES* March 1986.
14. See, for example, Martin Wight, *POWER POLITICS* (edited by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad) Second Edition, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986 p 109.
15. Car Von Clausewitz, *ON WAR* (1832) Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976, Book I chapter 1 section 3, p 77.
16. *Ibid* Book I chapter 1 section 2, p 75.
17. *Ibid*.
18. *Ibid* Book 1 chapter 1 section 24, p 87.
19. Among the most important modern Realists are E H Carr, *THE TWENTY YEARS' CRISIS 1919-1939*, London: Macmillan, 1946; Hans J Morgenthau, *POLITICS AMONG NATIONS* (1948), New York: Alfred A Knopf 3rd Edition 1963; RAYMOND ARON CLAUSEWITZ:

PHILOSOPHER OF WAR (1976), translated by Christine Booker and Norman Stone, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983; and, as the arch-practitioner, Henry Kissinger. Realism is particularly influential in the United States, where it is often contrasted with the parallel moral or idealistic tradition associated with Presidents such as Jefferson and Wilson. The most recent advocate of this approach to American foreign policy at the highest level was President Carter, whose thinking on this subject was overtly Christian. See Jimmy Carter, *KEEPING FAITH: MEMOIRS OF A PRESIDENT*, London: Collins, 1982, especially pp 141-151.

20. Op cit p 83.
21. For a recent discussion of the Principle of Double Effect in the context of the just war see David Fisher, *MORALITY AND THE BOMB* Beckenham, Croom Helm, 1985, chapter 3.
22. This is usually referred to as the **Principle of Proportionality** and provides a major ground for those just war theorists who argue against the use of nuclear weapons. The moral objections to the use of such weapons are manifold — the very high probability of widespread death of non-combatants, the possibility of a nuclear winter, even predictions about the end of human life on the planet in the event of an all out strategic nuclear exchange. All these seem to many just war theorists to demonstrate that the use of nuclear weapons would be in conflict with the principle of proportionality — the amount of evil involved in their use would far outweigh any possible good. Some Christians have been led by these considerations to favour a policy of nuclear pacifism, arguing that while some conventional wars may be just there can be no just nuclear wars. John Stott defends this position in *ISSUES FACING CHRISTIANS TODAY*, London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1984, chapter 5. Not all Christian just war theorists are nuclear pacifists, though. Some argue, using terms drawn from nuclear strategy, that while counter-city attacks are immoral, counter-force strikes need not always be. See David Fisher op cit, and Richard Harries, *CHRISTIANITY AND WAR IN A NUCLEAR AGE*, London: Mowbray, 1986. However, even if it were possible to justify the use of nuclear weapons in a limited counter-force way, it seems clear that the principle of proportionality must rule out any possibility of a major nuclear exchange, where civilians would inevitably be involved.
23. Normal L Geisler, *ETHICS: ALTERNATIVES AND ISSUES*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1971, chapter 7 and *OPTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN ETHICS*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1981, chapter 5.
24. Not only Thomists are affected by this way of thinking. The Confederate Southern Presbyterian theologian Robert L Dabney (certainly no Thomist!) mixes a defence of just wars with a belief that the spirit of self-sacrifice which marks the Christian soldier, 'is precisely that of the martyr, who yields up his life rather than be recreant to duty, to his church and to his God.' Robert L Dabney, *DISCUSSIONS: EVANGELICAL AND THEOLOGICAL* (1890), London: Banner of Trust 1967 Vol I, p 619.

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# The Nuclear Threat

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*Robin Dowling and Nigel Halliday*

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Christians must reckon with the fact of nuclear technology. It affects our lives both through the advantages and dangers of **nuclear power** and through the possibility of **nuclear war**. We will consider both areas because the availability of nuclear energy is a result of the primary goal of developing nuclear weapons.

Nothing in the world of technique, says Jacques Ellul, is so impressive as the machinery of war; and on no aspect of our corporate existence do we spend so much money, talent and emotional energy. In particular, Clarence Glacken speaks of 'the now almost limitless oblitative capacities of man' as that which most decisively sets us apart from the past. Similarly Arthur Koestler has written that the invention of nuclear weapons has been the single most decisive event in recent history.

In this article we are looking for 'given' principles to shape our responses to nuclear technology, but application of these principles is necessarily of a pioneering nature because of the uniqueness of the situation. We will focus firstly on nuclear power then on nuclear weapons, stating in each case some Biblical considerations and following them with discussion.

## **Nuclear Power**

### **Biblical considerations**

Nuclear power is an aspect of the earth's resources which are a gift of God, part of the immeasurable riches of the cosmos. But these are subject to the implied purpose of the making of man in God's image, stated in Genesis 1:26:

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground' (cf v 27ff)

One aspect of the expression of the image of God in man is his being entrusted with dominion over the rest of the created order (note the juxtaposition of 'our image' and 'rule'). This has too often been seen by Christians as a mandate for domination. But the key idea here is that of *stewardship* and dominion expressed not as mastery but as service. It is conferred dominion over a given earth, or subordinate ownership over the earth and its resources. The earth is the Lord's (Ps 24:1) he has given it to man (Ps 115:16; cf Ps 8:6). God owns the earth but has entrusted it into the keeping not of private individuals as such but mankind (the Hebrew 'ADAM' is generic here) whom he has equipped for the task and holds accountable. Also, since the earth is given to all mankind, its resources and produce are meant to be shared by all, not just by a few.

The above creation principle is important providing we take account of the fact, too often forgotten by some who emphasise creation ethics, that we live in a world

not only of creation, but also of the fall and redemption. The OT shows how creational principles still applied in a fallen world, but in a way which took account of the fall and the fact of God's redeeming activity. Whilst in its full 'spiritual' or typological application this gives perspectives to the church, the OT (in particular the Law) paradigmatically gives principles which are relevant to human society.<sup>1</sup> For Israel was to be 'a light to the nations' (Isaiah 49:6).

OT Israel provides us with a pattern, model or example. Not that modern secular, industrial societies should conform rigidly to the way of life of God's old covenant people. Rather, applications of the Law's principles may be made in different ways in different societies. But there is this pattern, this way of things, this paradigm.

Consider God's gift of the earth and its resources. The creation principle was rescued from the fallenness of the world (with its greed and power struggles) by the gift of the 'land' to Israel. The earth and its resources, in the microcosmic form of the land of Canaan, was shared among the Israelites, as God's gift distributed by 'lot' (see book of Joshua). This sharing was not on a mathematical basis, but in a way that provided for, and protected, the economic viability of the household (the extended family), the basic unity in that society. However, because of the effects of sin some would be landless and could only survive by selling themselves into slavery. Israelite law, whilst applying creational principles recognised the effects of the fall and the need for redemption activity to counter it, and so made special provision for their fair treatment and welfare, eg Ex 21:2-6. Again, the fact of sin meant that not all would share the produce of the earth in the way envisaged at creation. So the law made provisions such as the fallow year, when land was left for a year and its produce for the benefit of the poor (Ex 23:11); it also provided for gleaning, so that harvesting was not too thorough (in contrast to the pattern 'I've a right to *everything* I produce'), and the poor had access to gleanings from crops, vineyards, olive trees (Lev 19:9f). Also related to our subject, the sabbatical fallow year embodied a concern for the 'health' of the soil itself (as many of the OT food laws, it has been argued, bear in mind hygiene considerations).

Therefore in the use of the earth's resources it is not sufficient simply to argue from creational principles that we have complete domination over the world. We must exercise responsible stewardship in a way which not only takes account of our privileged position as God's stewards, but also takes account of the fallenness of the world and of the fact that the God whom we serve is a redeemer. Sufficient has also been said to indicate God's concern about ecology.

## Discussion

So, nuclear power is an aspect of the earth's resources which are a gift of God. But how is it to be used in a fallen world in a redemptive way?

Our first consideration should be that stewardship clearly demands that it must be for the benefit of *all*. And since this inevitably *won't* be the case, there should be protective measures to ensure that provision is made for those who do not automatically benefit. The question arises, then, whether the concern to develop nuclear energy is purely selfish, or can we distribute the benefits from first world to third world countries? To own resources does not give us absolute right of



disposal; rather, we have a mutual responsibility and we must look to the good of the whole human community.

But then secondly, given that nuclear energy is a part of God's creation, does the fall nevertheless make the use of such power untenable, such that we ought to forgo it? There are various factors to be borne in mind, and we have to decide how these should be weighed. We have to weigh up the damage caused to the environment by nuclear power (eg Chernobyl) and that caused by conventional oil or coal fired generators (eg acid rain, local soil corruption, damage to the ozone layer). And we have to assess the risks (ie other Chernobyls; transport of waste along routes through London; but also risks in oil and coal production). Do the creational benefits of nuclear power outweigh the risks? After all, energy always means risks, as seen in electric shocks, gas explosions, or the recent disaster on a North Sea oil rig. In assessing nuclear power, we wish to highlight three areas of concern: (a) the reasons why people want nuclear power anyway; (b) the dangers to civil liberties; (c) dangers to the environment and to people.

(a) **Why do people want nuclear power?** The first development of nuclear technology was for obtaining nuclear weapons, rather than electricity generation. However, with the development of nuclear reactors there seemed to be the promise of endless, cheap (almost free) electricity. This has, however, not been the case in the UK where nuclear energy is so expensive that (i) in its plans to privatise the electricity energy, the UK Government is planning to compel electricity suppliers to buy a certain proportion of their electricity from nuclear reactors (otherwise, market forces would induce them to buy cheaper electricity from conventionally powered generators); (ii) the Fast Breeder Reactor programme, which held the stronger promise of cheap electricity, has been greatly scaled down as it held no prospect of being financially viable for 30-40 years; (iii) much of the actual cost of developing existing nuclear reactors has been absorbed within the defence budget instead of being presented as a true cost of domestic energy. Judged by the costs charged to the electricity consumer, nuclear power therefore *seems cheaper* than it actually has been.

A second reason for wanting nuclear energy, however, is that our consumer and industrial society is so hungry for energy, and its consumption of energy is growing so quickly that nuclear power seems to hold the only prospect of meeting that demand. Fossil fuels and renewable resources seem unlikely to be able to fulfil such demands into the next century. This seems a very strong argument and one's response to nuclear energy is therefore tied to one's general view of modern consumer society. If we support the current trend of our society it is hard to argue against the need for nuclear power (almost irrespective of the dangers involved). On the other hand, one response to the question of nuclear power has come from what is called the '*the politics of enough*', rejecting further industrial growth and opting for a less consumer-oriented lifestyle. This would decrease the energy demand and enable us to survive with fossil and renewable resources, although it would almost certainly involve backtracking several stages from the present level of available technological achievements, and require a major reconstruction of our society's values and aspirations. Alternatively one could argue for limited further

industrial growth, with the rejection of nuclear power as one limitation voluntarily imposed on ourselves.

Is there a Biblical basis for forgoing exploitation of earth's resources? The OT certainly legislates against unlimited growth by means of the years of Jubilee. Here the tendency for the bulk of the land, and even many of the people, to be accumulated in the hands of the few, was periodically overridden by the necessary return of land and property in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8ff).

(b) **Civil liberties:** the danger of terrorist attacks on nuclear installations or on nuclear materials in transit and the risk of theft of nuclear material for blackmail have always been clear. There is therefore a tendency for separate, secretive police forces to take charge of nuclear installations. Different countries obviously have different police arrangements and different expectations of what the police should be like. But in Britain, for example, according to the London Nuclear Information Unit, there already exists what is effectively a private police force, the Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary. This consists of 650 officers, responsible primarily for protecting nuclear materials either inside nuclear installations or in transit but having broad powers to go anywhere in the country, armed if necessary. They are not, however, accountable to a police committee or even to the Home Secretary, but only to the Atomic Energy Authority itself. This, in the context of British expectations of the police, is alarming. The greater the dependence of a country on nuclear energy the more widespread would have to be the special police powers necessary to prevent evil-doers from attacking or stealing nuclear material. (For Biblical considerations which militate against such a police force, see next section.)

(c) **Dangers to the environment and to people:** no guaranteed safe means of disposal has been found for nuclear waste. Some waste will remain dangerous for thousands of years, and there are, by definition in this new technology, no means of disposal which we can be certain will remain safe for those thousands of years. In addition, we have regular transport of nuclear material by road and nuclear waste material by train. To take again an example from Britain, ten tons of nuclear waste passes through London every week, some of it using the railway through Highbury where it passes the head office of the Association of Grace Baptist Churches (South-East)! These trains all leak radiation and the public are recommended to keep at least 50 metres away from them.

As far as the safety of people working in the nuclear industry is concerned, the UK nuclear industry has so far had fewer deaths than occur in energy gained through coal mining. But one major accident could entirely overturn the figures, and in any case we do not yet know if there is serious radiation leakage, as suspected round Sellafield.

The ecological concerns reflected in the OT — and relevant to us in their general (paradigmatic) application — cannot merely be dismissed, at least by Christians, as being overridden by economic factors. Accidents do occur. We have the example of Chernobyl and the effects of its radiation spread across mainland Europe and Britain. In the UK in January 1987 a lorry carrying nuclear warheads overturned on an icy road. In a railway accident in 1984 a train caught fire in the Summit

Tunnel near Rochdale, with temperatures reaching 8000 degrees Centigrade. Happily, that train was not carrying nuclear material. But the UK Government subsequently admitted that such temperatures would have 'severely tested' the flasks used for carrying nuclear waste by train.

Are we really able to handle these powers? We as Christians should be sceptical of man's belief in his supreme ability to master nature. Given that accidents do occur, should we as Christians be warning our society that the risks are too great for us and urging them to reassess their goals and direction as a society?

## **Nuclear Weapons**

### **Biblical considerations**

The divine origin of the authority of governmental power is clear from the OT (eg Dan 4:17, 25, 32). This is also pointed up most clearly in Romans 13:1-7. It is a God-given, real (vv 1-2), but limited (vv 3-7) authority. The passage puts it in such a way that it applies to judges, policemen and those in a position of governmental oversight (v 3 speaks of 'the one in authority'). If a case *can* be made for 'just war' (this paper does not necessarily take this view), this passage provides it. A key role of government is certainly law and order, in the sense of the punishment and restraint of evil (vv 3a/4b). This may extend to the judicial taking of life (v 4 'sword'). But by extension a case could be made for 'just war', since the evil-doers whom the state has authority to punish may be aggressors who threaten it from without as well as criminals who threaten it from within. '*Machaira*' (sword), used several times in the NT, symbolises death by execution or in war (Luke 21:24, Acts 12:12).

Even if this case for 'just war' is conceded, the Christian cannot immediately argue for the use, or threatened use, of nuclear weapons. There are two factors to bear in mind: the state's role in rewarding good as well as punishing evil and the restrictions placed on its use of force.

(a) **The state has a double function** (vv 4a, 4b): it exists not only for the punishment and restraint of evil, but to provide the social benefits of good government. It must be concerned to reward, and so promote, *good*, as well as punish evil. It 'commends' those who do good (v 3) and exists to do its citizens good (v 4a). The state has a ministry which is for the *benefit* of 'good' citizens. Paul uses the words '*diakonos*' (the deaconing word), and '*leitourgos*' (a priestly word), elsewhere applied to the apostle and to Christ. So, in peacetime, the innocent must be protected and, in wartime, non-combatants should be provided with immunity. Therefore, the use of all indiscriminate weapons, or any weapon in an indiscriminate way, appears to be prohibited. This applies to 'conventional' as well as nuclear war. Some of the worst civilian casualties in history resulted from 'conventional' bombing — eg Tokyo (100,000 killed in one night's bombing, 23 May 1945) and Dresden — not from nuclear weapons (although clearly the fear is that 520 bombers were involved in the bombing of Tokyo, whereas in nuclear war only one plane carrying one bomb can inflict just as much, and more, damage and suffering).

(b) **Limitations on use of force:** On the question of the 'innocence' of the non-

combatant population, it may be countered that the civilian population is itself involved in supporting the war, through work in munitions factories, providing food and moral support for troops etc. However, as we have said, wars are to be fought with discrimination, and this implies the use of minimum necessary force. In this respect, Rom 13 suggests that the state's use of force must be *limited*. Force is allowable only in so far as it provides for the arrest, holding, trial and punishment of the wrongdoer (v 4b). Also, it is to be strictly limited to particular people, ie the wrongdoer. The whole implication is that only limited force is permissible, ie the force required to bring *criminals* to justice. The repressive measures of a police state are excluded. Also, in war (if war is permissible), force is to be controlled. Therefore, not only must there be discrimination but controlled use of weapons. The overkill capacity of nuclear arsenals and the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction seem to militate against this.

## Discussion

As with our discussion of nuclear power, our discussion of nuclear weapons is inevitably affected by our being subjects of the British nation, which both possesses its own nuclear war machine and is a member of the NATO alliance.

**'First use':** we need to distinguish between (a) possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent, ie as a defensive measure to deter others from attacking us with nuclear weapons; and (b) possession for 'first use' of nuclear weapons, where nuclear weapons would be used either as outright aggression or in response to an attack by conventional forces. The latter is the current policy of NATO, that it threatens to use nuclear weapons against any massed tank invasion of Europe. The NATO policy is mainly based on economics: it is cheaper to maintain a nuclear force than to keep 3 or 4 million men under arms. The nuclear weapons involved are of the smaller, 'battle-field' type, but their use carries the risk of escalation into an all-out nuclear war. In any case, battle-field weapons still tend to be indiscriminate to the surrounding population, and it is said with rather black humour that when we talk about the 'limited casualties' inflicted by battle-field nuclear weapons we are saying that they would only wipe out the entire population of Germany (rather than most of the western world). It seems to the current writers that it is difficult to find any Biblical warrant for 'first use' of nuclear weapons on grounds of cheapness or limitation of casualties.

**Deterrent:** despite what we have seen in our Biblical considerations, it can be argued that nuclear weapons still have a place as a deterrent, given the realism with which the Bible applies ethical principles. Nuclear weapons *exist* and we are unlikely to be in a position to change that, at least in the short term (cf existence of slavery in OT/NT). Nuclear weapons have so far only been used against a country that didn't possess them, and it seems unlikely that the US would have used them if Japan could have retaliated. It can therefore be argued that nuclear weapons *have* kept the peace.

Furthermore, non-possession of nuclear weapons probably means that one can never 'win' a conventional war against a country that possesses nuclear weapons. Possession of nuclear weapons can therefore be defended as a necessary part of being able to fight a conventional 'just war'. On the other hand, in assessing the

argument for deterrence one must also consider that deterrence involves the willingness to use nuclear weapons in the event of an attack, or at least the threat of willingness to use them.

## Final pleas

There are no simple answers to the dilemma of nuclear weapons. But given the dilemma, *we need more mutual understanding*. We need more mutual understanding between nuclear powers to make the use of nuclear weapons less likely. But we also need more mutual understanding within the Christian constituency over possession of nuclear weapons, between those who oppose nuclear weapons and those who support their retention (Rom 14). Those on both sides of the argument want peace and justice, but they differ in their views of how these are best secured. It is not enough to claim that pro-nuclear people would 'happily' press the button: that is probably one of the biggest moral burdens on the conscience of those who feel convinced by the arguments in favour of deterrence. Equally, it is not enough to accuse the whole anti-nuclear lobby of favouring Soviet world-domination: those who oppose nuclear weapons have to have the courage of their convictions that they would live under Soviet occupation (*if* the Soviets wanted to invade, or dominate) and maybe give their lives in passive resistance or underground warfare.

Still more, *Christians need to consider the fact of the world as a global community*. The possession of nuclear weapons tends to emphasise the distinctions between countries or alliances of countries. Is it consistent with the gospel to allow national considerations to overshadow the reality of the wider community of human beings across the whole world?

*We also need to consider the level of expenditure on armaments generally*, both nuclear and non-nuclear. According to US senator Mark Hatfield, across the globe we spend 15 times as much on armaments as we do on co-operation for economic and social improvement. Meanwhile, 10,000 people die every day from malnutrition.

Finally, we may take comfort in our Biblical faith that *the world will end with Christ's return, not with nuclear war*. Non-Christians understandably see this as dangerous talk, as it might tempt a Christian-influenced world leader to think about fighting and 'winning' a nuclear war. Rather, on the basis of Scripture we must work realistically for peace in the present (Mt 5) but we must ever let the fact of Christ's return control our perspective (Rev 22).

## Questions

We are aware that these considerations still leave a number of questions which evangelical Christians need to ponder if we are to come to an informed and relevant understanding of the issues. For example, is it an acceptable 'Christian' position to argue for the retention of nuclear weapons largely on economic grounds, ie because a nuclear deterrent is cheaper to maintain than a large 'conventional' defence force? Then it must be asked, what new ethical problems for the 'just war' position does the reality of nuclear weapons bring? Can one argue for the use of nuclear weapons at all in a 'just war'? Christians must also ask to what extent

they should be involved in furthering the peaceful use of nuclear power? Should they support the 'status quo' acceptance of the validity of nuclear energy in our society?

*Pastor Robin Dowling and Dr Nigel Halliday are both elders of Salem Baptist Church, Kew, Dr Halliday being an art historian. This article is adapted from a paper first given at the 1988 conference of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists of Europe.*

## References

1. The word 'paradigm' is taken from the study of grammar. A certain verb, for example, may be used to provide examples of the pattern that verbal prefixes or endings will follow in the case of other verbs of a similar type. 'A paradigm is something used as a model or example for other cases where a basic principle remains unchanged, though details differ.' (C J H Wright, *LIVING AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD*, IVP, 1983, p 43).

The paradigmatic approach to OT law and the social relevance of OT Israel has been developed by Christopher Wright. It is fully consistent with the distinctiveness of the New Covenant and is not to be confused with 'Christian Reconstructionism' and what the present writers regard as its dangerous implications for modern society.

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*People who do not believe in the essentials of the faith cannot be guilty of schism; they are not in the Church. We must not be afraid of saying this. Yet many Evangelicals only meet one another occasionally; their regular meetings are with people who are opposed to the essential matters of salvation. Too often our denominational loyalties are decided by the accident of birth. And for us to be thus divided from one another in the main areas of our lives and for the bulk of our time is schism.*

*Let me put it positively. Don't we feel the call to come together, not occasionally, but always? It's a grief to me that I spend so little of my time with some of my brethren. I want to spend the whole of my time with them. I am a believer in ecumenicity, evangelical ecumenicity. To me, the tragedy is that we are divided.*

**D M Lloyd-Jones**

National Assembly of Evangelicals

October 1966

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## Book Reviews

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### **J Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir**

*Ned B Stonehouse*

*Banner of Truth, 520 pp £5.95*

John Gresham Machen (1881-1937) was an influential figure in the earlier part of this century in the United States. His education in Princeton Theological Seminary was followed by studies in Europe and then his appointment as NT Instructor at Princeton (1906-1914). Machen was ordained to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in 1914 after years of doubt and anguish. In that year Dr Ross Stevenson was appointed President of Princeton and became an 'active spokesman and agent for a point of view which was ultimately destined to revolutionize the Seminary' (p 212) for worse, not better.

Machen's book, **CHRISTIANITY AND LIBERALISM**, published in 1923 'catapulted him into the centre of the arena of ecclesiastical and religious life where the broader controversy between Christianity and modernism was being fought' (p 335). As the Presbyterian Church and its Seminary favoured increasingly a broad ecumenism with modernism in its wake, despite the warnings and teachings of Machen, and many godly leaders, there was the inevitable but painful decision of Machen and others to withdraw from both. Led by clear biblical principles, Machen was the founder of Westminster Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania and worked to establish a truly evangelical Presbyterian church in the United States.

He was a scholar whose mind was always captive to the Word of God. His great love of Christ, deep concern for biblical truth and willingness to suffer for the gospel are a great challenge to our generation of Christians today.

### **Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography**

*Iain Murray*

*Banner of Truth, 503 pp £10.95*

This book has been meticulously researched and exceptionally well-written. Historically, it is reliable and illuminating; the biographer's grasp and appreciation of Edwards's theology and Christian experience make the book even more valuable. Undoubtedly, this is going to be the standard biography of Edwards for many decades to come.

Jonathan Edwards, of course, was one of the most able thinkers in America, if not in the West, in the eighteenth century; he was also an outstanding theologian and a diligent, godly pastor. This biography describes in a vivid yet honest way his life and work. Although serialized over many months in the *Banner* magazine, the material will be more useful to us in book form. I hope that members, as well as officers of our churches, will read and benefit from this outstanding book. The words of D Martyn Lloyd-Jones on the back cover are true: 'No man is more relevant to the present conditions of Christianity than Jonathan Edwards... He was a mighty theologian and a great evangelist at the same time. If you want to know anything about true revival, Edwards is the man to consult. My advice is, read Jonathan Edwards. Go back to something solid and deep and real!'

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4. To stimulate interest in contemporary theological matters among BEC churches by the way in which these topics are handled and by indicating their relevance to pastoral ministry.
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