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c o n t e n t s

- 1 _____ **Editorial**
- 2 _____ **The Toronto Blessing, Some Personal Reflections**
Graham Harrison
- 10 _____ **To Glorify and Enjoy God**
Review Article: Westminster Assembly Commemoration
Leslie Rawlinson
- 14 _____ **Exegesis 19: Revelation and Inspiration**
Ian Rees
- 19 _____ **Spirit and Word: Some Lessons from Puritanism**
Andrew Davies
- 28 _____ **Rebirth – Resurrection or Reincarnation?**
Philip Eveson
- 35 _____ **What is the Conscience?**
Gary Brady
- 42 _____ **Book Reviews**
Eryl Davies

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Toronto Blessing ■

Spirit and Word ■

Reincarnation ■

Conscience ■

foundations



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Editorial

Yes, the **TORONTO BLESSING** is the first subject in this issue of **Foundations**. Graham Harrison's **PERSONAL REFLECTIONS** are informed and stimulating as well as relevant.

Leslie Rawlinson then contributes a review article **TO GLORIFY AND ENJOY GOD**, which is a record of addresses given at the 1993 commemoration of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly. The book, as well as the review, are worth reading and the reviewer is particularly impressed by the Assembly's **DIRECTORY OF WORSHIP** which he regards as a neglected but important document for our churches today. "Boring", "brighter services", "greater participation" are a few of the modern slogans which express dissatisfaction with traditional worship patterns and help to change significantly church worship in many areas. The Directory can help us here.

An **EXEGESIS** article on **REVELATION AND INSPIRATION** is provided by Ian Rees in which he examines the teaching about Scripture in 1 Corinthians 2:6-13.

The theme of **SPIRIT AND WORD** is continued by Andrew Davies in which he draws out some important lessons from Puritanism. In his conclusion he warns us of the twin dangers of detaching the Word from the Spirit and also detaching the Spirit from the Word.

RE-BIRTH, RESURRECTION OR REINCARNATION? is the topical subject tackled by Philip Eveson in which he demonstrates convincingly how radically different the biblical teaching is from that of reincarnation. Another important read for you.

Gary Brady provides us with a carefully-written article on **CONSCIENCE**, considering the biblical material and arriving at a working definition. This will prove especially useful for evangelistic preaching and pastoral counselling.

Pressure of space has necessitated our holding over to the next issue the first instalment of Hywel Jones' article on **PAGAN SAINTS**. It is an examination of claims that some unevangelised people will be saved and we look forward to publishing it in Issue 35.

In the final article, I review a wide range of new books which may be of interest to you. Please encourage others to read, and subscribe to, **Foundations**.

BEC Theological Study Conference, March 1995

The Ministry of Women

A substantial report of the six papers given at this significant Conference will be published in Issue 35 of **Foundations** this autumn.

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The Toronto Blessing, Some Personal Reflections

Graham Harrison

It is still less than 12 months ago that the so-called 'Toronto Blessing' first landed on this side of the Atlantic. Taking its title from the Vineyard Church near the Airport in that most cosmopolitan of all Canadian cities and showing a remarkable propensity to find acceptance among a wide disparity of ecclesiastical groupings, the phenomenon by now has penetrated to most corners of the British Isles. It has found wide, though not universal, acceptance among charismatics of various labels as well as having its advocates and practitioners among more sedate and traditional mainline churches. Two churches in particular – one Anglican, Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB in the vernacular), and one Baptist, Queen's Road Wimbledon – seem to have been the centres from which its influence has spread far and wide.

Whatever one's initial reaction to reports of what was happening in these and other places it would be foolish simply to ignore it and to assume that like many other transatlantic peculiarities on the religious scene it would soon vanish away. I had already heard a friend (whose theological acumen I have good reason to respect) speaking of personal beneficial participation in it. Consequently I gladly seized an opportunity of attending both of the aforesaid churches to find out at first hand what was going on. These visits were supplemented by the tapes of Ellie Mumford (the wife of the minister of the Putney Vineyard Church) who allegedly was the human vehicle by which the 'Blessing' crossed the Atlantic, by two programmes on Welsh TV featuring the topic, and by attendance with some other ministers at a meeting in South Wales where all the activities associated with the movement were on display. Add to that various items of literature ranging from one of the many books written by its enthusiastic advocates to articles in the secular and religious press both for and against it, and these, such as they are, constitute my qualifications for putting pen to paper on this topic.

No doubt there will be those who will have deemed the whole exercise a waste of time, as anybody with the minutest quantity of theological nous should have been able to have seen from the beginning that whatever the origin of the Toronto Blessing it most certainly was not heaven. However, I happen to believe that sometimes strange happenings have occurred in the history of God's dealing with His people. There have been, as well, extraordinary activities that while ultimately bearing the clear mark of Satan initially perplexed and confused discerning men of God. Furthermore, the history of what Ronald Knox called '*Enthusiasm*' is littered with the stories of individuals and movements who once seemed to be carrying everything before them but who eventually ran into the sand, leaving behind as wreckage broken lives that once were sure that the hand of God was moving them in all that they did. Paul's words to the Thessalonians surely are still relevant: 'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' I endeavoured, therefore, to approach the whole investigation not naively, but with as biblically open a mind as it was possible for me to have and to make a genuine attempt

at some sort of assessment of what by now has become a widespread movement. Few would disagree that our land is in crying need of a visitation from heaven. There is precious little to encourage many congregations in their ongoing battle and surely we ought to be eager to learn of any authentic news that would signal the reversing of the ebb tide. I was especially wary of the 'knee-jerk' reaction (whether pro- or anti-) which seem to have characterized some of the pronouncements that have been made about it. I also wanted to avoid the rather fatuous adoption of the Gamaliel principle. '*Time will tell*' usually amounts to a theological cop-out!

Now the antecedents of what broke out in Toronto have been traced to some rather bizarre characters on the American extreme charismatic/Pentecostal scene - Rodney Howard-Browne and Kenneth Copeland. For some that constitutes the end of the discussion; enough said, so to speak. But again you cannot short circuit the discussion in that way. There have been those who query the authenticity of the 1859 Revival in Wales because Humphrey Jones, the man who brought it back from the USA, ended his time in Aberystwyth prophesying that the Holy Spirit would descend in bodily form on one of the local hills. Discernment is what is needed, not the instant quote made on the basis of the presence or absence of some notorious name somehow connected to those subsequently involved in the movement. It would not be difficult to show from history that our gracious God sometimes seems to read men's hearts rather than their heads in deigning to bless and use them.

What Actually Happens

These meetings typically begin with anything from 45 minutes up to an hour of what is called 'worship'. This invariably consists of a series of chorus-type songs, each usually quite short in duration and therefore leading to the inevitability of successive repetition. There will be a band or a music group leading the session. Most of the congregation will be standing for much of this time, many of them with their arms and hands raised. When prayer is offered it will probably have a background accompaniment of soft music. This not infrequently will continue into a time of communal prayer which usually will take the form of a general singing in tongues to the backing of a series of harmonious chords from the keyboard and/or the guitars. In the instances of which I have experience this was followed by a sermon (in one case lasting about 40 minutes). Then came the moment that everybody had been waiting for—the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes this was done simply with the words '*Come Holy Spirit*' or some such phrase as '*We invite You to come*'. At other times a more extensive prayer was offered and an indication was given to the congregation that they were likely to witness unusual things. It would be suggested to them that they must not feel inhibited about any physical response or effects that might be produced, and usually a variety of Scriptural quotations would be adduced to give validity to what it was anticipated would be happening. By this time space had been made at the front of the auditorium so that people could come forward to be ministered to by what were described as members of the 'Ministry Teams'. These could be authenticated by the badges they were wearing. This, presumably, was a well-intentioned precaution to prevent gatecrashers and weirdos from getting in on the act.

At this point various individuals would come forward for ministry. It was quite fascinating to observe the same technique which seemed to be followed in each of the centres that I attended. It could not properly be described as laying on of hands - at least not if the old-style Pentecostal way of doing this was in mind. Instead it seemed to be a peculiar

waving of the hands by one of the Ministry Team a few inches away from the head, face, shoulders and upper body of the recipient. Occasionally in some (but by no means all) instances a finger would touch the forehead, the nape of the neck or the shoulder. But emphatically there was no hand pressure to push the subject backwards or down. However, in most cases down they would go, some more quickly than others, some after a considerable time. In a few cases they never went down at all and the process was abandoned with the subject returning to his or her place. The actual 'descending' (this seems to me to be a better word than 'collapsing' to describe what happened) was almost invariably a quite gentle thing with the subject in some cases almost lowering himself to the floor.

There were other more violent episodes. Some were doing what is best described as 'jogging-on-the-spot'. This could go on for a considerable period of time. I did call into the Putney Vineyard church some time after their morning service had ended. Many had left, the musicians had abandoned their instruments, most people were standing around drinking coffee. But there was one woman jogging away on the spot with a lady standing by her presumably to catch her when exhaustion took over. There were also some in the other meetings that I attended who soon manifested a violent shaking of parts of the body or else were 'pogo-sticking' – bouncing up and down. Again, these led to eventual prostration in most cases. Apparently different centres have different physical reactions predominantly associated with them.

Most frequently it was when people were on the floor that the laughing began. This varied in nature, volume and intensity. Some were quietly giggling, others seemed to be having a good 'belly-laugh', while there were some who were shrieking in notes that would not have out of place for some of the witches in *Macbeth*. In HTB while this all was going on the person leading the meeting was constantly encouraging people to come forward for ministry or to indicate where they were so that members of the team could come to them to minister to them. At one point the clear exhortation was given, '*Don't be British!*'; by which I presume was meant that the stiff upper lip and the restraint of the emotions which otherwise might characterise a somewhat upper-crust Knightsbridge congregation would be better abandoned if they really wanted the blessing of God to come down on them.

The people who went forward seemed to be of a variety of types and backgrounds and they spanned a wide age range. The youngest I saw was in Wimbledon where a little girl who could not have been much more than 4 years of age, if that, was being 'ministered to' by two ladies who, even kneeling beside, her were still taller than she. That, I must confess, I found most disturbing as indeed was the participation of several other children in these activities there and in other centres.

I think I heard two 'lion roars' in HTB, although I could not be definite that this was not something to do with the amplification system. In any case such roars together with a variety of animal noises are part and parcel of the typical Toronto Blessing scene.

It was interesting to hear the testimonies of several who had experienced the 'Blessing'. None spoke of being in a state of unconsciousness while lying prostrate on the floor. Instead they described it as a very enjoyable experience. Some affirmed that they had had a vision of a beautiful and brilliant figure whom they presumed to be Christ. Many have testified to a greater love for God and a more urgent concern about spiritual things following such experiences. If such be the fruit, so it is argued, need we be paranoid about the root?

While some have spoken of the whole movement in terms of revival this is not what is

claimed by those most closely involved with it. They do, however, speak of it as being the likely precursor of revival, a sort of pre-libation, with the implicit suggestion that to resist it is to resist the working of the Holy Spirit. One of the most surprising features of the movement is the way in which it has trawled church history to identify instances of what is now described as the 'Toronto Blessing' occurring in quite other, and theologically impeccable, contexts. In essence this is not dissimilar to some of the more naive attempts to show that everybody who was anybody in Christian history has spoken in tongues. The current 'patron saints', so to speak, are Jonathan Edwards and particularly his wife Sarah. Ellie Mumford in particular slips into the eulogistic mode about the latter and claims her as a fascinating instance of one who had all that current advocates are claiming, but two and a half centuries before it hit Toronto. A careful reading of the descriptions that Jonathan Edwards gives of his wife's spiritual experiences will not, I think, verify the interpretation being put on them. Furthermore, there are elements conspicuously present in Edwards' accounts that are equally conspicuously absent from the current phenomena, as we shall see.

A Personal Assessment

Let me now turn to the question of how one is to attempt an assessment of this movement. There are, I think, three areas in particular in which it needs to be scrutinized with some care before its claims are either accepted or rejected *in toto*: the biblical and theological, the historical and the psychological. Each of these areas merits attention. There is the further consideration as to whether we are faced with a stark choice between total acceptance or total rejection of the whole as a sort of package deal. Might it be possible to say that there are people who have been blessed of God during their participation in the goings on at one or more Toronto Blessing meetings and at the same time to affirm that this does not thereby authenticate those proceedings? Perhaps an analogy will help to make this point. The Reformers were rightly highly critical of the Roman Catholic Church. Generally speaking they did not regard it as a true church of God. However, this did not lead them to anathematize all Roman Catholics and declare that they were not Christians. Rather, they recognized the work of God in such individuals, maintaining that such blessing as had come had been despite, not because of, the Church of Rome. Similarly there can be no doubt that a man like Staupitz helped Luther along the road to God even though it may be wondered whether he ever arrived himself. Some individuals whom I have spoken to have maintained that for months before they ever heard whether there was such a thing as the Toronto Blessing they had felt constrained to seek the Lord out of a deep sense of need and failure. Is it not the case that the Lord graciously condescends to such heartfelt seeking and visits the individuals concerned in a transforming way? They may well misread what He has been doing and commit the simple logical fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this, therefore, because of this), thus attributing the blessing to the instrumentality of the meetings that they have been attending. One does not therefore have to deny what seems to be an evident improvement in their spiritual experience in order to be able to hammer a movement that one might judge to be very seriously flawed, to put it no more strongly.

It is certainly not difficult to find fault biblically with the movement and its claims. To be frank, the simplistic equation it makes between the phenomena occurring in its meetings and various physical experiences recounted in Scripture as coming upon men in both Testaments who were encountering God borders on the absurd. The biblical instances

commonly adduced as supporting the phenomena usually include Ezekiel (1:28, 3:23), Daniel (8:17, 10:9) and even King Saul (1 Sam 19:24), as well as John (Rev 1:17) and the soldiers who came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:6). Even a cursory reading of these passages should be sufficient to establish a world of difference between what the Bible is speaking of and the type of experience referred to above. One thing seems to characterize the biblical happenings—a sense of awe and reverence together with a conviction of total unworthiness. If these factors were present in the meetings that I attended and especially in the experiences of the people lying prostrate or laughing or jumping, then I must admit that it was not at all evident to the onlooker. The impression rather was one of hilarity and light-heartedness, not to say light-headedness!

Some questions, then, need to be asked about the phenomenon that has become most typical of the Toronto Blessing - **laughter**. This is the feature that has been fastened upon by the secular media in the cynical way that one has become accustomed to expect of them when they deal with anything related to Christianity. The sad thing is that this time they have been presented with all the ammunition they need to make their case. Now let me make it abundantly clear what I am saying. I am well aware of the fact that there are instances in church history of outbreaks of laughter among the Lord's people when He has drawn near to bless them. In most times of revival there is an outbreak of joy that sometimes is expressed in laughter. After all, the New Testament does speak of 'joy unspeakable and full of glory'. But that is hardly what we are being confronted with here. Instead it has become the expected, indeed the invariable, pattern that these meetings have as their central and expected result fits of laughter. Before someone objects that surely there is biblical warrant for this and trots out Psalm 126:2, 'Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing', a little work with the concordance and lexicon would be advised. Words sometimes translated as 'laugh' or 'laughter' occur some 80 times in the Old Testament. Apart from the instances describing the reactions of Abraham and Sarah to news of the forthcoming birth of Isaac almost all of the remaining occurrences are to do with scorn and derision, often directed by the enemies of God against His people and sometimes by the Lord Himself at those enemies. Nor does the New Testament provide any contrary evidence. There are only six occurrences of words for laughing and laughter. Three of them describe the derision that greeted our Lord's affirmation that Jairus' daughter 'sleepeth'; one (James 4:9) speaks of laughter being turned to mourning; the other two (Luke 6:21, 25) have the same contrast. It would therefore seem quite extraordinary to claim that laughter is seen anywhere in Scripture as a recognizable indication of the blessing of God. Still less could it be held that there is any biblical warrant whatsoever for conducting meetings with the hope and intent that such laughter will ensue. Exactly the same sort of objection must be raised against the use made of those Scriptures that mention drunkenness. 1 Samuel 1:13f., Acts 2:13ff. and Ephesians 5:18 are pressed into service to prove that a state of high spirituality quite possibly will be read as apparent inebriation and that the physical effects sometimes associated with the Toronto Blessing are thoroughly in line with such precedents. Indeed the suggestion is that such a condition is virtually presumptive evidence that what has caused it is of God. But contrition for sin, a deep self abasement coupled with an overwhelming feeling of unworthiness, these are the marks that seem to accompany profound and life-changing experiences of God as they are recorded in the Bible, not hilarity. Yet in none of the meetings that I have attended connected with the Toronto Blessing has there been any evidence of such factors. In short, neither in their actual references from Scripture nor in their method of handling

it, their hermeneutical principle, if you want to dignify it by that title, do they succeed in showing that there is either biblical precedent or biblical principle to justify what has become the hallmark of these proceedings.

What then of history? Does its testimony provide the support that the advocates of the movement need? Judging by the remarkable way in which Jonathan Edwards and his wife Sarah figure so prominently in the current Toronto apologia, one could be pardoned for thinking that there must be a direct theological line drawn from the frontier town of Northampton to the modern Canadian city. Hasten the day when theological connections of a more substantial order could be perceived! Who knows whether the fact that Edwards' writings on the Great Awakening have suddenly become best-sellers in this constituency will yet produce surprising spin-offs?

However, any such connecting line is tenuous and sketchy, to put it mildly. The reality is that Edwards (whether Mr or Mrs) and Toronto are poles apart. Most certainly there were remarkable phenomena associated not only with the Great Awakening in general, but with Edwards' part in it in particular. And Edwards does not explain them away. But neither does he seek to promote them. Never does he set up a meeting designed to cater for the likely outbreak of physical manifestations. No New England 'ministry teams' are to be found hovering hands over willing subjects prior to the latter's collapsing with shrieks of raucous laughter. There were many instances of bodily convulsions. But they happened: they were not sought. Yes, Sarah Edwards had remarkable experiences which some, rightly or wrongly, have described as being akin to levitation, and her husband in recounting them makes it absolutely clear that he believed them to be of God. But they simply were not what is happening on the Toronto scene. Contrary to what Ellie Mumford and others are saying she is never described as being 'drunk as a lord' or 'drunk as a newt' for days on end. She knew rapturous experiences of the majesty, glory and mercy of a sovereign God that deeply humbled her. Her husband in describing them makes her anonymous and did not embark on a policy of trying to reproduce them wholesale across the colony or even in the town. Emphatically, if the analogy be permitted, one would have to say that he was driving with one foot on the brake rather than the accelerator!

Basically the same comments need to be made regarding, say, the 1859 Revival in Ulster. Undoubtedly there were prostrations and 'trances' lasting in some cases for considerable periods of time. But once again it needs to be said that they *happened*. They did not become part of the agenda of the Revival. In Ulster, as in the Great Awakening, the Methodist Revival, the 1904 Revival and innumerable others, what was produced was a multitude of people being converted. Often it was in connection with the trauma that might accompany this great work of conversion that the most remarkable physical phenomena occurred.

Thirdly, it will not be irrelevant to ask whether there might not be powerful **psychological** factors at work that may well account for some of the characteristics of the movement. To raise this possibility is not to place oneself in the camp of the Dr William Sargants of this world who evidently think that giving a psychological description of religious happenings means that you have evacuated them of significance for thinking men and women. It is simply to acknowledge that many ostensibly religious activities of various ilks may have an entirely sufficient explanation in this rather than in the spiritual realm. To fail to recognize this may be to do serious damage to the cause of Christ. It may also have devastating consequences for those who are swept along on the prevailing tide under the delusion that they are being borne along by the Holy Spirit. Many such eventually become

spiritual casualties, who in turn enable the sceptical world to say 'I told you so'.

But is it fair to bring such charges against these activities and those who are so vigorously promoting them? On the face of it some would immediately respond that these dangerous elements are absent from the meetings. They would point out that in most cases the meetings proceed in what might be described as a normal, mildly charismatic way – the typical opening period of worship, the familiar songs and choruses, the band, and so on. I readily admit that what I have to say has implications far wider than the particular scene we are considering. I would want to contend that this very style of worship, even though it be quiet and apparently non-emotional (as it is in many cases), is nevertheless very powerful, if subtle, in the psychological pressures that it brings to bear on its participants. Consider the following factors. The atmosphere is relaxed and easy-going. People are off their guard. The music is repetitive as are the lyrics, and both are undemanding of any serious mental commitment. The period of time during which people are standing, often with raised arms and closed eyes, has a wearying effect physically and a wearing effect psychologically. There can be little doubt it all combines to produce a soporific influence under which the audience unwittingly finds itself conditioned into a receptive state of suggestibility. Many of them have come with a predisposition in the direction of the phenomena that are expected to occur in the proceedings. Moreover (and in saying this I impute no evil motives to those leading the meetings) the programme is conducted by leaders who are expert manipulators of the social emotions of such meetings. They seem to know when to linger and when to move on, how to strike a particular emotional note, using the music often expertly to that end. Their interjected comments, occasionally disparaging those who might disagree with what is likely to be going on, the suggestions that the Lord is present in a special way, the claims that He is going to do something remarkable in this meeting tonight, all contribute to what might not be recognized as being but that nevertheless is a highly charged emotional atmosphere which relentlessly presses down on those who are now beginning to feel guilty and spiritually inadequate if they were to deny the validity of the proceedings.

Such gatherings are ripe for hypnotic suggestion. Once it is realized that hypnosis is by no means confined to the music hall caricature of a man in a black cloak and a twirly moustache swinging his gold hunter watch pendulum-like before the increasingly glazed eyes of his victim, this allegation is not as absurd as some would claim. A number of Christian, as well as unbelieving, practising psychiatrists have asserted as much.

At this point reference should be made to the distinctive pattern of hand and arm movements made by the Ministry Team as they deal with the candidate. There is a strangeness about it and certainly no scriptural precedent for it. An interesting article a few months ago in *TIME Magazine* described what it called '*A No-Touch Therapy*', or TT. It made no connection whatsoever with the Toronto technique, but anyone who has seen the latter will have no difficulty in recognizing potential affinities:

'Keeping her hands a few inches away from her seated patient, nurse Janet Quinn moves them around his body from head to toe, as if she were brushing away cobwebs. At the end of each sweeping motion, her eyes closed, she makes a dismissive gesture, as if shaking water off from her fingertips.

Quinn is giving 'therapeutic touch' (TT), a controversial form of therapy that is spreading through the ranks of nursing and already claims tens of thousands of practitioners in the U.S. and many foreign countries. According to its proponents, TT not only comforts and relaxes patients, but also relieves pain, produces chemical

changes in the blood and promotes healing.

Or maybe, as its detractors contend, TT is a form of New Age gibberish, a no-touch laying on of hands that has no legitimate place in medicine.'

(TIME, November 21, 1994, page 82. *I owe this reference to my friend Revd John Edmonds of South Woodford*)

Another factor which could be of significance in this area is the report of people who experience something not unlike what, I believe, is known technically as 'hypnotic regression'. The stage hypnotist, while having the subject under hypnosis, implants a word or a phrase somehow into his subconscious. When the subject is brought out of the trance, the repetition of that word or phrase will act as a trigger mechanism with the result that he will again come under the hypnotic influence. Ellie Mumford describes how one American clergyman who had received the Toronto effect at the Airport Vineyard Church when the invocation 'Come Holy Spirit' was given and immediately found himself doing 'carpet time' (as they call it), was writing this up subsequently for his church magazine. When he came to that point in his writing when he was about to put down those same words 'up came the carpet'. The laughter which greeted this when she recounted it at HTB was immediately exceeded when she went on to say how that as she flew back on Air France and was writing this up in her diary half way across the Atlantic exactly the same thing happened to her!

I noted also both from public testimony that was given in various meetings and also from private conversation that the experience was sought repeatedly by several who had received it initially. It was as if they could not go on without it. They had it last Sunday and now they needed it again. Nothing wrong with that in principle, you might say. Do we not all want more and more of the same grace of God? And I suppose you are right. But I have a nagging doubt at the back of my mind. Where have I heard all this before? The answer is, in the drug scene. The junkie has a fix that puts him on a high—for a while. But then it wears off and he must get another shot, and the sorry cycle continues. Was what I was hearing a sort of sanitized 'Christian' version of the same cycle? I, for one, could find no parallels from the New Testament to justify such habits.

Conclusion

Regretfully, therefore, (and I mean that word) I have found nothing to convince me that the many thousands of Christians who by this time have allied themselves to the principles of the Toronto Blessing are right in their convictions and explanations. I do not doubt their sincerity. Nor do I find it necessary to affirm that the Lord has not blessed any of them. To be honest, I did not sense anything sinister or Satanic at the meetings that I have attended. I do recall, however, that the Scriptures do speak of Satan donning the garb of an angel of light and that he specialized in wiles and devices. My increasingly firm conviction is that somewhere along the line there may well be a lot of pieces to pick up, wounded and disillusioned Christians to be helped, cynical unbelievers to be shown the authentic gospel and, hopefully, another Great Awakening that will banish these lesser so-called blessings into the obscurity of history.

Rev Graham Harrison MA is minister of Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Newport

To Glorify and Enjoy God

Leslie Rawlinson

This review article reflects on the COMMEMORATION OF THE 350TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY, published by the Banner of Truth (338 pages, £15.95).

The Assembly was convened in Westminster Abbey on the 1st July 1643 and dissolved on the 25th March 1652. At the behest of Parliament it had produced a Confession of Faith, two Catechisms (a shorter and a larger), a Form of Church Government and a Directory for Public Worship. There have been several commemorations of the Assembly during the past 350 years and David W Hall, one of the editors of this volume, has contributed an informative account of them in the Introduction. A preface, however, from his co-editor, John L Carson, insists that this latest occasion was more than a commemoration; it was a celebration bringing together Christian people from Australia, Korea, Brazil, The Netherlands, America and Britain.

It took place in 1993 from 23rd to 25th September in Westminster Abbey, the Abbey Church of St. Margaret, and Westminster Chapel. The addresses given are divided into three sections. The first section consists of three addresses on the Context and Work, the Men and Parties, and the Preaching of the Assembly by Samuel T Logan Jr, William S Barker and Robert Norris respectively. Much of this section is historical but we are introduced to the various groups involved, namely, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Erastians and the Scottish Delegation. Of the divines selected for mention we meet William Goudge, one of the oldest and most highly regarded members of the Assembly; Thomas Goodwin, an Independent respected for his learning and godliness; Herbert Palmer, whose background was upper class, but whose preaching was plain and simple, designed to reach ordinary people. In the Assembly his contribution was considerable and he was known for his prudence in dealing with "tricky" problems. Then, there was the Scottish Commissioner, George Gillespie, appointed with Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford and Robert Baillie to attend the Assembly as a consequence of the Solemn League and Covenant. His influence was felt in the debates regarding Church Government, strongly arguing for Presbyterianism.

The second main section of the addresses deals with the five enduring achievements of the Assembly mentioned earlier. Wayne R Spear defends the Confession of Faith against the charge that it represents a departure from mainstream Christianity via "Post-Reformation Scholasticism". In particular, he argues that its doctrine of Scriptures is simply what B B Warfield called "... the careful and well-guarded statement of what is delivered by Scripture concerning itself".

Douglas F Kelly, in his treatment of the Assembly's *Shorter Catechism*, reminds us that the "clarity, brevity and harmony, along with the authoritative Scriptural proof texts" found in this Catechism, have combined to give it "an unexcelled acceptance with generations of church people across the world for more than three centuries". He defends

the catechetical method of education against modern derogatory criticism, affirming that true knowledge is usually developed by finding the right answers to the right questions. The merit of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism is that it engages the mind with the kind of questions that evoke correct Biblical answers and thus stimulate a growing knowledge of God. But the Catechism itself, according to Kelly, subordinates propositions, and belief in them, to the person to whom they are "...a scarlet cord to lead us, so that we may repose all our trust in Him".

The third product of the Assembly was its **Longer Catechism**. W Robert Godfrey compares it with the Shorter Catechism. The latter, he affirms, "deliberately focuses on individuals whereas the former focuses much more on the Christian community. The Shorter Catechism does not even have a definition of the church, whilst the Larger contains a fully developed, reformed doctrine of the church". The Shorter "is relatively brief in its treatment of the means of salvation"; the Larger "develops these means much more fully. . . and is also more specific about the ordinances of God". Indeed, according to Robert Godfrey, the Longer Catechism is a "full, balanced, edifying summary of the Christian faith".

John R de Witt deals with the Assembly's fourth achievement, the **Form of Church Government**. He shows that the Westminster Divines were set the huge task of reforming church government biblically. Differing biblical interpretations were represented in the Assembly so that its Form of Church Government, though the fruit of much labour and complete as regards its essential elements "has the appearance of a penultimate book of church order rather than of a polished and finished document". John de Witt avers that we face today an unfinished task and that "we have to be sure as we move forward and as we re-think and re-draw and re-structure - once more on the foundation of the holy Word of God - that we do so in humility, in obedience to the Lord, and in a way broader than our own tradition or interest, and with a wide desire to reach out and to accommodate in our embrace brothers and sisters who are essentially one with us and who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity".

The fifth and last enduring achievement of the Assembly is the **Directory for Public Worship**, which was, in fact, chronologically its first publication. Iain H Murray draws attention to the principles governing the teaching of the Directory. Only what is commanded in Scripture is to be regarded as essential in worship but this does not rule out the place of Christian prudence and common sense in matters pertaining to it. In public worship all are called to praise their Creator, Preserver and Ruler but true worship is spiritual, relying on the Holy Spirit at work in the hearts of the gathered worshippers. There are no liturgical prayers in the Directory but that does not mean that it is weak on public prayer. On the contrary it contains comprehensive guidance regarding the conduct and content of prayer in services of public worship. Such guidance is worthy of close study by ministers and congregations. Iain Murray remind us that the compilers of the Directory thought it necessary to include a section on "the sanctification of the Lord's Day", and indication that they believed "that a true view of public worship stands or falls with a true view of the sanctification of that day".

The third and final section draws attention to three **Grand Themes** of the Assembly. The book concludes with an "Afterward" by Jay Adams on the Influence of Westminster and three appendices on the Unfinished Westminster Catechism by Wayne Spear, the Parliamentary Background of the Assembly, and a Bibliographical Guide - both by David Hall. James M Boice deals with the first grand theme of the Assembly, the **Sovereignty**

of God. He begins by stressing the importance of the doctrine. "It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of God's sovereignty", he declares. It is "an essential attribute of God, without which God would be proven to be no god. It is interwoven with God's other attributes, which could never be exercised apart from it. It gives meaning and substance to all the other doctrines. Far from being an abstract philosophical or theological concept, it is deeply relevant to the Christian. God's sovereignty is the Christian's "strength and comfort in this life".

James Boice draws on the experience of King Nebuchadnezzar, as recorded in the book of Daniel, for a powerful example of sinful man's rebellion against God's sovereignty and of the futility and folly of engaging in such a course. In judgement God smote the proud king of Babylon with terrifying afflictions, until he came humbly to acknowledge that "the Most High is Sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes" (Dan 4:32).

The blessings of appreciating Divine Sovereignty are greatly to be desired and James Boice draws attention to three, namely, the deepening veneration of the living God, comfort in trials and encouragement and joy in evangelism. "If God cannot convert depraved and rebellious human beings", concludes James Boice, "it is certain that you and I cannot. The situation will be hopeless. But if, on the other hand, God is sovereign... then we can be bold in evangelism, knowing that God has chosen to use weak messengers like ourselves to reach other people with the message of the cross and to bring Him glory".

The second grand theme of the Westminster Assembly was the **Pre-eminence of Christ**. Joel Nederhood deals with this theme under three headings; Christ and predestination, Christ the Mediator and Christ as the Source of every spiritual benefit. He admits that he was "overwhelmed by emotion" as he approached "this most majestic of subjects". He shows that predestination means that salvation is by the grace of God alone and his emotion comes through as he declares: "So, with awed response, we acknowledge the ineffable supremacy of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the Person upon whom our salvation centred before creation came to be. As we think of him and praise him, we are overwhelmed by the splendour of this revelation. Before the stars were set in place, my Saviour knew me by name, and he has done whatever is necessary to insure that my salvation will be actualized in history and in my life, Praise the Lord!"

Nederhood develops his second major theme by pointing to the pre-eminence of Christ as expressed in his work as the Mediator between God and man. He stresses the word *work*. Jesus, the Mediator, appears as the perfect worker wholly absorbed in the mighty task of achieving redemption for and in his people. Not only was Jesus "involved in the election of his children before the creation of the world, but he came to be among us. Here he accomplished the mightiest work of all, the achievement of reconciliation between God and man. He is our Prophet, our Priest, our King. . . Salvation is his work from beginning to end".

Finally, our attention is drawn to Christ's pre-eminence as the Source of *all* spiritual good. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. It is the Holy Spirit, sent from the Father and the Son, who comes into the lives of Christian believers and works in them all that the pre-eminent Christ achieved for them in his death, resurrection and ascension. "... Christ is the source of the rich multitude of blessings we receive through faith. Even the works we do for him, he has not only prepared, but also empowers us for their execution. There is no spiritual good of which we are the origin; he is the origin of it all". Nederhood concludes with a stirring call to Christians to point people to the pre-eminent Christ.

The last of the grand themes of the Assembly to be expounded was the **Application of Redemption**. Referring to Rom 8:29-30, Eric J Alexander focused on three words bearing on the process by which sinners are brought by God into the experimental knowledge of His saving grace. These three words, *called, justified and glorified*, are then expounded clearly and powerfully.

Opinions vary as to which of the Westminster Assembly's achievements are most relevant for us today. Because doctrine is always relevant and important, the Assembly's Confession of Faith will be seen by many as its greatest legacy. I agree, but the Directory of Worship ought also to be considered as a useful document highly relevant to today's church. For example, today there is a restless seeking after change to make services brighter and more attractive to people. Are we not absorbed with the outward trappings of worship? The more important question is how we can change our worship to make it more acceptable to God who is, or ought to be, the grand object of our praise. The Assembly's Directory of Worship contains a response to such a question. It has to do with our spiritual condition and our priorities. It teaches us that all acceptable worshippers of the Lord must worship him in spirit and in truth. Iain Murray reminds us that one of the main concerns of those who have clamoured for change has been for greater "participation". "It is said that people should cease to be passive onlookers and mere listeners in services; they need to be *participants*". With that sentiment the Puritans would no doubt have agreed, and Iain Murray believes that "the contemporary call for participation is in real danger of going back to the outward, the physical and the visual. For the Puritans, what makes true participation is the influence of the Holy Spirit, who alone can unite hearts and help congregations to offer 'prayer and supplication in the Spirit' (Eph 6:18). It is when there is a united quickening of the inward graces of faith and reverence, of love and praise, that there is true participation in public worship".

It would be good for congregations and church members to give themselves to a carefully planned and prayerful study of the Assembly's Directory of Worship. It will drive us to study our Bibles. Who knows what the result might be for us? It could lead to a re-discovery of that kind of worship which truly pleases God and to which the Assembly's Directory points. It could lead to a renewal of the life of the church in love and devotion to God. As the Puritan Stephen Chamock put it, "love is God's right in every service, and the noblest thing we can bestow upon him in our adoration of him. . . When the affection is set to the worship of God, everything the soul hath will be bestowed upon it. . . The happiness of heaven consists in a full attraction of the soul to God, by his glorious influence upon it". Our happy, holy objective in public worship must be to please God and make our church services an anticipation and foretaste of the worship of heaven.

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Exegesis 19: Revelation and Inspiration

Ian Rees

An examination of 1 Corinthians 2:6-13 and its teaching about the nature of Scripture.

There are times when Spurgeon's famous dictum about not defending the Bible ("I would sooner defend a lion") is inadequate. It is quite true that the Bible, being the Word of God, is well able to defend itself and is not chained by human disbelief or attempts to consign it to the waste bin. But the great man did not intend that we should stand on the touch-lines while New Age philosophies and liberal theology convert society around us to religious pluralism and relegate the Scriptures to just another holy book (and a bad one at that). Nor was he suggesting that we do not help believers so shaken by assaults on their faith that they question the authenticity of the Bible itself.

No. Christians need help to resist the temptation to weaken in their trust of the Bible and its authority. They need reassurance (and proof) that the Bible really is the Word of God in order to resist the scepticism of our unbelieving age and avoid the pitfalls of liberal interpretations offered in many churches.

This section of Paul's letter is a powerful antidote to doubt and disbelief, in that it combines instruction on two vital themes that deal with two areas of doubt about the Christian message.

In the first, Paul helps us to face the ancient notion that it is not possible to know God. Liberal theology, being a modern manifestation of that old idea, tells people that God is "mysterious" and beyond knowing with any certainty. Paul, without claiming it is possible to know God absolutely, tells us that knowing God is possible because He reveals Himself to us.

The second theme concerns itself with the question of how we can know that the Bible is right. It is all very well for Paul to claim divine revelation, but how can we be sure that he (that is, Paul) recorded it correctly? What is there to assure us that the version we have is still God's words and not Paul's to a greater or lesser degree? We are all aware of the solutions offered today: the apostles got it wrong; they were misled; they embellished the facts; the Bible therefore only contains the Word of God. . . to name but a few. Paul's answer is to explain how the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles and writers to record the truth using God's words.

This passage therefore addresses the dual themes of **Revelation** and **Inspiration**. According to Hodge, "there is neither in the Bible nor in the writings of men a simpler or clearer statement of [these] doctrines."¹ He defines them as follows:

"Revelation is the Spirit's act of communicating divine knowledge to the mind.

Inspiration is the same Spirit's act of controlling those who make the truth known to others."²

Elsewhere he makes the observations that "the object of revelation was the communication of knowledge. The object of inspiration was to secure infallibility in teaching.

Consequently they differ. . . in their effects. The effect of revelation was to render its recipient wiser, the effect of inspiration was to preserve him from error in teaching.³ The reason for Paul's excursion into this field is that he was answering his critics' accusations that his preaching was without wisdom or power (1:18-2:5). His message was regarded as foolishness (1:23); and his method, lacking in eloquence or oratorical power (2:1). He counters such attacks by informing us that the Christian message owes nothing to human wisdom, but is rather a demonstration of God's wisdom, since it is founded upon Christ crucified.

The Message Revealed, 2:6-10a

With his rebuttal of human wisdom in mind, he goes on to say that the Christian message is nevertheless true wisdom from God that believers recognise. There is some debate about who "the perfect" are, as the word usually refers to mature believers⁴, but Hodge is of the view that the context demands that Paul is speaking of believers in contrast to unbelievers⁵. These latter, whose viewpoint is framed solely by the wisdom of the present age, do not recognise the wisdom of God in what the apostles spoke (2:6). The reason for such a failure is put in terms that demonstrate the depths of man's inner darkness and the need for revelation from God.

Paul says that the wisdom they speak of is "God's secret wisdom" (2:7). The leaders of Jesus' day, whose thinking was patterned by the wisdom of the age, did not understand it and demonstrated their ignorance by finally crucifying the "Lord of Glory" (2:8)⁶. Paul uses the word *mysterion* ("secret", NIV), which "has about it nothing of the mysterious in our sense of the word. It does not signify a puzzle which a man finds difficult to solve. It signifies a secret which man is wholly unable to penetrate. But it is a secret which God has now revealed. At one and the same time the word points to the impossibility of man's knowing God's secret, and to the love of God which makes that secret known to man."⁷ The darkness is only emphasized by a further explanation that this wisdom was "hidden" (2:7) and was simply beyond the thoughts of men (2:9). There are grammatical difficulties with Paul's use of the Old Testament at this point. He appears to be giving a quotation ("it is written"), yet what he says does not correspond to any particular OT passage. Morris concludes that "it seems best to think of this verse as a rather free citation of Is 64:4 with reminiscences of other scriptural passages."⁸ Another problem comes out of the fact that the quotation simply ends in the air without concluding properly. Hodge refers us to "the custom of the apostles to quote passages from the Old Testament without weaving them grammatically into their own discourses."⁹ Any grammatical problems do not, however, obscure the intended meaning, that it was simply not within man's natural capacity to fathom out the depths of God's glory prepared for us.

With man's darkness as a back-drop, Paul is now able to highlight God's revelation. This is a turning point within the passage as Paul draws a great contrast: men are unable to penetrate the secrets of God but are not in darkness any longer because God has revealed them (2:10). He uses the word *apokalupto* to reinforce his previous emphasis upon God's secret and hidden wisdom, because it means the unveiling of something previously hidden¹⁰. What he puts in focus here is the source not only of his authority as an apostle but of the authority of the Bible itself. He is stating that the Christian message comes from God, having been revealed to the original apostles and writers by the Holy Spirit. It has not been worked out by an agile mind but has rather been uncovered to show those who could not possibly find it.

There is therefore no boasting on Paul's part as he writes these words: he at one time persecuted the church out of the same ignorance¹¹ that brought about the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. The difference between Paul and his former allies is that God revealed the truth to him. And there can be no boasting in our knowledge of the truth. What knowledge we have has come to us only through the mercy and grace of God. At the same time this short sentence answers the false humility of modern belief systems. It rebukes the liberal theology that suggests we cannot know God and refuses to acknowledge that God Himself has told us something. It contradicts the spiritual permissiveness of New Age philosophies which maintain that faith is a matter of opinion or personal taste. In opposition to these voices it proclaims that continued ignorance and fudging of the truth is inexcusable; there is light for our darkness because God Himself has provided it; we can know, because we have been told.

The Teacher Inspired, 2:10b-13

Paul's remark about the Spirit revealing the truth to him sparks off the next subject: that of inspiration. This is a vital question, since attacks on the Bible are often frequently directed at its trustworthiness. So we need to be confident that what Paul and the apostles taught corresponds to what God showed them. Paul answers this in a step-by-step argument, leading to a stunning conclusion.

His first statement, in 2:10b,11, clarifies how the Spirit is able to reveal God to us. Paul says that the Spirit searches the deep things of God, so that, just as no one knows the inner thoughts of a man except his own spirit within him, no one is capable of knowing God's thoughts except His Spirit¹².

Out of this Paul then makes the bold assertion in 2:12 that he and the other apostles have received this Spirit (not 'spirit', as AV), in consequence of which they are now able to understand "what God has freely given us," hence the difference between their understanding and the ignorance of their rulers.

But in 2:13, Paul's argument reaches its high-point, as he explains how it is they can actually communicate that understanding. He says that he and the apostles speak of God's free grace not merely in their own words but in words taught by the Spirit. The enigmatic phrase that follows (*pneumatikois pneumatika sunkrinontes*) can be translated and interpreted a number of ways but the context is, in the end, the determining factor in its meaning. Hodge is satisfied that the verb should be translated 'explaining',¹³ ('expressing', NIV), but Morris is unconvinced¹⁴ and, along with Vine¹⁵, takes it to mean 'combining' or 'joining fitly together'. The two nouns in the phrase are problematical since it is not immediately obvious whether they are masculine or neuter, or what they therefore refer to. The context, however, brings us to conclude that Paul is reinforcing what he has just said, and is pointing out that they combine spiritual things (truths) in/with spiritual words.¹⁶

This is a staggering claim, for it is stating that the Bible is not inspired solely in its ideas but also in its words. As Hodge says:

"This is verbal inspiration or the doctrine that the writers of the Scriptures were controlled by the Spirit of God in the choice of words which they employed in communicating divine truth. This has been stigmatized as the 'mechanical theory of inspiration', degrading the sacred penmen into mere machines. It is objected to this doctrine that it leaves the diversity of style which marked the different portions of the Bible, unaccounted for. But, if God can control the thoughts of a man without making

him a machine, why cannot He control his language? And why may He not render each writer, whether poetical or prosaic, whether polished or rude, whether aphoristic or logical, infallible in the use of his characteristic style? If the language of the Bible be not inspired, then we have the truth communicated through the discolouring and distorting medium of human imperfection. Paul's direct assertion is that the words which he used, were taught by the Holy Ghost."¹⁷

Of course, what Hodge mentions at the end of that quotation is exactly our problem today. It is *not* generally accepted that the Bible is inspired in its words, so it is inevitably treated as just another religious tract, written by men and containing a mixture of truth and error, which has been "discoloured and distorted" by the channels through which it came. It is B B Warfield who gives one of the classic answers to this objection:

"As light passes through the coloured glass of a cathedral window, we are told, is light from heaven, but is stained by the tints of the glass through which it passes; so any word of God which is passed through the mind and soul of a man must come out discoloured by the personality through which it is given, and just to that degree ceases to be the pure word of God. But what if this personality has itself been formed by God into precisely the personality it is, for the express purpose of communicating to the word given through it just the colouring which it gives? What if the colours of the stained glass window have been designed by the architect for express purpose of giving to the light that floods the cathedral precisely the tone and quality it receives from them? What if the Word of God that comes to His people is framed by God into the Word of God it is, precisely by means of the qualities of the men formed by Him for the purpose, through which it is given?"¹⁸

But Paul's words are in themselves sufficient to answer such scepticism about the Bible. God revealed Himself to men and then guided them in the recording of truth, so that it came through their personality and was yet the Word of God.

Conclusion

What we have in this passage of Scripture is statement about the way in which Revelation and Inspiration combine, and combine they must. If we are to have a message for our generation, that message must come from God. We have such a message, brought to us with the assurance that the very words used to convey it are God's words. We can affirm with confidence and boldness that God is not unknowable since He has made Himself known to us, and the Truth is not indefinable since God has defined it for us. This is a piece of spiritual high ground which we must never surrender.

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- 4 see Leon Morris, COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS, IVP/Eerdmans, 1983, p 53, 54
- 5 Charles Hodge, COMMENTARY ON 1 & 2 CORINTHIANS, Banner, 1978, p 34
- 6 cf Acts 3:17, "you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders."
- 7 Morris, op cit p 55
- 8 op cit p 56

- 9 Hodge, COMMENTARY, p 37. cf other examples of this, Eph 3:1, Rom 5:12
10 cf Rom 16:25,26, Eph 3:3-5
11 cf 1 Tim 1:13
12 A clear indicator of the Personality and Deity of the Spirit
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Biblical Docetism?

Docetism applies to a particular distortion of the biblical view of Jesus. In the earliest days of the Christian church there were those, usually associated with the school of gnosticism, who believed that Jesus did not really have a human nature or human body. They argued that he only seemed or appeared to have a human body. This heresy was called docetism (*dokeo*, to seem, to think or appear). It has come to apply to any failure to take seriously the real limitations of the human nature of Jesus.

The charge of **biblical docetism** has been levelled against advocates of inerrancy, most notably by Karl Barth. He accuses us of holding a view of inspiration in which the true humanity of the biblical writers is cancelled out by the intrusion of the divine characteristics of infallibility. For Barth it is fundamental to our humanity that we are liable to error. If the classic statement is *errare est humanum*, to err is human, we reply that although it is true that a common characteristic of mankind is to err, it does not follow that men always err or that error is necessary for humanity. If such were to be the case, then it would be necessary for us to assert that Adam, before he fell, had to err or that he was not human. Not only must we ascribe such error to Adam before the fall and to glorified Christians, we would also have to apply it to the incarnate Christ. Error would be intrinsic to his humanity, and it would have been necessary for Jesus to distort the truth in order to be fully human. Let us never engage in such blasphemy even though we confess the depth to which we have fallen and the high degree of propensity that we do have to err. Even apart from inspiration, it is not necessary for a human being to err in order to be human. So if it is possible for an uninspired person to speak the truth without error, how much more will it be the case for one who is under the influence of inspiration.

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

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Spirit and Word: Some Lessons from Puritanism

Andrew Davies

The seventeenth century was an age similar to our own in at least one major respect: the emphasis on experience. It was the age of diaries and autobiographies, of Rembrandt and his fascination with himself, the age of anatomy. In religion also, it was the century of prophesyings, of telling experiences, of preaching what "I felt, what I smartingly did feel". During the Civil War and Commonwealth period in particular, religious enthusiasm burst forth in almost every direction, with new groups and sects claiming the liberty of the Spirit. Mainstream Puritanism addressed itself to this question as a matter of urgency. The debate centred around the work of the Holy Spirit in the enlightenment of Scripture's hearers and readers. It was one of the major controversies of the time, and the way it was dealt with provides us with some illuminating insights into the sort of questions which have again come to the fore in our century.

The Puritans, to a man, accepted the inspiration of Scripture. But when they came to examine the work of the Spirit within the believer, discussion, even controversy, emerged. All agreed that the letter of Scripture, the "bare word", could not save. The work of the Spirit was essential for a saving knowledge of the Word. (John Owen spoke of the "external testimony" of the Spirit by which Scriptural truth became luminously clear, and of the "internal testimony" of the Spirit opening the eyes of the blind.) But thereafter questions arose about which there was not such unanimity. 1) Did the Spirit ever speak apart from the Word? Or was He bound to what was written? 2) What exactly was the Spirit's function and role in the interpreting of the Word? 3) What about leadings or promptings or impressions? Were they of the Spirit? And if so, how should they be tested? By the Word alone? or by the Word and the Spirit? 4) How could you tell that it was the Spirit who was speaking to you? Might it not be your own spirit? or even the evil Spirit? 5) And when the Spirit did speak, what exactly did He say? And to what part of the human personality did He speak? These were some of the many questions raised in Puritan sermons and books about the relationship between Word and Spirit.

Word and Spirit

This was the basic question. Did the Holy Spirit speak only "in" or "through" or "by" the Word?

The main body of Puritan opinion answered with a qualified "Yes".

"There must be a double light. So there must be a Spirit in me as there is a spirit in the Scriptures before I can see anything. The breath of the Spirit in us is suitable to the Spirit's breathing in the Scriptures; the same Spirit doth not breathe contrary motions". (Richard Sibbes)

Or again, John Forbes: *"Nothing else doth the Spirit witness but that which is contained in the Word".*

However, Oliver Cromwell said that sometimes *"God speaks without a written word"*,

and Robert Baillie found himself having to condemn the Independents for what he called their “*contemplations of God without Scripture*”. But those who claimed such directness went on to make it clear that in such cases the Spirit never spoke in a way that contradicted the written Word. Walter Cradock said: “*the Spirit leads by the Word*”, whilst Samuel Petto added, “*my heart was wonderfully set against those who pretend to revelations without, or not agreeable to or against the Scriptures*”. Even the immediate testimony of the Spirit within a person’s heart, said Petto, is “*the effectual application of the Word unto a particular soul. Or if it be not by an expresse word, yet it is by some Scriptural consideration, or, in or presently after waiting upon the Lord in ways of His own appointment by the Word*”. So, if direct perceptions of the Lord did occur, they always presupposed biblical understanding, arose from biblical study, were identified by biblical criteria, and were interpreted by biblical theology.

The mainstream of Puritan opinion, then, held the balance between Word and Spirit. The Spirit is indispensable to a true learning from Scripture, and any “spiritual” thoughts which are not grounded upon Scripture are false. To submit to the Spirit is to submit to the Word. We must have the Spirit to interpret the Word, but if we would live under the Spirit’s authority we must bow before the Word as His text book.

It was the Quakers who upset this balance. They also took Scripture very seriously, but they also emphasized individual personal experience (the spirit in them) so much that they tended to undervalue the written Word. They said that the same Spirit who was in the apostles was also in them, and in the same way. Hence George Fox took 2 Peter 1:19, “a more sure work of prophecy” to mean the Holy Spirit, and not the Scriptures *per se*. He also spoke of the Spirit who gave the Word as the judge and touchstone of spiritual experience, and not the Word as such. Spiritually, the Quakers felt themselves to be very close to the apostles, sharing the same kind of inspiration. As long as they gave priority to the apostles in the testing of spiritual experiences, they were within the bounds of Puritanism. But some of them separated the Spirit in them from the Spirit in the Word, and gave priority to the Spirit in them. Hence they became dangerously subjective and impulsive.

Mainstream Puritans argued against them in two ways.

1. They said that the Spirit in the apostles acted uniquely and extraordinarily, whereas the Spirit’s activity in subsequent believers was ordinary. It was the difference between inspiration and illumination.

“The Holy Spirit, by immediate inspiration, revealed unto the apostles the doctrine of Christ, and caused them infallibly to indite the Scriptures. But this is not that way of ordinary illumination now.” (R Baxter)

2. They rejected the Quaker tendency to separate the Spirit from the Word, and employed three analogies to do so.

- a) The Scriptures are the lantern, the Spirit is the candle within.
- b) Just as male and female are essential to natural generation, so are Spirit and Word in spiritual generation.
- c) Earth, rain, and sun, together with the seminal virtue in plants, are necessary to germination. So are Word and Spirit in spiritual germination.

Should there be any conflict between the Spirit in the Word and the Spirit in the human heart, Baxter’s answer was clear:

“Christ gave the apostles the Spirit to deliver us infallibly His own commands, and to indite a rule for following ages; but He giveth us the Spirit but to understand and

use that rule aright. This trying of the Spirit by the Scriptures is not a setting of the Scriptures above the Spirit itself, but is only a trying of the Spirit by the Spirit; that is, the Spirit's operations in ourselves and His revelations to any pretenders now, by the Spirit's operations in the apostles, and by their revelations recorded for our use. For they and not we are called foundations of the church."

"Interpret Scripture well, and you may interpret the Spirit's motions easily. If any new duty be motioned to you, which Scripture commandeth not, take such motions as not from God. (Unless it were by extraordinary confirmed revelation)."

That last remark indicated that Baxter did allow for immediacy and directness in the Spirit's activity in the heart. But it was not the usual ordinary way in which He worked, and it was always to be tested by the Word.

Discernment

The second question addressed by the Puritans concerned discernment. How could men distinguish the Spirit within them from their own fancies?

Their answer was firstly to **analyze**, and secondly to **test**. In analyzing the action of the Spirit they came to three conclusions.

- a) The Spirit's enlightenment was **rational**. Since man was a rational creature the Spirit opened his mind to God's truth through the Word.
- b) It was also **moral**. The activity of the Spirit, they believed, was closely linked to conscience. Sibbes spoke of conscience as *"an inferior light of the Spirit."* They were careful to add that reason and conscience were not the Spirit (as if the Spirit dwelt in every man as reason or conscience). And they recognized that spiritual things were not discoverable by reason or conscience alone, since they were too wonderful and mysterious for that. But when the Spirit performed His marvellous work of enlightenment He always worked on and through reason and conscience.
- c) The third element in discernment was **experimental**, *"knowledge with a taste"*, *"a sweet relish"* (Sibbes). So there was an intuitive element to discernment also. You do not need witnesses to prove that the sun is shining on you - **you know**.

But analysis was followed by **testing**. How did you actually recognize the voice of the Spirit? How could you test a claim to spiritual enlightenment? John Goodwin, the Arminian, said that the test was that of reason; enlightened by Scripture, of course, but not bound by it. Roman Catholics said that it was the Church. Tradition was the best interpreter of the Spirit. George Fox said it was Christ Himself in a man, linked to a holy life, and unity among the Friends. But the Puritans said it was Scripture. John Owen said of the Church: *"There is no need of Traditions. . . no need of the Authority of any Churches"*, and Sibbes described the Church as *"the remotest witness, the remotest help of all"*. In Scripture you had the true judge and touchstone.

If anyone should suggest that to make Scripture the judge was in effect to make your own interpretation of Scripture the judge, the Puritans would have stressed the necessity of deriving your interpretation of Scripture from Scripture itself, using the principles of literal meaning, unity and coherence, and analogy and, of course, always seeking the Spirit's testimony to and through the Word.

The Nature and Content of the Spirit's Testimony

Before examining this it might be useful to take a glance at a related question, namely the mode of the Spirit's indwelling. Here there was considerable difference of opinion. Some,

like Hollinworth and Howe, were reluctant to call it a personal indwelling of the Spirit Himself: *"The Spirit by a metonymy may be said to dwell in us. . . when we partake of His gifts and graces, though these be not the Spirit Himself. . . as when we say the sun comes into a house, we mean not the body of the sun. . . but the beams of it."* Others, however, especially the radicals, argued that it was the Spirit Himself who came. Thomas Goodwin said: *"Now for the manner of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost's Person; it is no error to affirm that it is the same in us and the man Christ Jesus"*.

But what of the content of the Spirit's witness? What effects did His indwelling have? We will follow the three categories already referred to above.

1. It was **intellectual**. Did the Spirit convey infallible revelations to men? People like Fox said "Yes". Fox claimed that things recorded in the Bible had been revealed to him independently and infallibly. *"This I saw in the pure openings of the light, without the help of any man; neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures, though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it."*

Others like Baxter and Owen said "No." Speaking of contemporary claims to revelations Owen said: *"Whether they contain doctrines contrary unto that of the scriptures, or additional thereunto, or seemingly confirmatory thereof, they are all universally to be rejected, the former being absolutely false, the latter useless. . . For He (the Holy Spirit) having finished the whole work of external revelation, and closed it in the Scriptures, His whole internal spiritual work is suited and commensurate thereunto."*

2. It was **moral and practical**. Did the Holy Spirit give people direct guidance through immediate "openings", or "leadings", or "waitings"? Again Fox said "Yes". He could claim without embarrassment, *"At this my spirit was greatly grieved, and the Lord, I found, was highly offended."* Indeed, some of his followers actually attributed infallibility to him. Fox would have nothing to do with extremists like the Ranters, who claimed direct guidance but lived loosely. There must, he said, be moral integrity and uprightness of life. But he insisted that the Spirit did lead directly, and quoted examples of Scriptures and impressions coming to his mind and to the minds of others. Baxter also allowed for the possibility of new "revelations" being given to individuals, but was careful to specify what they were: *"It is possible that God may make new revelations to particular persons about their particular duties, events, or matters of fact, in subordination to the Scriptures, either by inspiration, vision, or apparition, or voice; for He hath not told us that He will never do such a thing."* But he emphasizes that such "revelations" were entirely God-given; and the possibility of being deceived by one's own imagination was very real. *"Certain experiences telleth us that most in our age that have pretended to prophecy, or to inspiration, or revelations, have been crack-brained persons, near to madness, who have proved deluded in the end."* If direct experiences were of God they usually occurred within the context of a true biblical understanding, and were always to be tested by Scripture.

3. It was **experiential**. Three areas of experience may be referred to. a) Did the Holy Spirit give believers direct assurance of their sonship? b) Did He give liberty and boldness in prayer? c) Did He come into meetings of the church, creating a new awareness of the presence of God and so enriching worship and fellowship?

a) Direct Assurance. There was general agreement that the Spirit did give direct assurance. The Puritans spoke eloquently about the "spirit of adoption." *"There is a*

great deal of familiarity in the spirit of adoption. That 'abba Father', it is a bold and familiar speech. . . there is an inward kind of familiar boldness in the soul, whereby a Christian goes to God, as a child when he wants anything goes to his father. A child considers not his own worthiness or meanness, but goeth to his father familiarly and boldly." (R Sibbes)

- b) Prayer. Richard Hollinworth spoke about the work of the Spirit in prayer, and described it in two ways. Firstly, He enlightens, enlivens, and enlarges the heart. Secondly, in the act of prayer, He excites, discovers, and brings to mind God's promises. *"Promises and prayers are like the figures 6 and 9, the very same figures, only the promises like the figure 9 do bend downward, and prayers like the figure 6 do point upward."* The Spirit also excites the graces of prayer (lifting our hearts like a log out of a ditch), enlarges our affections, and restrains our tongues. Hollinworth also spoke of the silent ejaculations which were too big for expression.
- c) The Spirit coming into meetings. There is abundant testimony to the Spirit's Presence in individual lives and church gatherings. *"God hath appeared 200 times, 2000 times to my soul. I have seen Him while in the sacrament, I have seen Him among the saints, I have seen Him in the country, in such a condition, in such a place, in such a meadow, in such a wood, when I read His word, and called upon His name."* (Walter Cradock) *"I remember one once said of the late Queen Elizabeth, I have seen her picture, saith he, but I have one picture of her that I will not sell for all the pictures of her in the world. And what was that? I saw her but once, saith he, and the image of her remains still in me; which image he could convey to no man living. . . Therefore, now, if you ask me what it is the saints know, which another man knows not? I answer you fully, he himself cannot tell you, for it is certain, as to that impression which the Holy Ghost leaves upon the heart of a man, that man can never make the like impression on another; he may describe it to you, but he cannot convey the same image and impression upon the heart of any man else."* (T Goodwin)

Areas of Practical Disagreement

We now examine three practical areas where the Puritans disagreed. 1) Prayer
2) Hymn singing 3) Preaching.

1. Prayer

"The more radical Puritans, acutely conscious of the working of the Holy Spirit, immediately, in their hearts, increasingly felt there to be no place in worship for liturgies or read prayers." (G Nuttall). Such prayers became a hindrance to spiritual freedom; they quenched the spirit, and were referred to as "stinted prayers". In Fairfax's army Baxter found that the men were *"sometimes against forms of prayer"*, and *"sometimes against set times of prayer, and against the tying of ourselves."* Walter Cradock complained bitterly that *"when it may be (that) the poor minister's soul was full of groans, and sighs, and he would have rejoiced to have poured out his soul to the Lord, he was tied to an old service book, and must read that till he grieved the Spirit of God, and dried up his own spirit as a chip, that he could not pray if he would."* Bunyan wrote a book against liturgies, although he later revised his views because of the excessive subjectivism and wordiness of some of the praying. The Quakers took extempore prayer to the further point of silence, so that people would sit in silence and only pray when they felt inclination to do so. John Owen agreed with the arguments against liturgies. He too was concerned about a true

spirituality, but unlike the Quakers, he did not advocate waiting in silence for the Spirit's leadings, nor was he overly enthusiastic about inwardness. His concern was for an authentic work of the Spirit in which ordinary praying should be elevated to praying in the Spirit. More conservative Puritans would not go as far as this. There was a middle group who favoured extempore prayer but still allowed read prayers. Baxter is a typical example. Others, like Hollinworth, felt that extempore prayer was based on a false assumption, namely, that the Holy Spirit moved in the believer in the same way in which He moved in the biblical authors. This was not the case, so it was better to use biblical language in prayer.

2. Hymn singing

Conservatives said that to be consistent those who rejected read prayers should also reject hymns, since they too were from books. Baxter used the use of hymns and psalms as an argument to justify the use of forms of prayer. But some of the radical Puritans rejected the comparison, regarding hymns as primary edificatory and didactic, and therefore justifiable. Others accepted the parallel and refused to use hymn-singing from a book. The Quakers were among this group, and George Fox declared that his mission was *"to bring them off from all the world's fellowships, and prayings, and singings, which stood in forms without power; that their fellowship might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the Eternal Spirit of God; that they might pray in the Holy Ghost, and sing in the Spirit."*

3. Preaching

Puritanism was a movement of preaching. For this reason it deserves special treatment and our discussion of it will therefore be more detailed. What effect did the Spirit/Word correlation have on the seventeenth century view of preaching?

We shall examine three aspects of this matter. a) Who should preach? b) The act of preaching. c) Ordination and training.

- a) Who should preach? In the 1570s Puritans prophesyings began, probably in Northampton. At first they were meetings of ministers, but as they developed, and with the increased interest in the Spirit, the right to prophesy was extended to gifted members of the congregation. Prophesying was understood to be biblical exegesis coupled with personal testimony and exhortation.

John Robinson was forced to justify the practice in a polemical debate with a John Yates. Yates had argued that biblical prophesyings were extraordinary. Like tongues, they had ceased. Robinson rejected the argument and went on to sum up the benefits of prophesyings: the preservation of purity of doctrine, the clearer shining of the truth *"as by the beating together of two stones"*, the conversion of outsiders through the testimony of several believers, and the deepening of fellowship and goodwill between ministers and people.

Naturally, out of such opportunities for individual participation in meetings, lay preaching emerged, and with it the question of ordination. In 1639 Sidrach Simpson left a Congregational Church in Rotterdam and founded a separate congregation, partly because he stood for the ordinance of prophesying *"after the Brownist way"* during worship on Sundays. During the Civil War period it ran riot: *"when women preach and cobblers pray, the fiends in hell make holiday."* The Quakers led the way in this. They abandoned the settled ministry. They allowed lay participation. And they permitted women to speak, justifying the practice on several grounds: the equality of

men and women in spiritual privilege and responsibility, the prophesying of people like Philip's daughters, and the preaching of the woman of Samaria. For Fox, of course, there was no need to appeal to the Bible in this way, because he and his fellow Quakers had the Spirit! Fox said *"And if there was no Scripture for our men's and women's meetings, Christ is sufficient."*

Congregationalists and Presbyterians tended to differ over the involvement of gifted brethren in public worship. The Congregationalists employed several arguments in its favour. Why, they asked, are people gifted if they are not to use their gifts? It is wrong to quench the Spirit when He is at work. Apollos preached without anyone ordaining him. Preaching was *ex dono*, not *ex officio*, so if God gave the gift who could suppress it? The Presbyterians used several counter-arguments. Richard Hollinworth, for example, said that the promise of Joel 2:28 was fulfilled at Pentecost, so that the office of prophet had ceased in the New Testament age. Thomas Hall argued that the gift of prophecy in the continuing church was preaching, and no one should preach without a clear call and accompanying gifts.

It was people like Baxter who occupied a central position between these groups. He allowed for lay preaching, but only in exceptional circumstances: *"as if a layman were cast on the Indian shore, and converted thousands, who could have no other ordination. . . upon the peoples' reception and consent, that man will be a true pastor, yet, the regular way of entrance appointed by Christ to make a person capable, is the said election and ordination."*

- b) The act of preaching. The central issue here was whether the sermon should be read or be extempore. How did the Spirit function with the Word in the actual delivery of the sermon?

In 1592 William Perkins had spoken of the custom of preaching from memory, and many of the later Puritans memorized their sermons. Baxter said: *"Never since I was 20 years old did I ever learn and say without the Book, the words of one prayer, or one sermon, since I preached."* It seems that Owen and Howe probably did much the same. But others preached in a much freer way. Bunyan was one. Morgan Llwyd was another: *"he comes not to them with a sermon out of a book, but with that which the Lord hath spoken to him."* Baxter commended this directness and earnestness: *"They are greatly taken with a preacher that speaketh to them in a familiar language, and exhorteth them as if it were for their lives; when another that readeth or saith a few composed words in a reading tone, they hear almost as a boy that is saying his lesson."* What is important to emphasize is that whether sermons were memorized or more extempore, the concept of preaching was the same: the exposition and application of the Word with warmth and directness. Since the Word was the voice of the Spirit, preaching meant letting the Bible speak; but because the Spirit was alive, He spoke again through what He had spoken; and at the same time He was at work in the hearts of the hearers. So their view of preaching was dynamic, not static.

However the Quakers went much further than this. Their speaking was very much freer and much more spontaneous. Thus Fox could write: *"let it be your joy to hear or see the Springs of life break forth in any. . . such as are tender, if they should be moved to bubble forth a few words and speak in the seed and lambs power suffer and bear that that is tender, and if they should go beyond their measure bear it in the meeting for peace sake and order."*

- c) Ordination and training. Because of their stress on the immediacy and the Spirit, the

Quakers did not share the prevailing Puritan emphasis on learning. Indeed they were suspicious of training for ministry and the concept of an ordained group of “ministers”. Some of the radical Puritans also frowned on those who subjected the *“infinitely abounding spirit of God, which blows when and where it listeth. . . to the Laws and Ordinances of men. . . God must not speak till man give Him leave; not teach nor Preach, but whom man allows, and approves, and ordains”* (Saltmarsh). Oliver Cromwell rebuked the Scottish Presbyterians who had complained about *“men of civil employments. . . usurping the calling and employment of the ministry”*, by declaring *“though an approbation from men hath order in it, and may do well; yet he that hath no better warrant than that, hath none at all. I hope that He that ascended up on high may give His gifts to whom He pleases: and if those gifts be the seal of Mission, be not envious though Eldad and Medad prophesy.”*

The Presbyterians, on the other hand, laid heavy emphasis on learning, education, and a university training. It is conceivable that they went too far in the opposite direction. So it was the middle group again who sought to strike the right balance between Spirit and Word in this connection. Baxter’s words were judicious: *“if we give to reason, memory, study, books, methods, forms, etc., but their proper place in subordination to Christ and to His Spirit, they are so far from being quenchers of the Spirit, that they are necessary in their places, and such means as we must use, if ever we will expect the Spirit’s help. He that hath both the Spirit of sanctification, and acquired gifts of knowledge together, is the complete Christian, and likely to know much more, that he that hath either of these alone”*.

The Puritans, like ourselves, had to struggle to keep the right balance between the Spirit and the word. There were other areas where similar tensions emerged. Take the question of the **Sacraments** for instance. Did the Spirit reside in the Word, so that all that was needed was for the Word to be read and proclaimed? Or, were the Sacraments really necessary at all, if the Spirit was moving in men’s hearts? Or, were they means of grace, the Spirit’s presence being regarded with equal importance as the use of the correct words? And what of the whole question of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and **history**? Is the Christian era the age of the Word? Or, as many seventeenth century people were asking, is it the age of the Spirit? Or, is it both? The way they answered these questions touches on a number of contemporary issues such as the place of spiritual gifts, our attitude to guidance and providence, and the evangelization of those who have never heard the Gospel (is the Spirit at work in them already? Or do they need to hear the Word?). These are big matters, and we would do well to consider their efforts to grapple with them.

Conclusions

1. The danger of detaching the Word from the Spirit

To have the Word without the Spirit produces serious consequences in all sorts of ways, as people resist the living element for an excessively cerebral approach. **Doctrinally**, we are left with a dry orthodoxy and an easy believism. **Evangelistically**, we may be content with statements of truth and competent apologetics. **Preaching** becomes simply a matter of accurate exegesis and correct homiletics. **Ministerial training** will be heavily academic, with an emphasis on degrees and qualifications. **Worship** will be correct, formal, and orderly, preferably with objective hymns and lecture-type sermons. **Assurance** will be entirely a question of intellectual assent to the written Word. **Guidance**

will involve focusing the mind on objective factors, circumstantial considerations and the advice of counsellors. **Church life** will concentrate on activity, organization, structures, and correct teaching.

2. The danger of detaching the Spirit from the Word

Equally serious consequences derive from this imbalance, because people rely on immediate “words”, impressions and emotions, relegating the Word to a subordinate position. **Doctrinally**, vagueness and “feeling good” replace clarity and depth of understanding. **Evangelism** becomes less truth-centred and more a question of “a warm atmosphere” and “feeling at home”. **Preaching** is regarded as less important than “direct words” and “prophecies”, often in the first person singular, and calculated to produce an immediate response. **Ministerial training** is seen to be relatively unimportant compared with enthusiasm, immediacy, and spontaneity. **Worship** will be seen in terms of free expression, individual participation, new forms, a relaxed atmosphere, a conversational style, with a liberal sprinkling of choruses. **Assurance** becomes a very subjective affair, almost entirely to do with how people feel. **Guidance** similarly will be about impressions and “words from God” and direct leadings. **Church life** will revolve around the degree to which emotions and sensations are aroused, so that a “good meeting” and “a lively church” will be one where laughter and exuberance abound.

3. Maintaining the balance between Spirit and Word

Since the Word of God is the “sword of the Spirit” it is essential that they are kept together. Each teaches by means of the other. They never contradict each other. “So those who would live under the authority of the Spirit must bow before the Word as the Spirit’s textbook, while those who would live under the authority of Scripture must seek the Spirit as its interpreter.” (J I Packer: KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT, p 240) Preserving the right balance will enable us to function properly in each of the eight areas just mentioned. **Doctrinally** we will be anxious to marry a clear theology to a warm spirituality, so that our beliefs will be alive and vigorous. **Evangelism** will combine lucid relevant Gospel convictions with a prayerful dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit who alone can give new life to dead souls. **Preaching** will be both the careful, accurate exposition and application of the biblical text, and truth on fire. **Ministerial training** will emphasize the importance of thoroughness of thought and disciplined study, together with the necessity of a close walk with God. **Worship** will be truth-centred and Bible-drenched as well as being Spirit-inspired and God glorifying. **Assurance** will be a combination of objective biblical evidence and the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit. **Guidance** will depend on both biblical criteria, circumstantial factors, and the direct activity of the Spirit moving our hearts. **The life of our churches** will be constantly measured by the concern for biblical reformation and spiritual revival.

May we always strive to maintain the balance between Word and Spirit, and may the Spirit graciously take up His Word in our day and wield it as the mighty weapon it is.

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Rebirth - Resurrection or Reincarnation?

Philip Eveson

'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.' So reads the words of Jesus to rabbi Nicodemus in John 3:3. Nicodemus responded with the sarcastic comment: 'How can a man be born when he is old? . . . Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' (3:4). Whether reincarnation ever entered Nicodemus' mind at that time we shall never know but one thing is certain, for him as a Jew the whole idea of a reincarnation would have been a non-starter. Jesus confirmed that he himself was not talking about physical but spiritual rebirth.

Today's Climate of Opinion

People in the west have for many centuries generally accepted the Judaeo-Christian beliefs that each individual person has one life in this world, is accountable to God for that life on the great day of Judgment and that there will be a resurrection of the body. However, there is now an increasing tendency to look favourably on the **theory of reincarnation**. It is, of course, the predominant view in Asia but numbers are growing in the West. 27 % of adults in the UK are said to believe in reincarnation. The growing interest can be seen in the stock of books on the subject in our high street bookshops. Some are even trying to Christianize the idea, making out that the Bible teaches it. Such texts as Mt 11:14, Jn 3:3f, and 9:1ff are forced into serving this purpose. This very relevant subject does need to be considered and the Christian answer to it made clear.

Reincarnation or *metempsychosis*, to give it its technical name, is an ancient and widespread belief, particularly in the East. The Greek philosophers believed in it and developed the idea of the transmigration of souls, ie that immortal souls do not die at physical death but are reborn into different bodies many times over. From around the 7th century BC the cycle of rebirth became a fundamental presupposition with Hinduism. The soul may go through thousands, even millions of incarnations. When sufficient merit has been earned the soul achieves salvation (*moksha*), which involves being absorbed into the divine. In the 6th century the Buddha built his entire system on the teaching of reincarnation, influenced as he was by Hinduism. It is Buddhists who use the term *rebirth*. They do not believe in a soul as such, or in the transmigration of immortal souls. At death, it is not the soul that continues to exist but 'the germ of consciousness', the bundle of characteristics representing the sum of an individual's action, that survives. It is the *karma* of the person (ie, the consequence of one's good and bad deeds) which survives and passes on, giving rise to a new individual. Final escape is *Nirvana* in which all desire and passion is eliminated and perfect bliss is attained. Jainism and Sikhism also believe in reincarnation, under the influence of Hinduism.

Why should this teaching be of interest to modern, materialistic Westerners? First of all, we should recognise that the world has become a global village where ideas and religions spread very rapidly. Our cities have become cosmopolitan so that the customs and beliefs of the East are more familiar to us. Schools are now making children more aware of other religions and cultures. We cannot ignore the influence of the pop culture of the 1960's,

particularly the Beatles with their interest in eastern mysticism. Indian gurus have come to Britain in their droves to sell their teachings. In such a climate the so-called *New Age Movement* has been gaining ground, which is a hotchpotch of modern fringe activities, eastern philosophies, astrology and the occult. The actress and entertainer, Shirley MacLaine is one of the main propagators of New Age ideas and such people influence a rising generation seeking meaning to life. A generation had grown up having been taught that the material world is the only reality there is and, quite rightly, many are coming to question the whole notion that we are nothing more than machines or a mix of chemicals. Unfortunately, the 20th century professing church has generally gone along with the opinions of scientific humanism. Over the last 100 years liberal and modernistic theology has had a devastating effect on hundreds of clergy graduating from theological colleges and consequently on their congregations.

The Evidence

1. Close encounters with death

Dr Raymond Moody in his book *LIFE AFTER LIFE* (1988, Bantam Books) produces case studies of 300 people who either had close encounters with death or who were actually pronounced clinically dead by doctors, but revived. These people claimed that during their experience of death they left their bodies, saw and heard the doctors who were trying to revive them, met dead relatives, other spirits and the presence of a great Light. This evidence, if you are prepared to accept it, is mainly for belief in the soul as distinct from the body. Dr Moody has to admit that his case studies do not necessarily mean that reincarnation has taken place.

2. Recalling past lives

Reports of people who can recall past lives and can speak intelligently of places and individuals they have never seen is put forward as one of the strong proofs of reincarnation. Two main types of past-life recall can be identified:

- a) hypnotic regression - where people are led under hypnosis to delve into their past lives.
- b) spontaneous recall - often found among children, where, without prompting, they claim to have been somebody else and they talk of their past lives.

Most of the cases, however, lend themselves to very natural explanations. The fact that a person under hypnosis is asked to remember previous lives means the person is expected to believe he or she had previous lives. And let no one forget the power of our subconscious mind to store data. Under hypnosis it is possible to tap into this store-house. One person under hypnosis spoke Oscan, a 3rd century BC Italian language. Was this proof of a previous existence? Not at all, for it was later discovered that he had looked at an Oscan grammar in a library a few days before being hypnotised. Phrases of the language had obviously registered in his subconscious mind.

Cultural and religious conditioning where belief in reincarnation is encouraged also accounts for many cases, especially among children. We ought not to underestimate, either, the spirit world of evil in deceiving people into thinking they have had previous lives.

3. Other possible evidence

It is often argued that love at first sight and child prodigies are pointers to lives lived in a previous existence. But such evidence proves too much. Why is it that child prodigies are very few and far between if we have all had previous existences? Again, for every child who claims to remember his previous life, there are millions upon millions who do not remember. If love at first sight is a result of a relationship in a previous life why does it happen after puberty? Why don't all souls reincarnate with experiences or memories of previous lives? It would be of great help to a believer in reincarnation to know about one's previous lives in order to break the cycle of birth and rebirth!

The Supposed Advantages

1. It gives a plausible explanation of the inequalities and sufferings of life

To believe that the good and bad actions of a previous life (*karma*) determine future incarnations is said to be a satisfying way of explaining undeserved suffering, of children born deformed or diseased, and all the other apparent injustices of life.

2. One life-span is insufficient to gain salvation

One short life of about 70 years is insufficient to achieve one's full potential, to find the truth and to gain perfection. So, belief in reincarnation gives hope that through experiences received from previous lives one can eventually gain perfection.

3. It seems to give respect for all life

As one writer puts it, 'if animals and plants have souls, and if there is a possibility that I may be reborn as an animal or a plant one day, then I ought to treat all life with respect and develop ecologically responsible behaviour' (Mangalwadi, p 137)

The Case Against Reincarnation

1. **There is no objective evidence.** It is all very subjective and pragmatic. This does not worry the eastern mystic but it should concern those genuinely interested in finding out the truth.

2. **It destroys personal responsibility and morality.** Far from giving an adequate explanation of the inequalities of this life, it is the most unjust idea imaginable. The theory of *karma*, which lies behind reincarnation, undermines the very foundation of moral order. If I am unfortunate enough to be born blind, as a punishment of an action in a previous existence of which I am completely unaware, this is most unjust. Punishment can only be meaningful if I know the evil for which I am being punished. Moreover, morality becomes a purely mechanical cause and effect system, an effect which is felt in another life situation in this world. MacLaine in her book *OUT ON A LIMB* justifies her own blatant immorality on the grounds that she is working out the *karma* of a previous life. She even puts forward the tentative suggestion that the millions of Jews killed in Hitler's camps were simply working out their collective *karma* from previous lives.

3. **It hinders the relief of suffering.** If you believe that a person is suffering because of bad actions in a previous life then to alleviate his sufferings would amount to interfering with the cosmic justice of the law of *karma*. Acts of compassion on behalf of people in trouble is foolish according to one professor at Delhi university because if we did cut short someone's suffering, he would have to be reborn to finish off the prescribed period of suffering, so what is the use of interfering with the law of *karma*? Never forget, that as a result of the Christian gospel social concern is not only a part of everyday life in our country but exists in countries of the East dominated by this philosophy of *karma*.

4. **This teaching encourages self-centredness**, where deliverance from the cycle of rebirths involves detachment from this life, and concern and active compassion for others in the world around us is not encouraged. The best that Buddhism can offer is detached compassion without commitment.

5. **It justifies racism and sexism**. MacLaine finds it a comfort to think that a soul can be born sometimes a male, sometimes a female. For her it implies the equality of the sexes. (By the way, homosexual practices are justified on the basis that souls were of a different sex in the previous life). But while MacLaine sees reincarnation supporting equality this is not how the eastern world thinks. In his book *A HISTORY OF INDIA* (Penguin 1975, p 46), Romila Thapar comments: 'The doctrine of *karma* also provided a philosophical justification of caste. One's birth into a lower caste was also dependent on one's actions in a previous life.' So the logic of reincarnation has been: 'You are born an untouchable or a woman to serve me because of your past *karma*'. It became news here, some years ago, when two 15 year-old Indian boys were hanged for wanting to marry girls of a higher caste. The villagers demanded it.

6. **It leads to the loss of the significance and value of the individual**. While people are looking to these eastern religions in order to find themselves they do not appreciate that belief in reincarnation means that the individual person is an illusion. Who am I? Well, I am Philip Eveson in this life but I may have been Cleopatra in a previous existence or even somebody's pet rat and there is no telling what I might be next because of all my wrongs in this life.

7. **It trivialises death**. In India it has justified the widespread practice of widow and leper burning, infant drowning and human sacrifice. Did you know that lepers were burnt alive on the ground that such an end purified the body and ensured a healthier state in the new life? It was the result of the preaching of William Cary, the evangelical missionary to India, that such burnings were stopped and infanticide declared illegal. But unwanted infant daughters are still killed and this is rationalised on the grounds that death is unreal and that she will come next year as a boy. Reincarnation is being used in the West to justify abortion. What is the point of an unwanted pregnancy, making life difficult for the mother or the rest of the family, when the baby can be reborn to someone else who wants it?

8. **It breeds pessimism**. While believers in reincarnation start out well, thinking that more than one life is needed to gain deliverance and perfection and to be absorbed into the divine, they have to admit that the goal of perfection could well take many thousands of rebirths. Buddhists agree that very few, if any, have attained Nirvana after the Buddha and he lived over 2500 years ago. From the Hindu scriptures, likewise, it would seem that very few attain salvation. What a gloomy prospect! An endless cycle of being reborn into this sad, suffering world, always hoping and struggling to get out of the vicious circle. No wonder it leads many to hate life and to commit suicide.

The Christian Position

Presenting these other religions with their belief in reincarnation and then presenting the Christian position is **not** like a TV commercial for soap powder where one powder is only marginally different from another. The Christian position is so radically different from other religions that they cannot be compared but must be contrasted.

1. **Souls are not eternal**. God alone is eternal. This one true and living God is a personal Being. He is the creator of everything seen and unseen. Human beings owe their existence to God. We are personal beings made like God to have contact and communion with God.

We are created body and soul. Each human being is a distinct person - body and soul. Each person, each soul is responsible for his or her own actions done in the body before God the Judge.

2. God created human beings not as robots but with the freedom to choose to do God's will. The first human couple chose to rebel against God and this brought suffering and death into our world, part of the consequences of rebelling against God and this is what we are having to live with today. Death is God's judgement on sin. Death is an evil, an enemy. It is not natural. Physical death involves the unnatural separation of what belongs together - body/soul. But physical death - the separation of soul or spirit from body is symbolic of spiritual death, to be cut off from the life of God, to be dead in sin. That is the condition of each one of us born into this world, and physical death is a pointer to this sad spiritual condition. What is more, if we die in this spiritually dead state our future is very bleak. The Bible speaks of a second death - eternal separation from God in hell.

Salvation from this spiritually dead state and this future doom does not depend on our efforts. In fact we cannot save ourselves. The Bible is realistic. God knows we cannot. These other religions encourage us to believe that we can make it but their own teachers have to admit that few reach the supposed goal. For the overwhelming mass of people there is nothing in this theory of reincarnation to look forward to but to come back to this sad, often hell-like world.

3. Christianity, however, offers real hope. That is why it is 'gospel', good news. The living God, our creator has provided for our salvation. Salvation is not by human effort in millions of lives but is the result of God's gracious action in one unique life - Jesus Christ, who is God in human flesh. The God-Man, Jesus Christ is the only person who has lived the good life, who found joy in doing the will of God perfectly; the only human being conceived with the life of God in him and who was not subject to death. And yet he came into our world as a human being in order that he might die as a human being in the place of human beings and suffer the second death to save sinners. He has paid the penalty which sinners deserve that all who rely upon him as saviour might never experience such an awful death. God calls us to acknowledge the fact that we are in rebellion against him, that we belong to a race of guilty sinners, that we deserve to be for ever punished for our sins. He calls us to repent of our sins, to turn our backs upon our past state and to trust the Lord Jesus Christ to save us, to free us from our sins, to cleanse our sinful lives and to put us in a right standing and relationship with God. For this to happen there has to be rebirth, a spiritual birth. It is like a new creation, where the old has passed away and all things become new. The true believer has the life of God in him now. He has eternal life. This new birth, this resurrection in Christ is our salvation. The Christian is at peace with his Maker and his guilt is removed. There is forgiveness of all sins and safety and security in the Lord Jesus for ever. Nothing can ever separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus. This salvation does not mean losing our identity but living for ever as God's children, personally loved and known by name.

4. There is another rebirth to which the Christian looks forward, the rebirth of creation. The apostle Paul speaks of the entire creation groaning as in the pains of childbirth (Rom 8:22). In fact, spiritual rebirth here and now anticipates the future universal rebirth. The Bible speaks of a new heaven and a new earth where only what is right and good will be found. God will create all things new and all who are found belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ will belong to that new creation. He is preparing us now for that new state.

5. Coupled with this future hope is the resurrection of the body. Not only does the Bible speak of spiritual resurrection it also speaks of bodily resurrection. Bodily resurrection is not the same as resuscitation, where someone who revives from the dead dies again. The resurrection of the body means that physical death, the last enemy, is conquered. All those who have been reborn spiritually in this life, who have been raised from spiritual death even though they may have to die physically, will be bodily raised from the dead, to live in this new creation. All those who belong to Jesus will have glorified bodies like Jesus' glorified body. The Christian position on the resurrection of the body is not that of Muslim belief with its very materialistic, self-indulgent, male-dominated view. In his resurrected body in Paradise the Muslim looks forward to reclining on soft couches, drinking wine he was never allowed to have on earth, served by lovely maidens, of whom he may marry as many as he pleases. The Christian message focuses all attention on the delight of knowing God and being with the Lord who created us and saved us. There will actually be a general resurrection from the dead to face Almighty God the Judge to give an account of the things we have done in the body in this world. Those who have the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, who have been prepared for the coming glory, will enter the new creation. Those who do not know God and have not received salvation will be forever lost in hell.

6. The resurrection of the body is based on the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, one of the best attested facts of history. His body which had lain in the tomb was raised and glorified. The evidence is there, from which we can draw our conclusions: the empty tomb; the appearances of Jesus to individuals and groups of people at different times of the day; the changed disciples. Lew Wallace thought he could expose what he thought were the myths of Christianity. But his researches led him in an unexpected direction. He couldn't write the book he intended His wife told him to write another book. BEN HUR was the result. Frank Morison was another who thought he could disprove the resurrection of Christ. In the end he had to admit his failure and wrote a best-seller WHO MOVED THE STONE? An Orthodox Jewish scholar, Dr Pinchas Lapide, has recently written: 'Christianity as a historical religion is based on two fundamental events - the death of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross and his resurrection. . . According to my opinion, the resurrection belongs to the category of the truly real. . . Something must have happened which we designate as a historical event since its results were historical... Without the resurrection of Jesus after Golgotha, there would not have been any Christianity.' Jesus' resurrection is the vindication of his good and perfect life and of his substitutionary death on behalf of sinners. It already introduces us to the new creation. When Christ rose from the dead he did so in a representative capacity. It is in association with this fact that the Christian is spiritually reborn and raised to newness of life. Jesus' resurrection is also the guarantee of the Christian's bodily resurrection when Jesus returns in power and great glory.

Conclusion

This truth concerning the resurrection puts paid to any idea of reincarnation. Resurrection and reincarnation cannot coexist. We only have one body and one life in this world. It is appointed for human being once to die and after death the judgment. I do not become somebody else in the next life but the same 'me' in the same body, is raised and glorified just like the crucified body of Jesus was raised and glorified.

The resurrection clearly affirms that we are more than a body but neither does it minimise

the body; the resurrection affirms personal responsibility. Body and soul are reunited to face the Judge for the deeds done in the body. Each human being is responsible for his own life in the body. The resurrection means that there is no loss of human identity and individual significance.

Unlike the ideas we have been reviewing, the Christian position does not trivialise death. Death is the wages of sin. Death brings to an end our life in this world. And yet death is seen as something unnatural, an enemy, an intrusion, something to be resisted. Far from trivialising it, the Christian message speaks of God coming in the person of Jesus Christ to taste death, to go through it and to come out of it victorious. Resurrection conquers it and overcomes it.

The resurrection hope, far from breeding pessimism, gives purpose to life and all that we do in this world. After the great chapter on the resurrection hope the apostle Paul closes with these words: 'Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' (1 Cor 15:58)

It is because of this wonderful hope that Christians have wanted to share this message with others and urge them to repent and believe this good news. Because each individual is precious and unique Christians have gone to the furthest parts of the world with the love of Christ, to show compassion and to relieve the sick and the dying. It is Christians who have been at the forefront of medical advance and social concern. Instead of leading them to be detached from the world this heavenly perspective has enabled Christians to be of more use in the world, to have concern for suffering humanity and to have respect for all life.

Rebirth - resurrection or reincarnation? There is no question to answer, it is resurrection. Jesus Christ is the living proof.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet 1:3ff)

This is the substance of an address given in November 1991. I have read a number of works on the subject but I am particularly indebted to an article by an Indian scholar, Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Reincarnation of the Soul*, reprinted in *EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY*, Vol 15, No 2, April 1991, pp 135-147.

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What is the Conscience?

Gary Brady

'What are conscience?' is Pinocchio's question in the Walt Disney adaptation of Collodi's charming children's story. The grammar is wrong but the question is a good one. **What is the conscience?** Of course, we all have an idea of what conscience is. We all know we have one. We can think, perhaps, of the hard times it has given us. People say 'My conscience is playing on me' or 'My conscience pricked me'. We know what it is to have something 'on your conscience'. We know about a bad or guilty conscience and, hopefully, a good conscience too. However, as one writer points out, 'of the number that make use of the word nineteen in twenty perhaps may be ignorant of its true meaning.'¹ He is not exaggerating. Other words found in the Bible are used quite loosely. People still talk about 'living in sin' and use phrases like 'as ugly as sin' or 'more sinned against than sinning'. But how often is the word understood in its Biblical sense, the transgression of God's law? It is the same with the word conscience. The word is seldom used with any precision. In every day use it can have a range of meanings. We are all familiar with the word but how many of us have a carefully defined Biblical concept of what the conscience is? A survey of Biblical material relating to the conscience and an examination of the Greek word employed in the New Testament will enable us to attempt a Biblical definition.

The Old Testament

There is no actual reference to the conscience in the Old Testament.² The Hebrews did not seem to find it necessary to use such a term. This was probably because as God's chosen people they received direct revelation from God and so were not as immediately aware of conscience as the Gentiles. Old Testament believers spoke more readily of their hearts reflecting on revelation, as in the Psalms (see Psalms 16:7, 40:8 and 119:11). Nevertheless, the idea of conscience is certainly present in a number of places and some modern translations introduce the word at certain points. In the opening chapters of Genesis we read that Adam and Eve, following their disobedience, were ashamed of their nakedness and hid in fear at the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8,10). What else is this but the earliest manifestation of man's conscience at work?

There are other places where the word *heart* clearly stands for the conscience. Thus in Genesis 20:5,6 the Gentile Abimelech speaks with God. '... I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.' Then God speaks to him in a dream, 'Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me.' (NKJV). We also read Job's words, 'I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.' (Job 27:6 NIV). On at least two occasions David's conscience is seen to be at work. 'And it came about afterwards that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe.' (1 Samuel 24:5 NASB). Also 'David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men.' (2 Samuel 24:10 NIV), cf 1 Samuel 25:31.

Similarly in Psalms 32, 38 and 51 the conscience is active. Psalm 32:3,4 is descriptive of the pangs of a bad conscience, 'When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.' Psalm 38:3-5 is similar and Psalm 51:10 speaks of David's desire for a good conscience ('Create in me a pure heart, O God etc.') It was on the basis that every man has a conscience that the Law was given and that the prophets preached. A striking example is the way in which Nathan dealt with David following his adultery with Bathsheba (1 Samuel 12). In the story of Joseph and his brothers the conscience plays an important role (see Genesis 42:21). 1 Kings 8:38; Job 4:16,17; Proverbs 20:27 and 28:1 and Ecclesiastes 7:22 are other places where some have detected possible references to the conscience.

The New Testament

In the Gospels there is no direct reference to conscience (excepting the questionable instance of John 8:9 where the word appears in some manuscripts). However, there is reason to believe that there were occasions when the conscience was in view. For example, in Luke 12:57 Jesus asks the people, 'Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?'. This appeal is directed to the conscience. Similarly, some writers suggest that in Matthew 6:22,23 where Jesus refers to having a 'single eye' he is talking about the conscience. A pure heart must also be something similar to or allied with a clear conscience (Matthew 5:8). In Mark 3:5 Jesus rails at the 'stubborn hearts' or hardened consciences of the Pharisees. The meaning of John 1:9 is a matter of debate amongst Reformed and Evangelical writers but Calvin and others may well be right when they see conscience as at least partly the point of reference here. The bulk of direct New Testament references to conscience are found in Paul's letters. In fact, of the thirty or so uses of the word twenty are in his writings. Two others are found in speeches by him recorded in Acts and five are in the letter to the Hebrews which if not by Paul is certainly characteristic of him. The only other New Testament writer to use the word is Peter, in his first letter. It is, therefore, very much a Pauline word. But where did Paul get it from? At one time it was widely thought to be a specialist word taken from Stoic philosophy but it has now been demonstrated to have been an every day word going back, in one form or another, to at least the sixth century BC. It has been suggested that it was a 'catchword' amongst the Corinthian believers taken up by Paul and used not just in writing to them but, consequently, as part of his own Christian vocabulary.³ Certainly Paul and other New Testament writers were happy to take up words and fill them with Christian meaning. Peter does this in his letters more than once and Paul, for example, takes up the word Saviour (*soter*) in this way.

Like the Old Testament and the Gospels, the rest of the New Testament is perfectly able to speak about the conscience without using the word. For example in 1 John 3:19-21 the apostle uses the word *heart* where the word *conscience* would fit equally well. 'This then is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts (consciences) at rest in his presence whenever our hearts (consciences) condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts (consciences), and he knows everything.' However, in the writings of Peter and especially of Paul the word conscience itself is used.

Etymology

The Greek word is *suneidesis*. It is universally agreed that the word is made up of two parts. The first part (*sun*) means 'with' or 'together' (Cf the English words, *synchronised* or *symphony*). The second part (*eidesis*) is from one of the Greek words meaning 'to know'. The root meaning, therefore, is 'to know together' or 'joint knowledge' or 'knowledge shared (with another)'. The English word is from Latin and is made up in exactly the same way, *CON-SCIENTIA*. Some other modern European languages are similar. So in Welsh you have *CYD-WYBOD*, in Swedish *SAM-VETE* etc.

This does not bring us immediately to a Biblical definition. There has been much debate as to who shares this 'joint knowledge'. Obviously there is, on the one side, the person himself, but who is the other? Many have maintained that the other must be God. Conscience has been spoken of as 'The voice or oracle of God', 'The vicar of Christ' or even 'God's intimate presence in the soul'.⁴ Such phrases are often used on the basis that the etymology proves that what conscience reveals to a man's mind must be knowledge shared with God. Thus we have definitions like that of Aquinas and approved by the Puritan William Ames, 'a man's judgement of himself, according to the judgement of God of him'. Ames' tutor William Perkins is similar. He sees God and man as 'partners in the knowledge of one and the same secret'. Conscience is undoubtedly part of God's general revelation but to speak of it simply as God's voice agreeing with ours is potentially confusing.

Usage

It is unwise to base a definition of a word on etymology alone. The way a word is used matters much more. (September is not our seventh month. There is surely nothing sinister about left-handed people.) Scholars are not in total agreement about the usage of the word *suneidesis* and its family of related words. It is clear, nevertheless, that when the Greeks used this and related terms it was not always in the context of moral judgments. There is an example where Socrates' young disciple Alcibiades speaks of being conscious he could put up no resistance to the power of his teacher's arguments.⁵ There is no moral element here. Least of all, in Greek thought, is there any necessary connection between conscience and God.

In the New Testament we find a related word being used in a context where God is clearly not the one who shares the knowledge. In Acts 5:2 we read that 'with his wife's full knowledge' Ananias kept back money from the apostles while claiming it was being given over. The word used is *sunoida*, 'to know with another'. Ananias knew what he was doing and so did his wife. He knew with her.

Then in Acts 12:12 and 14:6 the NIV speaks of something 'dawning' on Peter and of Paul and Barnabas 'finding out about' a thing. Words from the same family are again used. Thus, at their most basic, these words can simply mean 'to become conscious of', 'to realise'. Most interesting in this connection is Hebrews 10:2. There the ASV speaks of worshippers who 'would have had no more consciousness of sins'. The word used is the same as that found in Hebrews 10:22, 'having our hearts sprinkled to save us from a guilty conscience' (NIV. Cf TCNT: '... purified by the sprinkled blood from all consciousness of wrong.') In Hebrews 10:2 it is really only the addition of the words 'for their sins' that brings in a moral element. At root the Greek word does not necessarily imply anything more than 'knowing'.

Complexity

Before we come to a formal definition perhaps we should warn against the temptation of thinking about the conscience simplistically. Whatever it is, the conscience is something complex. Recognising this, some of the Puritans allowed their imaginations free rein in order to describe the workings of conscience. William Perkins speaks of conscience being assisted by mind, the storehouse and keeper of rules and principles and by memory, the recaller of omissions and commissions. In *THE HOLY WAR* Bunyan is even more elaborate with Mr Conscience the Towncrier who goes mad. Richard Sibbes says, 'God hath set and planted in man this court of conscience, and it is God's hall, as it were, where he keeps his first judgement . . . his assizes. And conscience doth all the parts. It registereth, it witnesseth, it judgeth, it executes, it doth all.'⁶ Such pictures are helpful as long as we keep in mind the complex mysteries involved. The workings of conscience include the process of perceiving what is required, assessing this and then deciding how to proceed or what judgement to give on the subject. This culminates in an over-riding impression of 'ought' or 'ought not'. Although this may happen very quickly a host of mental perceptions and emotions are involved. For instance there is the comprehension of right and wrong; using the memory, mind and will; a resulting complacency, delight or pride, on the one hand, or disquiet, shame and pain on the other as reward or punishment is contemplated.

The breadth of mental and emotional interplay involved can be gauged from the variety of legitimate illustrations employed by different writers in their attempts to bring out the manifold character of conscience. These include spy, watchdog, monitor, bloodhound, window, skylight, mirror, pope, lash, sword, barometer, sundial, alarm clock, plumbline, sense of taste etc! These various illustrations highlight the fact that conscience cannot be thought of as a simple mechanism or reflex.

Definition

Now we come to a definition. It is clear that when the Bible speaks about the conscience it is really speaking about the heart or soul or spirit itself. More definitely, it is referring to a particular aspect of the soul or, better, the soul's workings. We should not think of the conscience as a department of man's personality or a faculty of his soul. It is useful to speak of it in these terms for the purposes of study but it is important to realise that the conscience is, in fact, simply one aspect of man's personality, one function of his soul, namely the moral working or reasoning. Hence the complexity we have spoken of. Hence the way in which the Bible is willing to talk about the heart rather than using the more specific term, the conscience.

The 'joint knowledge' is not necessarily something shared with God himself. Rather it is a knowledge we share with ourselves. Put simply, the conscience is man's power of self-reflection and of self-criticism. It is the moral reason. American Milton Rudnick helpfully defines it as, 'the self in the process of ethical deliberation and evaluation. . .'. He says, 'It is not someone or something else working in or upon man, but the moral self at work, involving all of a man's rational and emotional faculties.'⁷ In Sibbes' words, 'The soul reflecting upon itself'. We can agree, too, with Kenneth Kirk who, earlier this century, wrote, 'The exigencies of language force us often enough to speak of conscience as a distinct entity; but we must continually remind ourselves that it is no such thing. . . conscience is myself so far as I am a moral man.'⁸ Conscience is remarkable. It is one of the things that distinguishes us from the animals. In his mid-twentieth century classic on

the subject Norwegian Ole Hallesby writes, 'It is through the conscience that man acquires a consciousness of his humanity and is thus distinguished from the brute. . . This. . . is very remarkable. A sort of doubling of our personality takes place. The 'I' takes a position, so to speak, outside of itself. . . it then pronounces judgment upon itself. . . Then follows the most remarkable result of all. The judgment which the 'I' pronounces upon the 'I' is entirely objective and unbiased. . . at the judgment bar of conscience it is the accused person himself who passes judgment.'⁹ As remarkable as the conscience is we must not place it above other abilities, however. As R L Dabney points out in his PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY conscience is not a separate faculty. Why should we think of our ability to judge ourselves as somehow essentially different from our ability to judge others? It is only the fact that we ourselves are involved that makes us feel the process is so much more remarkable.¹⁰

Romans 2:14,15

The nearest the New Testament comes to anything like a definition of conscience is in Romans 2:14,15. A number of things emerge from these verses.

Firstly, everyone has a conscience, even pagans. The conscience belongs to man as man. These verses also help us to distinguish and identify the elements involved in making a moral decision. Although the word conscience is often used to refer to the whole process of making moral decisions there are in fact at least three clearly identifiable strands in the process.

1. The requirements of the Law of God which are written on every man's heart. *The Moral Record.*
2. The conscience itself which makes its judgments on the basis of the preceding element. *The Conscience Proper.*
3. A man's thoughts, his opinions. These come as he makes a decision on the basis of the mediation of his conscience. *The Mind or Opinion.*

When we use the word *conscience*, therefore, we should really restrict it to this second aspect of moral decision making, although it is easy to see why the word is also used for the whole process. The Dutchman, Willem A Brakel wrote of the three elements as knowledge (ie of God's will and law), witness (ie of conformity or lack of it) and acknowledgement (ie of deserving punishment or reward).¹¹ This corresponds to the Puritan idea, gleaned from Aquinas and the Schoolmen, of the conscience working *sylogistically*.

A syllogism is an inference from two *premises*, one *major* and one *minor*. The Puritans spoke of syllogisms of duty and syllogisms concerning our state before God. Jim Packer gives an example of the former in an essay on the *Puritan Conscience*,

'God forbids me to steal (major premise)
To take this money would be stealing (minor premise)
Therefore I must not take this money (conclusion)'

He also quotes two from Ames concerning our state before God,

'He that lives in sinne, shall dye:
I live in sinne,
therefore I shall dye.'

'Whosoever believes in Christ, shall not dye but live.
I believe in Christ;
therefore I shall not yie but live.'¹²

The major premise corresponds to the moral record (referred to as *sunteresis* or 'nature'), the minor one to the conscience proper (*suneidesis*). The conclusion is the work of the mind, defending or accusing.

Some would suppose that the conscience only acts in a negative, condemning way. One twentieth century theologian spoke of it as 'alien, dark, hostile and sinister'. This may have been the Greek view but Paul points out that there are times when even the Gentile conscience can provoke thoughts which excuse as well as accuse. A person can have either a 'bad conscience' or a 'good conscience'. (Strictly speaking, of course, it is not the conscience that is good or bad, any more than a barometer is bad if it correctly predicts stormy weather.) Certainly a Christian can have a good conscience. This is clear from 2 Corinthians 1:12 and 1 Timothy 1:19, for instance. Romans 2:14,15 plainly teaches the moral responsibility of all men. As Walter Chantry has observed, 'Conscience alone has witnessed sufficiently to the moral law, so that everyone is without excuse.'

Past, Present and Future

It would seem that the judgements of conscience can concern not only past and present but also the future (some would draw this conclusion from Romans 2:14,15 itself). In this latter role conscience acts more like a guide than a judge. Packer speaks of conscience as 'a mentor, prohibiting evil (Acts 24:16, Romans 13:5)' (future), 'a witness declaring facts (Romans 2:15, cf John 3:20)' (present) and 'a judge assessing desert (Romans 2:15; 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12)' (past).¹³ Hallesby also observes that conscience is generally at its weakest during sin (present)¹⁴ but at its strongest after the event (past).

Conclusion

The conscience is not the result of evolution. It is not simply the interiorisation of cultural norms or of social mores. The conscience undoubtedly bears witness to the culture and the morality around about it but this in no way explains its origin or how it functions.

Nor is conscience 'the voice of God' except as far as it is part of his general revelation to each individual of the existence of right and wrong and the need for judgement. It is rather what Oppenwall labels, 'the internalised voice of those whose judgment of a person counts with him. It is the inner voice that testifies for the moral authorities that we recognise'.¹⁵ Keil says it is, 'not the echo of an immediate divine self-evidence at every moment, but the knowledge of a divine law which every man ... bears in his heart.... an active consciousness of a divine-law established in man's heart...'.¹⁶ Thus it is a most important voice, one you dare not ignore.

Fallen conscience's judgements are inevitably inadequate, nevertheless they always bear some relation to the coming judgement. The voice is not as loud or as clear as before the Fall but it is still there anticipating, in Bishop Butler's words, 'a higher and more effectual sentence which shall hereafter second and affirm its own'.¹⁷ God has given every man a soul. The word *conscience* refers to that aspect of the soul concerned with morality. The conscience bears witness to the moral record in a person. On the basis of its witness decisions are made about right and wrong. We do not always like the witness that our conscience bears. Sometimes we do not even agree with it. We must all realise, however,

that the voice of conscience ought not to be ignored. John MacArthur¹⁸ suggests that the conscience may be the most under-appreciated and least understood attribute of humanity. He may well be right. Modern psychology, he goes on to suggest, is more concerned to silence it than to understand it. Let those who seek to make Christ the Lord of their conscience not do the same.

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- 18 John MacArthur Jr, THE VANISHING CONSCIENCE, 1994, p 61

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'Conscience. . . is as essential a part of man's moral nature as feeling is of his physical constitution. It is also like the other noble powers of his mind, indestructible. Neither life nor death, nor time nor eternity, nor the happiness of heaven, nor the misery of hell, will be able to extinguish this spark of moral life within the human breast.'

John King, CONSCIENCE, 1838

Book Reviews

Eryl Davies

The New Testament is where I commence this extended and wide-ranging review of new publications. An interesting, though technical, book was recently authored by Professor Sang Bok Kim in Seoul, Korea, on *THE SOURCES OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS: THE PRIORITY OF MARK: FACT OR FICTION?* (Torch Publishers, 55 Yang Jae-Dong, Sucho-ku, Seoul, 137-130, hdbk, 375pp). Researched over many years, mostly in the United States, the author concludes "from the evidence that the priority of Mark in terms of its composition and importance is generally accepted today by liberal as well as conservative scholars within Protestantism and Roman Catholicism". Evangelical scholars like Everett F Harrison and Ned B Stonehouse led the way for evangelicals in defending the hypothesis although Donald Guthrie, in accepting the Two-source Theory with regard to the Synoptic Problem, had reservations about it.

In this book, Professor Kim gives some interesting and persuasive reasons why such importance is attached to the theory of the priority of Mark before looking at the presuppositions in the Synoptic debate then examining the Patristic evidence and the Synoptic phenomena. A competent and detailed examination is undertaken of the internal evidence, redaction critical evidence, archaeology, Old Testament quotation evidence and the Textual Critical evidence. He then looks at Mt 28:1-10 and the parallels as well as the "Q" document (he "underscores the obvious uncertainty of the alleged document", p 334) and argues that "the Synoptic debate on source criticism should be reopened to search for

a new direction (p 340). The bibliography is extensive and useful. Having known the author for five years and come to respect him for his scholarship which is wedded to an uncompromising fidelity to the Word of God, I commend the book to those who want to explore the subject further. Academics may not agree but Professor Kim's fair and thorough examination of the subject at least warrants their careful consideration of his arguments and conclusions.

By contrast, *DELIGHT FOR A WRETCHED MAN* is a popular, readable study by Benjamin Clark of Romans 7 and the doctrine of sanctification (Evangelical Press, pb, pp 160, £4.95). The author examines different interpretations including that of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones but concludes that a regenerate man is described in Romans 7. Paul's argument in the chapter is outlined carefully and without rancour as the author refers to conflicting views. The final chapter pinpoints some important principles relating to sanctification arising from Romans 7. The appendices which summarise and assess briefly three alternative views ("miserable because unbelieving", "the unsanctified Christian", "Barth and the modern liberal approach") are introductory but useful, as is the guidance for further reading. Here is the kind of book pastors can enjoy reading as it provides interaction with other approaches; it is also a book which can be recommended to believers prepared to study this important part of Scripture. Are you aware of the *CROSSWAY*

CLASSIC COMMENTARIES SERIES under the authorship of Alister McGrath and James Packer? The purpose of the series is "to make some of the most valuable commentaries on the books of the Bible, by some of the greatest Bible teachers and theologians in the last five hundred years, available to a new generation". One advantage of the new series is that the commentaries are abridged and edited in order to simplify the style. With the publication of Hodge on EPHESIANS (£7.99) and PSALMS (vol 2 by Spurgeon, £7.99) the series is now complete. I am delighted that JOHN by Calvin (£9.99) has been included in the series; it was first published in 1553. Packer describes the commentary as "one of the best elucidations of the evangelist's text ever achieved" and which contains "some top-class spelling out of key truths about Jesus Christ" (p x). If you have never used this commentary then you ought to purchase a copy and study it well. Here is excellent value. I commend the series to you.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL DOCTRINE by Wayne Grudem was published during 1994 (IVP, hb, pp 1264, £19.99). It is an easier read than many other books on systematics because it is "written for students" and "also for every Christian who has a hunger to know the central doctrines of the Bible in greater depth". Grudem has attempted to make these chapters understandable "even for Christians who have never studied theology before " (p 15). He generally succeeds in this aim. Grudem defines and explains terms carefully and most chapters can be read separately. The presentation is lucid and fresh; at the end of each chapter there are "Questions for personal application" together with a relevant hymn, bibliography and Scripture memory

passage. "Theology", he insists, "is meant to be *lived* and *prayed* and *sung*!" All of the great doctrinal writings of the Bible... are full of praise to God and personal application to life... theology when studied rightly will lead to growth in our Christian lives, and to worship" (pp 16-17). I heartily agree.

Grudem holds to inerrancy and a "traditional Reformed position" with regard to divine sovereignty/human responsibility, predestination, the extent of the atonement and the perseverance of the saints. He is Baptist, pre-millennial and post-tribulational. In addition, he affirms that *all* the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament "are still valid for today" but the apostolic *office* does not continue. "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is understood as "best applied to conversion" and subsequent experiences are "better called" fillings.

The opening chapter is particularly useful; Grudem defines systematic theology, discusses its relationship to other disciplines and addresses the question, what are doctrines? In conclusion he provides reasons *why* we should study theology and also *how* we should study systematic theology ("with prayer", "with humility", "with reason", "with help from others", "by collecting and understanding all the relevant passages of Scripture on any topic", "with rejoicing and praise"). There are some places where I strongly disagree with Grudem and one example is in his chapter on the nature and purpose of the Church, particularly the section where he discusses "True and False Churches Today" (pp 866-867). While conceding that there are still "profound differences with Roman Catholic teaching on some doctrines" yet he argues that some Roman Catholic Churches possess the two vital marks of a true Church, namely, the proper teaching of the Word and the proper administration of the two sacraments: "it

would be hard to deny that it is in fact a true Church". These blemishes should not prevent us from buying and benefiting from what is on the whole a stimulating and useful tool both for preachers and hearers.

I have enjoyed reading THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM STILL. The second volume, STUDIES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (ed Sinclair B Ferguson, Rutherford House, 1994, hb, pp 327, £19.90) was published recently. Volume 1 had focused on Christ's work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit whereas the six sections in volume 2 are more practical. The first section, "Towards Spiritual Maturity" is better known to some of us because it had been privately circulated in 1957 and also published in a paper-back edition. The second section develops the theme in more detail under the title "What it is to be Christian" and it includes some helpful chapters and statements. For example, "The Personalness of Salvation" (pp 65-77: "There is no part that is not personal... What is *Theology*? It is the study of God, and God is a Person, who loves us", p 76), "Grace Abounding" (pp 88-98: Still accepts "limited atonement" yet "in another sense I think the truth of the Bible transcends it...", p 94), "Adoption" (pp 140-148 which he describes as "the bridge between Justification and Sanctification", p 140), "Indwelling Christ" (pp 159-168 : "Justification and adoption have to do with our being placed in Christ. But sanctification has to do with Christ being placed in us, which is different. . . , p 159). Another smaller section includes two sermons on morals (pp 237-261) but I was impressed by the next section "The Christian in the Home, Church and World", especially "Primary Evangelism" (pp 273-281) in the home, which deals with headship and love, suffering the moods of others cheerfully, patience, witness by

one's life : "Everyone cannot go everywhere ! But everyone can live the life where they are" (p 231). The concluding section, "Rhythms of rest and work" (pp 295-327) is stimulating and interesting; it is "A consideration of rhythms of rest and work in alternate and simultaneous combinations, as applied to physical, psychological and spiritual health" (p 295). There is some helpful advice in these pages concerning relaxing! You can read this whole volume only with profit.

More briefly, it is worth noting 20th CENTURY THEOLOGY : GOD AND THE WORLD IN A TRANSITIONAL AGE written by Stanley J Grenz and Roger E Olson (Paternoster, 1992, pb, pp 393, £11.99). The book is a survey of modern theology, focusing on the doctrine of God and the way prominent theologians have understood the doctrine. Transcendence and immanence become the key for interpreting and assessing the contributions of a wide range of theologies such as neo-orthodoxy, "the deepening of immanence" in the liberal tradition (Tillich as well as Process Theology), "immanence within the secular" (Bonhoeffer, secular theology), "transcendence of the future" (Moltmann, Pannenberg), "the renewal of immanence in the experience of oppression" (Black, Latin American Liberation and Feminist theologies), "the transcendence of the human spirit" (Rahner and Küng). Chapter 10 is entitled "Re-affirming the Balance : Evangelical Theology coming of Age" and provides an examination of the thought of Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm. The former is discussed sympathetically but, sadly, less favourably than the latter who "was able to move beyond the backward-looking approach of Carl Henry. In so doing", it is claimed, "he provided the foundation for a generation of younger evangelical thinkers who would build on the freedom to think

critically and engage in positive dialogue with modern culture. Evangelical theology had begun to come of age" (p 309). Thankfully, other academics, both liberal and evangelical, disagree with this assessment. Gabriel Fackre, for example, views Henry as a "Michelangelo", "premier theologian, key figure", "... Henry has no peer" while another scholar claims that Henry is "the maker of the modern theological mind". I would urge the editors of this volume to reconsider their assessment of both Ramm and Henry. On the whole, however, this is a technical book which dips helpfully into contrasting contemporary theologies.

The next book is quite different but important because of its subject, stable and message. I refer to *ECOTHEOLOGY: VOICES FROM SOUTH AND NORTH*, (David G Hallman, ed, WCC Publications/Orbis, 1994, pb, pp 317, £11.50). There are twenty six essays by international writers of different backgrounds and convictions. The essays are divided into five main sections: biblical witness, theological challenges, insights from ecofeminism, insights from indigenous people and, finally, ethical implications. Some essays are pioneering as well as radical in tone and perspective yet all of them express a passionate concern for God's world in the face of threats to the survival of mankind and planet Earth. An attempt is made to provide a firm biblical base in section 1 but it is an inadequate, highly selective and, in places, misleading summary and assessment of biblical teaching. The theological challenges highlighted in the second section demand careful consideration. For example, how does "justice" relate to the ecological crisis? What are the ethics of care and the alleviation of poverty? How does the model of mutual interdependence provide a new orientation for us in ethics? To what

extent, if any, should ecological concerns be pursued on a formal inter-religions basis? These are only a few of the theological questions raised and discussed in the section. An illuminating but disturbing third section covers Ecology, Feminism and African and Asian Spirituality. "Feminist movements all over the world", we are told, "have also raised a radical cultural critique of our way of living" (p 175). The next section includes insights from Indigenous Peoples while the final section deals with the crucial area of Ethical Implications. One writer uses the principle of "participatory democracy" to develop a general exposure of how many popular environmental theories and practices have failed to involve indigenous peoples in the design and execution of environmental projects. Social ecology ("the study of human systems in interaction with environmental systems", p 239) is discussed in another essay: the basic issues are highlighted before outlining the need for a social-environmental ethic that "restricts not only the behaviour of human beings among themselves, but also their relationship with the environment" (p 242). We are informed by another writer of the way in which African independent churches face the challenge of Environmental Ethics (pp 248-263) and David Hallman then provides a competent essay on the important subject of Ethics and Sustainable Development in the light of the 1992 "Rio Declaration" and the ONE EARTH COMMUNITY document reworked and written by the United Church of Canada. Climate changes and the role of transnational corporations are also considered in some detail.

I do not agree with some of the underlying assumptions or implications of the essays but I value this publication as a stimulus and challenge to reflect even more biblically on a subject of growing importance. An index, however, and an

extended bibliography would have enhanced the usefulness of the book.

The first British edition of Peter Jensen's **AT THE HEART OF THE UNIVERSE : WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE** was published by IVP during 1994 (pb, pp 176, £5.99). The book is aimed at three types of person; firstly, the Christian who needs to grasp an outline of revealed truth in order to understand God. Secondly, the student called to preach the Word who is in need of appreciating "its coherence and inner relationships" as well as thinking about its application. Thirdly, unbelievers can profit from the book if they "wish to explore the essentials of Christian truth" (p 10). Important questions are posed and Christian answers are then provided by Jensen, the Principal of Moore College, Sydney, which are approached from an eschatological perspective. Some chapters include questions for further reflection and discussion. I am unsure of the extent of the book's usefulness and feel that the author's aim is too ambitious for it requires careful reading and reflection.

Hot from the press is the **NEW DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY** (IVP, David J Atkinson & David H Field, editors, pp 918, introductory offer £27.99 until 30th June 1995; normal price £29.99). This major resource is welcomed as it meets a need in providing useful, often urgent, material on Christian Ethics and pastoral Theology. It is an ideal resource for "pastors, social workers, doctors and counsellors working in a Christian context... ordinands, teachers", students and other interested lay people. Eighteen major "keynote" articles in theological order are provided in Part One introducing the main themes of Christian ethics and pastoral theology. The theological arrangement in the order of these articles

also illustrates the methodology adopted within the dictionary. Beginning with God, the implications of his love and justice are then explored before proceeding to a discussion of the nature of the human moral agent, the gospel themes of sin and salvation, general historical surveys of Christian ethics and practical, pastoral theology, Old Testament and New Testament ethics. Specific themes such as sexuality, pastoral care, life, health and death, ethics of medical care, global ethics, community ethics and economic ethics are examined in detail. Professor O'Donovan concludes the section with a competent article on "Christian Moral Reasoning" (pp 122-127). Part Two includes over 700 articles, arranged alphabetically and varying in length from 250 to 2,000 words. Cross-references are included with most of the articles and the bibliographies are indispensable. The subjects covered are wide-ranging from the Kinsey or Brandt Reports to a Christian leisure ethic, childlessness, rape and signs and wonders. It will be convenient to have so many subjects included within one volume for easy reference and providing a competent summary and introduction. Liberation Theology, Reproductive Technologies, Human Experimentation, Singleness, Euthanasia, Burial and Cremation, Alcoholism, Aids and Animal and Human Rights are only a few of the many contemporary subjects covered in Part Two.

Contributors are not afraid to be self-critical with regard to evangelicalism or to point challenges and suggest areas where new work is required. Concerning Homosexuality, for example, we are told that "Conservative scholars have sometimes been guilty of dodging the hermeneutical issues" yet it is a relief to read that "the case in favour of applying the Bible's veto to homosexual behaviour today retains its cogency (p 451). On

Feminism, the challenge is given : "If the church is to be relevant, a range of issues must be addressed". Some of the issues include "being open to the feminist critique" and evaluate feminist hermeneutics; the "church's teaching must engage with the real issue in women's lives". Women need help "to recognize their spiritual gifts" and to be encouraged to "play an active part in the Christian community" (p 381). Churches also need to be more vocal in objecting to the ways in which women are used in advertising, pornography and media violence.

The contributors to this volume will certainly not please us all with regard to their coverage, sympathies and conclusions but nevertheless the Dictionary will serve as a useful reference and resource book; hopefully, it will stimulate us to think even more biblically in many areas of Christian ethics and pastoral theology.

Now I turn to a popular biography : T C HAMMOND : HIS LIFE AND LEGACY IN IRELAND AND AUSTRALIA (Banner of Truth, pb, pp 178, £4.95). The biographer, Warren Nelson, has provided us with an interesting and useful account of Hammond's life and ministry; it is informative and encouraging in many ways.

Born in Cork in 1877 into a Protestant family, converted in 1892 and married in 1906, he pursued a three year course with the Irish Church Mission. This course grounded him in the Scripture and also in Anglican Theology. His intention was to seek ordination in the Church of Ireland which, in the nineteenth century, was "largely evangelical" and the Divinity School he attended at Trinity College, Dublin reflected good biblical scholarship. He became a Dublin curate and, in 1910, a rector. Trends in the church such as prayers for the dead and ritualism were opposed by

Hammond but in 1919 he accepted the leadership of the Irish Church Mission. The work of ICM was varied including children's homes, schools and religious instruction by means of the "Hundred Texts", open-air meetings, etc. The work was primarily evangelistic and Hammond vigorously opposed Roman Catholicism.

In 1935 there was a significant change in the location and nature of his ministry when he accepted the invitation to become Principal of Moore College, Sydney and rector of a nearby church. At this time the College was numerically weak, rundown and in debt but under Hammond's leadership there was considerable growth and expansion. He was a conscientious and orthodox tutor, hospitable and a good administrator. There were problems, of course, including tensions within the diocese especially when liberal evangelicals and broad churchmen "had begun to feel themselves squeezed out of power" (p 113) and there was also litigation in Australian courts. Hammond was more than a controversialist. Retiring from his College responsibilities in 1953, he continued as rector of his parish church and he was still in pastoral charge when he died in 1961. Chapters 8 and 9 dealing with Hammond's *Books and Theology* and *Ireland After Hammond* are absorbing as are the three appendices on the writings of T C Hammond, the *Wit and Wisdom of T C Hammond* as a select bibliography. There are many lessons for us to learn from this biography.

For those of us who have benefited greatly from reading Ian H Murray's two volume authorized biography of the late Dr D Martyn Lloyd-Jones, THE FIRST FORTY YEARS, 1899-1939 and THE FIGHT OF FAITH, 1939-1981, there is appreciation of the recently published D MARTYN LLOYD-JONES: LETTERS 1919-1981, selected with Notes by Iain H Murray

(Banner of Truth, hb, p 248, £11.95). This is a necessary and rich supplement to the biography where the *Doctor* tells his story "from within" in over a hundred personal letters covering areas such as family, fellow ministers, Westminster Chapel and new agencies. Crucial subjects covered in the letters include Evangelical Unity and

the Threat of Ecumenism, Queries and Controversies. There are some fascinating letters here revealing the *Doctor's* spirituality, discernment, concern for the truth as well as his care for people and feelings of unease relating to charismatic developments. Go and buy a copy of the book then ponder its contents prayerfully.

Extract from a letter to the Members of Westminster Chapel, 1 January 1968.

'I find myself greatly encouraged, and thank God for His goodness in calling me to minister to people who are so concerned about His glory and the extension of His Kingdom.

When one turns to the more general position however, the situation is very different. Here, the main impression is one of confusion, uncertainty, and divided opinions. This is true not only in this country but throughout the world. This is something that one expects in 'Christendom', but in the past has not been true of those calling themselves evangelical. This is the new feature which is so disturbing. No longer can it be assumed that to be evangelical means to accept the authority of the Scriptures on matters of history, and on the creation of the world and man, and at the very lowest to be sceptical about the theory of evolution. In the same way there has been a recrudescence of denominationalism and an entirely new attitude to Romanism. Institutions which for almost a hundred years have been regarded as bulwarks of orthodoxy are being divided by what is called 'the new thinking', which in fact, is but some of the old heresies in a new garb.

It is, alas, a time of conflict and of trial, indeed a time of tragedy when old comrades in arms are now in different camps. It is not that one in any way questions the honesty or the sincerity of such friends. There is only one explanation and that is, 'an enemy hath done this'. Never has the enemy been more active or more subtle.

Each one of us has to be loyal to his or her own convictions and conscience, and we must align ourselves with all who are like-minded. To that end, as you will know, we have joined The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches during the past year, and through them The British Evangelical Council.

With them it will be our privilege to continue in the good old fight for The Faith. What the outcome of the present upheaval will be no one can tell. Our duty is to be faithful knowing that the final outcome is sure.'

D M Lloyd-Jones Letters, 1919-1981, pages 177-178

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