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C O N T E N T S

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

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NEW IMPROVED FOUNDATIONS

Although we do not wish to fall into the specious language of washing powder commercials we are glad to announce that Issue 13 will be the first of an improved journal!

OUR DISTINCTIVE POLICY

In order to identify our place among the range of evangelical journals the Executive Council and the Editorial Board have agreed on a more specific statement of Editorial Policy (see below) based on the agreed Basis of Faith of the British Evangelical Council.

The significant and primary emphasis is to give expression to theological work which distinguishes churches associated with the BEC from churches which retain links with ecumenical associations. It is our conviction that the principle of doctrinal separation from error at church level leads to a distinctive concept of church unity and of many other issues of contemporary relevance. An introduction to this subject is to be found in the next article. The Editor would be especially pleased to receive contributions on this theme and would gladly discuss ideas of possible topics with any who wish to contact him.

NEW FORMAT

The BEC is deeply indebted to Mr Bill Back of Brighton for his skill and dedication in enabling us to float Foundations and for producing it from typed plates for our first six years. The acquisition of new equipment by another Christian printer has now made it possible for us to move up to a fully type-set production with wire-stitched binding. This will produce a journal of the same A5 size carrying as much copy as this issue but on fewer pages. We are confident that readers will appreciate the improved appearance and legibility of the new format.

NO NEW PRICE!

Yes, incredible as it may seem, the new improved Foundations will cost you no more in 1987 than you paid in 1981! Our new printing arrangements make it possible to hold our price of £1.25 per issue for a further three years for UK subscribers. There will also be an extension of the SPECIAL OFFER scheme by which readers can obtain a further reduction

by ordering the six issues 13-18 at the offer price of £6.

OBTAINING YOUR OWN

So confident are we that our present subscribers will wish to receive the next generation of Foundations that we shall be sending Issue 13, together with an explanatory letter and invoice, to all those on our mailing list. If you bought this issue 12 in a bookshop simply send us the note on the back cover to ensure your name is included in the mailing for Issue 13.

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

As part of our positive witness to the distinctive position of the BEC on evangelical church unity we would urge readers to do all they can to circulate Foundations both within and beyond our own constituency. If you have friends, or know pastors or students, to whom the journal would be of help then fill in the reply slip on the back cover on their behalf. An increased circulation depends on your efforts!

FOUNDATIONS EDITORIAL POLICY

1. To articulate that theology characteristic of evangelical churches which are outside pluralist ecumenical bodies.
2. To discuss any theological issues which reflect the diverse views on matters not essential to salvation held within the BEC constituency.
3. To appraise and report on contemporary trends in theology, particularly those which represent departure from consistent evangelicalism.
4. To stimulate interest in contemporary theological matters among BEC churches by the way in which these topics are handled and by indicating their relevance to pastoral ministry.
5. To keep our constituency informed about the contents of new books and journals, as a means of encouraging their stewardship of time and money.

EVANGELICAL CHURCH UNITY -

A SEPARATED VIEW

Rev Alan F.Gibson BD
St Albans

Mr Gibson is the General Secretary of the BEC.

INTRODUCTION

Do you remember the incredible story of Mr Roy Tapping? His arm was dreadfully severed from his shoulder when working on agricultural machinery. By a highly skilled operation his arm has been sewn back on and the surgeons are hopeful of a reasonable recovery of health. Even when one part is painfully separated from the whole body that severing need not be permanent. As Christians we recognise the work of God the creator in his restoring this man's torn tissues. Our concern in this article is the way in which God the redeemer is working for the unity of the body of his church after separations which are painful and long-standing.

The particular issue I want to consider is this - what should be the relationship of the local church to the universal church in the United Kingdom today?

Let me at the outset acknowledge some limitations to my consideration of this subject. I will not primarily be concerned to discuss the relationship of churches in the UK to churches overseas. This is a very important branch of the theology of missions and is not lightly dismissed; it is not, however, our subject here. Nor will I concern myself with our indebtedness in the 1980s to the church of Jesus Christ in past generations. Again, I recognise that a grasp of church history will make a significant contribution to our understanding of our problems today and in the future. This too, however, falls outside my remit. I propose to consider how the local church recognises its place within the whole church and expresses the ecumenical dimension of the universal church within our nation at this point in time.

I SURVEY OF CURRENT POSITIONS

I want to suggest that there are four attitudes adopted by evangelical Christians to the point at issue today. I will describe them under the general headings:

1. Non-ecumenical
2. Involved ecumenical
3. Para-church ecumenical
4. Separated ecumenical

1. Non-ecumenical

a) Pre-occupation with the local church alone

Recent years have seen a renewed emphasis on the local church. An undoubted awareness of the integrity of each local congregation not as part of the church but as a microcosm of the universal church has brought a thoroughly healthy concern for the ministry of the body at this level. Whenever there are pressures upon the local church however, voices are heard calling for the concentration of resources only on the immediate task 'We cannot afford to be concerned with other people outside our local church. This must be our priority', they insist. The practical result is a non-ecumenical stance.

b) Disillusionment with church politics

It is well known that discussions on ecclesiastical politics have mushroomed since the Edinburgh Conference of 1910. For the ordinary man in the pew some of these discussions will seem at best arid and at worst an unseemly power struggle in the body of Christ. Many of these discussions have been utterly sincere; most of them have been practically abortive. The more discerning might recognise that they bear little relation to the evangelistic thrust called for by a sin-sick world around us. Until recently most evangelicals have shown little enthusiasm for them. This would be particularly true of churches which have seceded from denominations on doctrinal grounds and who are then suspicious of any wider unity which might bring them under the same bondage from which they have so recently escaped. It might even be generous to call some of these churches non-ecumenical; they might better be described as anti-ecumenical.

c) Dangers

The effect of these attitudes is that if there is any concern for the 'church' at all it is concern only for an independent church or fellowship. Some of these churches have become isolationist. They have little or no meaningful contact with other Christian churches. This is not only a feature of theologically independent congregations or house fellowships. Some of these features may be displayed by churches which are theoretically associated with denominations. Some evangelical causes in the Church of Scotland, dismayed by some actions of their own denomination, only retain their link with the assembly of the Kirk in a nominal way. It could be said that they are strong enough to be isolationists in practice, whatever they are in principle.

2. Involved Ecumenical

a) Involvement

There are many local churches which have an evangelical ministry within denominations of a much broader range. They do not agree in everything with the other churches but for historic reasons, they are prepared to co-exist within that framework. The denominational authorities themselves often regard evangelicals as having a valuable contribution to make and put no pressure on such churches to sever their links with the parent body. For some evangelical churches convinced of the validity of the universal church, there seems little inconsistency in remaining true to their present loyalties. They become involved in co-operating with other denominational churches in joint ventures of an evangelistic or social kind. The mounting pressure for church unity is heralded as THE work of the Holy Spirit today and it is commonplace for Roman Catholics to talk of other denominations as 'separated brethren' and not as infidels beyond the pale. Falling church rolls and the competition from our materialistic society only enforce the call to unite against the real enemies of secularism and the cults.

b) Local patterns

The problems being faced by many ecumenical schemes at national level, such as the Anglican/Methodist conversations and the Covenant for Unity scheme, have made many Christians disappointed that their leaders are not capable of achieving the structural unity which is felt by Christians at the local level. Attention is now being concentrated on unity at the grass roots. Many have testified to the refreshing differences in worship patterns experienced by attending services at other churches. The fact that different traditions can exist alongside the same basic experience of Christ has been seen as an example of God's purpose of diversity. In a few cases Christians have found those of other denominations more tolerant than some from their own background!

c) Doctrine divides

There can be no doubt about one change which has taken place in evangelical Christianity over the last 30 years. It is summarised by the simplistic phrase 'Experience unites, doctrine divides'. This is not the place to explore the reasons for the trend away from doctrinal Christianity. What we can say, however, is that there are many young believers who do not devote much attention to the cerebral dimension of their faith. Alongside this trend has been the gradual erosion of the term 'evangelical' to describe a Christian. It can mean 'evan-

gelistic', 'low church', or even 'enthusiastic'. In some circles those who use the word 'evangelical' to refer to a particular attitude towards the authority of Scripture are regarded as dogmatic and unloving.

d) Dangers

Within the ecumenical movement those who welcome the contribution of evangelicals regard theirs as one viewpoint equally valid amongst many within the universal church. Evangelicals, however, do not regard their standpoint in this way. What is at stake is nothing less than an entirely different view of religious authority. This in turn means a different gospel. In the last analysis liberal and sacramental forms of churchmanship mean that one becomes a Christian either by a life of good works or by the use of the sacraments. The denomination to which such local churches belong is frequently a union of those who preach significantly different gospels. The Apostle Paul is clear in Galatians 1:6-7 that Christians must distinguish their Gospel from 'a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all'. The effect of such involvement in the ecumenical dimension can often be a confusion of Gospel testimony where it matters most, that is to the man in the street. He has every reason to conclude that the things on which we agree with those in our own church body are more important to us than the things on which we differ. This can hardly be true if the Gospel itself is at stake.

There is yet another dilemma for the involved ecumenical. Such evangelical churches are often anxious to express their oneness with evangelicals in other denominations and even speak of this as being their first loyalty. And yet they are divided from them at the church level whilst being at the same time united with those who are not one with them in the Gospel itself. This amounts to dividing the genuine body of Christ and is to be guilty of the sin of schism. We will have reason to return to this subject later.

3. Para-church ecumenical

a) Evangelical societies

For many individual Christians their fellowship with those who do share their experience of Christ in the Gospel is found in the wide range of trans-denominational societies in this country. (They are sometimes called 'inter-denominational' which suggests they operate as a joint activity between denominations. I have used the word 'trans-denominational' indicating that their activities are irrespective of denominational links). It is possible for Christians to work together in ways

which transcend the local church despite denominational differences. The Keswick Convention banner 'All One in Christ Jesus' is no mere slogan. Such enjoyable fellowship, however, may be only temporary. Many return to a church life after the convention which breathes quite a different atmosphere. Some are not in evangelical churches at all and find themselves isolated from the fellowship of Bible-believing Christians for the rest of the year.

b) Para-church bodies

The range of organisations with an evangelical basis of faith available for believers in this country is very wide indeed. Christians at school may belong to the Scripture Union, young people may be evangelised through Crusaders, when at college they will be helped by the structure of UCCF, their vacation evangelism may take place through OM. Their social involvement can be expressed through Tear Fund, their professional interests covered by one of the Shaftesbury Project groups and their overseas interests furthered by one of the many un-denominational missionary societies. I am not implying any negative criticism of these bodies nor anyone involved in them. They are not, however, churches. They do not claim to be churches and the fellowship which they offer is not strictly speaking church fellowship.

c) Dangers

I recognise that by the nature of the case some of these societies fulfil a function which could not readily be maintained by a church body as things stand at the moment. Their very success and number, however, does have the effect of weakening the practical application of the Bible's teaching on the universal church. The Bible's teaching on the church is not exhausted by what it says regarding the local congregation. The existence of these para-church bodies and the way in which they act as one expression of the wider fellowship of the body of Christ carries a danger. They have served to satisfy many of our brothers and sisters so that they are content to remain in churches or church bodies which are not evangelical. They are then exposed to the danger indicated earlier of the involved ecumenical position. At best this can ignore the church dimension of the New Testament teaching. At worst, it can lead to a refusal to heed the Biblical emphasis on separation from false teaching. In 2 John 11 the Apostle of love says that anyone who welcomes a deceiver who does not continue in the teaching of Christ 'shares in his wicked work'.

4. Separated ecumenical

a) A contradiction in terms?

There are evangelical churches which prefer to stand aside from the ecumenical movement as it is exemplified in the British Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. To that extent they are separated. They do not believe however, that they will be the only people in heaven and are seeking to express an ecumenicity which is more consistent with the Bible. They are seeking to take seriously various strands of Biblical teaching.

(i) The integrity of the local church as the basic Biblical unit for Christian fellowship.

(ii) The importance of the universal church. They do not believe that the prayer of the Lord Jesus in John 17:21 envisages an invisible abstraction but a body to be taken seriously and which is visible to the world around.

(iii) The need to separate from the teaching of a false gospel.

(iv) The need to express this kind of ecumenicity at church level.

b) Dangers

There is an understandable tension in this position which might cause some churches to polarize at one end or other of the extremes. Some will be more separated than others and even take pride in their separation. They can become isolationist in practice even though their church leaders may be enthusiasts for a wider fellowship. Others may be so concerned for joint activity with other churches that they become indifferent to the principles and insensitive to the traditions of their own congregation. Have you noticed that it is not so difficult to get along with another Christian if you do not actually have to live and sweat and pray together so that you are forced to work through your problems at the local level? No position is without its dangers - the devil will see to that!

II GROUNDS FOR THIS POSITION

1. The Primacy of the Gospel

There is genuine concern for the Gospel itself. The Apostle Paul in Galatians 1:6-10 has the most stringent things to say about those who preach another gospel. His language would be regarded as unacceptable in many ecumenical gatherings today. But he could see that what was at stake was the only saving message for our lost world. The ecumenical

movement is now merging into the syncretism of an inter-faith atmosphere embracing non-Christian religions. The eternal consequences of this must not escape us. We are responsible for the effect our testimony has upon people around us and that testimony is not simply in what we preach from our pulpit but what we indicate by our churchmanship.

We would want to be clear too, about the lessons from history. Spurgeon's concern during the 'down grade controversy' was not simply about the effects of the new theology on views of the Old Testament. He was perceptive enough to recognise that this would, and actually did, affect the Gospel itself. The social gospel of the early 20th Century was not a gospel at all because it was not able to save anyone for eternity. To contend for inerrancy is not fastidious nit-picking nor is this controversy merely a debate about words as some have suggested. History teaches us that only a Bible without error is a sufficient ground for a Gospel without error.

2. The sufficiency of Scripture

At first sight it might not be necessary for evangelicals to discuss the well known Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The Apostle Paul refers to the fact that Scripture is God-breathed 'so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work'. We do not need another authority derived from human reason or church tradition above Scripture to negate it, nor alongside Scripture to supplement it. The Bible is adequate. What Paul calls 'every good work' must certainly include the good work of establishing and building the temple of God, the body of Christ's church.

How can we apply this then to the doctrine of the church? Many leaders of church bodies admit that today's patterns of church government and ministry are not found in the New Testament. There are two responses to this lack of Biblical data. One is to say that history has proved that such arrangements, even that of 'the monarchical episcopate' (that is one bishop having authority over an area group of local churches) have proved beneficial to the church and should be retained. Another response however, is to say that these things are not found in the New Testament because they are not essential to the well-being of the church in any age. Any who insist upon them today create a separation from those churches which lack these officers. (Furthermore, the concept of

a national church owes more to the historical development after Constantine than to the New Testament.) When we come to apply the sufficiency of Scripture to the question of the church the separated ecumenical would say that 2 Corinthians 6:14 ('do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?') is one of many New Testament calls for separation from those who have no living experience of the Biblical Gospel. It is not a challenge we can ignore and keep a clear conscience.

Are we going to take Scripture seriously as our final authority about church issues, or are we going to accept a pragmatism of saying that since such and such a church pattern has worked for many centuries we may as well continue with it?

May I repeat something to which I referred earlier. Those who adopt a separated position are not in principle isolationists. I myself do not see how they can be. If we have the Spirit of Christ then we love the people of Christ wherever we find them. Nor is their concern only for the local church. They believe in the universal church and this belief gives them the right to speak of a passion for ecumenism even if they are defining the unity of the church in a way different from that of the ecumenical movement as it is commonly known. John Owen, writing in 'The True Nature of a Gospel Church' in 1689 sought to show that local churches cannot consistently remain isolationist. 'That particular church which extends not its duty beyond its own assemblies and members is fallen off from the principle end of its institution; and every principle, opinion, or persuasion, that inclines any church to confine its care and duty unto its own edification only, yea, or of those only which agree with it in some peculiar practice, making it neglectful of all due means of the edification of the church catholic, is schismatical.' Owen, by this time an independent, suggests a wider unity than merely that of a local congregation even though he stops short of arguing for the authority of synods in a presbyterian manner.

3. Not all truths are essential to salvation

If we are to show a consistent concern for the oneness of the body of Christ and a concern for the truth of the Gospel then each local church will have to know what it believes and say so. Many evangelical churches do have some kind of statement of what they believe concerning church order and practice on such matters as baptism and church government. Where so many of our difficulties arise however, is in attempting to

achieve a church unity which is based on a common acceptance of a detailed statement of belief and practice. To say that something is true and we ought to believe it is not the same as saying that it is true and every born-again Christian will be prepared to believe it.

There are two difficulties in the way of requiring every genuine Christian to believe the same thing about every detail of the Christian life. One is that there are some truths which are revealed as essential to salvation but some other truths which not every Christian who will be in heaven has learned and believed. The dying thief for example, did not learn anything about baptism, never became a church member, never gave a tithe of his income, and did not take part in the election of any church officers. And yet he went to be with his Lord in Paradise. Can we require of every believer everything which we ourselves believe? Then there are the difficulties of trying to derive an identical pattern of church life from the various New Testament churches. There are clear differences between the way in which the church at Corinth and the church at Philippi expressed their common life in Christ. The seven churches of Revelations were genuine churches although they differed greatly. How are we to respond to these differences? If something is true why do not all Christians led by the Spirit of Truth come to believe it?

It may be instructive to refer to the well-known passage about church unity in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. There were areas of disagreement amongst the Christians at Corinth over spiritual gifts, the Lord's Supper, and party loyalties. In 1 Corinthians 1:13 Paul asks these significant questions. 'Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul?' The first of these questions 'Is Christ divided?' is a rhetorical question. It is unthinkable that the person of Jesus Christ should be divided; there is only one Christ; there is only one body of Christ, that is the implication. This body is his church. Paul goes on to amplify this identity in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. It is interesting that here he does not ask, 'Is the body of Christ divided?' but 'Is Christ divided?' Using a figure of speech called synecdoche, the whole body is referred to by the name of its most important part, the head. By stressing its essential unity he challenges those who are causing divisions in the body. The word he uses means a tear in a garment and would be appropriate to the ripping of an arm from the shoulder. It is the undeniable oneness of the person of Christ which gives the question about the body of Christ its force.

Let us notice, however, the importance of the next two questions in the same verse. Having emphasised the person of Christ Paul goes on to ask 'Was Paul crucified for you?' Later in the chapter Paul insists on the centrality of the cross, without which no-one can be saved. Here then are two factors in Christian unity, the person of Christ and the cross of Christ. What are we to make however, of the third question 'Were you baptised into the name of Paul?' This must be linked with what he says in 1 Corinthians 12:13; 'For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body'. He is referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration granting us the living experience of union with Christ in his resurrection life. Without this, as the same Apostle reminds us in Romans 8:9, we do not belong to Christ.

It is suggestive that in 1 Corinthians 1:13, Paul is pointing to three things which are essential for the salvation of every Christian, a living faith in the person of Christ, the cross of Christ and the life of Christ brought to us by his Spirit. This is all the more fascinating when we go back to the beginning of the chapter and notice in verse 2 that Paul addresses his letter 'To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - their Lord and ours.' In other words, the letter is addressing the universal church everywhere as well as the local church at Corinth. By sharing with those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ on these Gospel essentials we are not denying that there are other truths which we ought also to believe. But here are those truths without which we cannot be saved and are not incorporated into the living body of the church of Jesus Christ and will not go to heaven.

4. Respect for individual conscience

The question next has to be faced about handling the differences which exist in the understanding of the rest of Scripture among evangelical Christians. Such differences are inevitable in this world. It is a mark of the imperfection of the church which will only be perfect in eternity that 'here we see in a mirror indistinctly'. It may be helpful to refer to another exposition of the unity of the church in Ephesians chapter 4. The third verse shows the Apostle Paul urging Christian believers to 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace'. This is a unity already created by the Holy Spirit by our being united to Jesus Christ in his body. This unity the devil will

attack and it is our duty, if we are to live a life worthy of the calling we have received, (verse 1) to make every effort to keep this unity. It might seem, from the statement in verse 5 about 'one faith', that we all have perfect understanding and share the same body of doctrine. This, however, is neither true to Scripture nor to experience. There were differences within the New Testament churches and it was the effect of these differences which occasioned the writing of the New Testament letters. The 'one faith' referred to in verse 5 must be that faith in the basic minimum of truth required for us to be members of the one body. It is when we come to verse 13 that we see the Apostle using altogether different language. He is speaking about God's gifts building up the body 'until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ'. This unity we do not yet enjoy, it is future. There are many things to be done until we reach it. It will be unity in a perfect understanding of the faith and in a perfect experimental knowledge of Christ. Such a statement of what the church will be is included in the New Testament in order to encourage us towards it and not to remain indifferent to those differences which we meet and not to despair of their ever being overcome. They may be differences in understanding on the way to a growing knowledge of the Bible, they may be differences brought about by the cultural background out of which we have been converted like that in Acts chapter 6 between the Grecian Jews and the Aramaic speaking community. These we will find within a nation like our own as tradition, education and even social class may affect the way in which we look at the Bible. It is our grasp of the fellowship of the universal church which must take account of these differences and help us to handle them.

Within the British Evangelical Council there are church groups from the Presbyterian tradition in Scotland and Ireland, the Strict Baptists of East Anglia, and the Apostolic Church Pentecostals from South Wales. Our fellowship is not based on ignoring those differences entirely and our study conferences have explored our various traditions in the light of Scripture. There have been conferences on attitudes to the church and the state, charismatic gifts, and Biblical interpretation. We are seeking to show respect for the conscience of our brothers and sisters on matters not essential to salvation. These things have not inhibited our positive fellowship and co-operation on a number of practical matters.

More questions arise in considering our differences with evangelical

brothers and sisters outside the BEC. It may be helpful to refer to Acts 18:24-26. You will remember that Apollos was a man mighty in the Scriptures but his grasp of truth was seen by Priscilla and Aquilla to be defective. 'He knew only the baptism of John.' What is significant is the way in which Priscilla and Aquilla invited him to their home. They accepted him as a person. They did not write him off as a hopeless case. They did not ignore him as being someone allowed to paddle his own canoe. They felt a duty to encourage him and to 'explain to him the way of God more adequately'. Respect for the consciences of other believers does not mean that we never talk to them!

Even when the New Testament Christians felt it necessary to separate from another Christian who was not living according to the teaching received from the Apostles, it is clear from 2 Thessalonians 3:14 and 15 that he was to be regarded 'not as an enemy but as a brother'.

5. Fundamental questions

In a generation as confused about religion as about many other basics of life, the BEC is seeking to ask the right questions. Only then can we begin to hope that we shall formulate the right answers. May I indicate four questions which seem to be at the root of many of our differences within the universal church today.

a) What is a Christian?

The fact that a person thinks himself to be a Christian, engages in Christian work, and even identifies with the Christian church, is no guarantee that our Lord will recognise him as a member of his body on the last day. We have this insistence from Christ's own lips. It is not being judgemental, as some would suggest, for us to seek to understand from the Bible what constitutes a man who was born a son of Adam, now to be a son of God. Many of our problems in this area have derived from the tendency in this generation to emphasise the manward and subjective aspects of conversion; what we have done in committing ourselves, turning to Christ, deciding for Christ, accepting the Lord Jesus, taking him as our Saviour. It is no disregard for the subjective aspect of the new birth to notice that the Biblical emphasis is not on what we do but on what God does. How does God save sinners and whom does he save? Who are those whom he recognises as the subjects of regeneration and whom he has grafted into the new vine? Such a question is not merely academic. It tells us whom we must regard as brothers and sisters in the Christian family. Just as there is only one Saviour there is only

one way of being saved. Even though the Bible uses a variety of terms to describe the people of God the Bible is specific about how they are defined. Once we acknowledge someone as a Christian, simply because they have started to live a moral or a religious life, because they have been baptised or confirmed or because they want to be known as a Christian we have begun to do what the Bible never does. And yet these are precisely the terms the ecumenical movement imposes on us! Any unity of the Christian body must begin by asking, 'Who are the members of that body?'

b) What is a church?

Whatever we may have learned about the nature of the universal church, there are other questions to be faced. What does the Bible mean by the word 'church' when it is used to describe a local congregation? Does the Bible ever use the word to describe a territorial church like the Church of England? Baptists and Presbyterians would differ about whether the children of believers would be included in the covenant body of the church. They would, however, be united in questioning the validity of the territorial church concept. Separated ecumenicals who persist in asking this question 'what is a church?' are sometimes charged with seeking an ideal or a pure church, an impossible task in this fallen world. This is a mis-conceived charge. What we are looking for is not a church which is ideal, but a church which is genuine, one which bears the essential marks of the church found in the New Testament Scriptures. Opponents of any consideration of the genuine separated church have appealed to our Lord's parable of the wheat and the weeds in Matthew 13. They have suggested that we should leave it to the Lord at the Judgement day to decide from the mixed body of his church who are his own. No-one would wish to dispute the solemnity of the day when the Son of Man will weed out of his Kingdom 'everything that causes sin and all who do evil'. It is not without significance, however, that in Matthew 13 verse 38 the Lord explains that 'the field is the world'. It is hard to see how this parable can be so directly applied to the church when our Lord specifically says that the field is not the church but the world. The basic question to be asked is whether the church whose unity we seek is a mixed body, indifferent to the genuineness of its members' experience of the new birth, or whether it is made up of those giving a credible profession of being justified through faith alone, by grace alone.

c) What is the Bible?

This has been the subject of increasing debate over the last 100 years or so, not least among professing evangelical Christians in our own generation. The nature of Scripture authority, the extent of its infallibility, the relationship of Scripture to the authority of the Holy Spirit today, all are still hot potatoes. It must be one of our tasks as evangelicals to look at these matters seriously, to discuss them thoroughly and to come to conclusions which are consistent with our loyalty to the Christ of Scripture. It does seem strange that the Christians who are asking this question today are branded as divisive and charged with attempting to fight the battles of yesterday. Can we seriously suggest that this basic question has been satisfactorily answered for all generations and does not need to be asked again today? Anyone with the most elementary acquaintance with theological discussion in our universities and bible colleges will know that the answers we give to this question are hotly contested by those who wish to regard themselves as Christians. No doubt some of them are truly born-again but their growth and usefulness will be affected by the way they view the Bible itself and its authority.

d) What is our present duty?

For so many of us the question of our church affiliation hardly arises. Where the Lord has saved us, who our friends are, what our family background has been, all this seems to determine which church we belong to. And yet the question does assert itself. The rise of the ecumenical movement has made many look at the issues again in the last 30 years. Donations from the WCC to terrorist groups has made some denominations question their previous loyalties. Then there is the mobility of population which is an increasing feature of our society. Our young people move away to study in universities at the other end of the land. Finding a job during the recession has uprooted many Christians from the town where they were brought up. Which church should I attend? What are the essentials? If we are not to be bound by merely traditional loyalties has God given to us in his Word any guidance on this important issue? I have a pressing duty to find out what God is saying to me. The question has to be faced by the individual Christian. It is also faced by the local church looking for a way of expressing its fellowship with the whole body of Christ. Under the constraint of conscience some churches have seceded from their previous commitments and have realigned with wholly evangelical bodies. Congregations have left their buildings and started afresh in a school hall, ministers have given up their pension rights after years in a mixed denomination. These things

have happened because they could no longer regard the church issue as insignificant and have been compelled to ask what the Lord requires of them here and now. Who of us could suggest that the question can be avoided altogether in our own generation?

CONCLUSION

The Executive Council of the BEC is anxious that we should express as widely as is consistent with our separated principles the fellowship of the body of Christ today. It must be obvious that there is danger of the fragmentation of the body in a way that is neither healthy for the body nor attractive to the world. We are seeking to retain personal fellowship with evangelicals in other parts of the universal church both in the United Kingdom and overseas. We are actively concerned to keep the lines of communication open. No-one is able to predict exactly how the next decades will affect existing church structures. What is imperative is that we should know our own biblical principles and seek to live in a way which is sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying and doing in our own generation. The whole body of Christ is facing two inescapable challenges. The church stands in need of constant reformation, and for this we must work together. The church also stands in need of revival, and for this we must plead, together.

HERMENEUTICS

Rev John Legg

Mr Legg pastors an evangelical church in North Allerton, Yorkshire

About thirty ministers belonging to the churches affiliated to the BEC assembled in Northampton on March 13th for two days of concentrated study on the topic of 'Hermeneutics', the principles on which we interpret scripture. The five papers had been prepared and circulated beforehand, and a great debt is owed to all the speakers in preparing for the conference.

Pastor Peter Misselbrook presented the first paper, on 'Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology' and this was a stimulating beginning opening remarks charted the course of our later discussions with uncanny accuracy as he insisted that our study was not a mere academic exercise, but was relevant to our preaching: to the biblical authority behind our words, to the practical application and to the man in the pew, who

should be enabled to see for himself what God is saying.

The paper was based on the principle that scripture must be allowed to interpret itself, in character and structure as well as in content, and that we must therefore discern a coherence and unity which looks both forwards and backwards. In search of this he began with some general comments on the nature of biblical theology both in relation to non-evangelical varieties and also to that of Gerhardus Vos, in his important and generally helpful books. Mr Misselbrook expressed concern over Vos's limitation of the source material for biblical theology to 'God's verbal or doctrinal self-revelation ... to which the scriptures bear witness', which restricts the idea of revelation and effectively demotes some of the Bible, such as the narratives and the wisdom literature, to a second-class status.

In coming to his own 'interpretative structure' of the Bible, or rather recognising the Bible's own structure, Pastor Misselbrook set aside the 'well-developed' concept of the covenant of grace as the central and unifying theme of the Bible, regarding it as 'a static dogmatic conception which fails to do justice to the narrative character of scripture ... to the plurality of covenants in the Old Testament.' (While this is certainly true of the seventeenth-century covenant theologians, I personally felt that it was less than fair to Calvin and Professor John Murray). He also rejected the suggestions of the promise or the kingdom for this role, as, too, the idea of simply God himself, which says so much that it says nothing at all.

Mr Misselbrook would start from 'the fact that the Bible tells a story'. If this seems to be subject to the same criticism of vagueness, he would answer,

> 'The unity of a story is complex rather than simple. The unity does not consist in there being the same characters throughout, though there must be some continuity governing the changing subjects of the story. The unity does not necessarily consist in a single theme which dominates the story in all its parts: several themes may be interwoven throughout the story. Thus it may be difficult to give a single and unambiguous answer to the question, "What is the story about?" without collapsing into broad and unhelpful generalisations. Again, the unity of a story does not consist in the sameness of all its parts; one chapter may deal with characters and themes which are very different from those of another chapter. In one place the story may appear to move towards a climax and conclusion only then to move off

in a second and rather different direction. Thus the very different parts together form a unified and coherent story in which each part makes a significant contribution because it is set within the overall scheme ... The unity of a story is thus dynamic rather than static since it becomes evident only when we observe the way in which each section plays its part within the moving drama.'

The central focus of this story is Christ himself, but 'this does not mean that every text of scripture must be made to speak directly of him, rather that every text and portion of scripture is part of the one story which has its focus in him.'

Mr Misselbrook went on to trace the story through the various eras of revelation, from Genesis 1-3 'which sets the scene for the remainder of the story', through 'the dramatic story of the redeeming activity of God' from Genesis 4 on. A summary cannot give any true impression of the riches of this section as the paper noted the development of the story through the establishment of the monarchy and the prophetic era and on to the earthly ministry of Christ and the apostolic continuation in the creation and instruction of the church.

The writer had been asked to comment on two 'problem passages', Judges 11:30-40 and Exodus 4:24-26, but this was something of an anti-climax, as biblical theology appeared to cast little light on them. Mr Misselbrook also dealt with another difficult passage, the slaughter of the Canaanites in 1 Samuel 15, which he linked most effectively with 'the redemption of God's people and the possession of their inheritance' which had to be 'accomplished through an act of judgement'.

Pastor Misselbrook's two conclusions are well worth quoting. First, 'The methods and approach of biblical theology ... help us to understand the scriptures by viewing each scripture within its proper context within the Bible story'. Secondly, 'the story which the scriptures tell is our story. In reading the Bible we cannot be spectators of its redemptive drama ... for we are intimately bound up in this story and are carried along in its stream. The application of the biblical message is thus not left to the artifice, ingenuity and whim of the preacher, but springs directly from the relationship between the redemptive story of the Bible and those to whom this redemption is proclaimed.'

This paper stimulated an interesting discussion, especially on the relation between the Old and New Testaments in terms of finding Christ

'in all the scripture'. In this respect the question of the Song of Solomon and its 'canonical context' was raised, which leads us directly to the second paper, by Pastor Robin Dowling on 'Contextual Factors'. While it provoked some controversy in detail, the general substance of the paper commanded a large measure of agreement, providing a basis for profitable discussion. Once again the author's introduction stressed the essentially practical nature of the subject. 'If we are to apply a text of scripture to ourselves, we must understand what it means within its context', otherwise 'our application is invalid.' While thus highlighting the humanness of the scriptures, Mr Dowling in no way detracted from the Bible's divine inspiration; he was concerned only 'to acknowledge that God chose to reveal his word through men living in history.' From this basis, then, he dealt illuminatingly with three contextual factors.

First, we have the author's original intention in writing. This means the grammatico-historical approach with a stress on purpose. In presenting his paper, Mr Dowling made the necessary point that he was not limiting the meaning of the scripture to the author's meaning, but he was saying that God's meaning is 'never less' than the author's and is always consistent with it. Within this framework he then discussed the importance of semantics in providing a linguistic context and the limitations of word-studies which major on etymology and cumulative usage, and isolate words from their context. Whole passages should be dealt with, even when preaching on one verse, so as to avoid atomistic interpretation. 'If the text is expounded within its context, however, the sermon will be controlled by the intention of the inspired author.' This led to the necessity for a thorough analysis of the literary context for which he quoted a pattern of six steps, beginning with finding 'a provisional purpose statement' for the passage which will be revised and amended until the interpreter can 'formulate a succinct, polished, universal statement, which can be taken and specifically applied to his life.'

Secondly, we must take note of the situation of the people to whom he wrote: 'the background of a particular historical, ideological and cultural milieu ... We are not dealing simply with timeless propositions delivered in a vacuum.' Thus we must know the historical background of Isaiah if we are to grasp the theological significance of his prophecy. The nature of ideological factors is a little more controversial in the case of references to contemporary myths, but is sometimes helpful. However, it was the cultural factor to which our attention was most

forcefully directed, where there is a need to assess whether a teaching or injunction is culturally relative or 'culture-bound'.

In this respect Mr Dowling came to the conclusion that the prohibition on women teachers in the church found in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is not culture-bound or relative, applying only in Paul's day and culture, since Paul refers to basic creation principles found in Genesis 1-3. Mr Dowling's balanced attitude was shown by his treatment of the holy kiss in 1 Corinthians 16:20, which he does regard as culture-bound, since 'such an action simply does not have the same significance in our society as it did in the near-eastern societies of New Testament times. However,' he continues, 'even here it would appear that there is a principle enshrined in this culturally conditioned exhortation and that we should adopt such physical expressions of fellowship as are appropriate in our culture.'

The paper then dealt with the most controversial passage, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. It is not possible to follow here the details of his exegesis, in which he acknowledged help from J.B.Hurley's 'Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective', but it will be helpful to note his method of proceeding. His chief concern is that the fundamental teaching of the passage on headship should not be overlooked. Paul argues the point by reference to creation principles, not cultural matters. The issue of the covering/veil/hat/hair style (depending on one's translation) is the expression of that headship in terms of their culture and is not directly binding. Some of those present took issue with the speaker on this point, but it was interesting and encouraging to note that they too recognised that the issue was one of determining what arguments were used to support the practice in question.

The third aspect from which context may be viewed is the way the author writes, i.e., the literary characteristics which must be taken into account. The author referred to various literary genres, but laid most stress on 'the distinctive theological concerns' of the biblical writers. He illustrated this most helpfully from the Old Testament by pointing out the different, but not opposed, theological viewpoints of the authors of Kings and Chronicles respectively. The former, the so-called Deuteronomist, stresses the way blessing for Israel depends on the nation's obedience under its king, in terms of Deuteronomy 11:26-28, while the latter, priestly, writer concentrates on the line of David and the fulfilment of God's promise to him.

In the New Testament Mr Dowling dealt with the writings of the apostle John. John's Gospel, he maintained is true history, but it is interpreted history, fulfilling the purpose stated in 20:30-31. With due caution he warned us against the presuppositions of liberal and some neo-evangelical scholars and exponents of redaction-criticism, but also against the danger of throwing out the baby with the bath-water. The paper concluded with a warning that we should not regard these debates as making the interpreter's task impossible and an exhortation to devote ourselves to using every resource available to us to make the Bible's message clearer to our hearers.

Professor W.J.Cameron presented the third paper on 'The Importance of Types of Language in Interpretation'. His topic was more formal and factual than the other four and, therefore, did not yield so much material for discussion, although the content itself was most useful. The paper was marked by a running battle which he conducted with various opponents of evangelical interpretation and in introducing his subject Professor Cameron outlined three current tendencies which make his contribution vital.

First, we are faced with the 'New Hermeneutic' which largely devalues the traditional grammatico-historical approach, regarding this as merely a preliminary - and not even a necessary one - to the 'language-event' in which we can 'encounter' God, without actually receiving any knowledge of God himself. Thus human language is considered to be utterly inadequate to convey knowledge of God. This is true also of the second tendency in many academic literary circles to say that human language cannot express feelings and the inner life of man. On this basis, linguistic analysis of a purely functional kind controls much biblical interpretation. The third tendency comes from oriental ideas which discount the whole idea of communication between God and man, and regard 'non-being' as a prerequisite to religious receptivity.

Against all this Professor Cameron asserted that human language, while not wholly competent, is sufficient for the revelation of God. Thus God chose spokesmen who 'by the aid of the Holy Spirit ... were able to receive what he revealed and also to communicate it accurately in the ordinary forms of speech to their contemporaries. The biblical writings comprise a variety of literary forms ... They press into service almost all, if not all, the main kinds of language recognised today, in order to convey adequately a revelation from God, able to instruct men for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.'

It is impossible in a brief report to give the details of this paper, but we can indicate his headings with something of their particular relevance. On 'Informative Language' Professor Cameron was at pains to stress that while his idea of information about events included all that James Barr, for instance, would include, he regarded the latter's view as falling far short of a biblical conception both in terms of extent and accuracy, failing to take account, as it does, of propositional revelation. Similarly, on 'Performative Language', he pointed out that the biblical idea is not of a language event, a belief in the magic power of words, but faith in the power of the word of God. Passing more briefly over imperatival (commands) and celebratory language (praise and worship), Professor Cameron dealt helpfully with the imprecatory (cursing) language of parts of Jeremiah and eighteen of the Psalms. He did not accept that these writers 'were either mastered at that point by sinful human impulses or were reflecting a contemporary standpoint of thought lower than the requirement of scripture.' 'Illuminative' or figurative language is a case where a special form is used to make possible a fuller and clearer revelation.

Professor Cameron defended the gospel settings of the parables against modern theories of a later ecclesiastical context and also gave a balanced view of the way to interpret them. A rather brief section on types, partly because of some doubt as to whether they really belonged to this paper, was taken up in later discussion, linked with the question of finding Christ in the Old Testament. A treatment of symbolic and apocalyptic language led to the final, interesting section of the paper, which discussed 'Language of Creation and Consummation', comparing the usage of Genesis 1-3 with the closing chapters of Revelation.

Several times in the earlier papers and discussion the topic of the law had arisen, so we awaited with especial interest the Rev Philip Eveson's contribution on 'Law and Laws'. As he put it in his introduction, 'In fact the whole subject (of the law) is once more in the melting-pot and the settled convictions of a former generation are being challenged afresh.' Thus, 'the key question to which this paper is directed concerns the attitude to the law by the New Testament and, in particular, the way specific Old Testament laws are treated in their New Testament environment.'

Mr Eveson began to pick his way through the minefield by discussing the actual meaning of law and coming to the conclusion that while 'torah' does refer to a code of law, among other things, 'it is as if this code

were the instruction of a father to his son. All this is far removed from a cold, matter-of-fact legal document.' He distinguished the various codes given on different occasions and also the different forms of law: the casuistic or case laws which are impersonal, and the more direct, second-person apodictic commands and prohibitions. All are, however, set within a narrative framework.

Moving to more controversial areas, Mr Eveson asserted, 'Nowhere in the OT is law presented as a means of gaining salvation. Neither the individual nor the nation was saved by law. The Mosaic law is to be seen in the context of the Sinai covenant, and in form it is very like the ancient near-eastern vassal treaties. However, the essential thing is that God's covenant was an act of sovereign grace towards a people whom he chose to save from Egypt. All the law and codes of law are to be viewed in this light.' Then he adds, 'There is an even more fundamental context for law than the covenant, for both the law and the covenant itself are based on the character of God.' He finds justification within the torah itself for recognising the two great commands to love and the Decalogue itself as being 'more basic' than other laws, and 'the importance of the Decalogue is not ignored in the NT where quotations are made from it on many occasions and every one of the Ten Commandments is taught either by word or example.'

The great issue, of course, is the so-called 'third use' of the law in terms of its abiding validity for the Christian. Mr Eveson discusses and rejects those views which regard the law as no longer binding or which substitute the law of love or which arbitrarily divide the law into moral, civil and ceremonial. Finally he settles for Gordon Wenham's view that 'only the underlying principles of OT law are binding for the Christian.' In some cases, 'there is no need to look behind the actual law to find the principle. With other laws this is necessary ... because our situation is different. Nevertheless all the OT laws do contain moral and religious principles of abiding validity which our Lord and his apostles make abundantly clear.'

The second part of the paper consisted of a most helpful detailed study of Leviticus 19, based on these principles. I cannot reproduce the detail of this exposition, but one long and one short quotation will indicate the method adopted. 'In v.2 the exhortation to "be holy" stands apart from the rest of the chapter and all the laws that follow are dependent upon it ... holiness is the great theme of this book ... The holy God is associated with life, order, normality and cleanness. The

opposite of all this is death, disorder, deformity and uncleanness ... Holiness is a state to which people or things are brought and there are two aspects to it. It is God who sanctifies, but man is commanded to sanctify what God sanctifies ... In keeping the list of duties that follows, Israel will demonstrate that she is God's holy people. Not only the Ten Commandments and social laws but the food regulations and other laws of separation were reminders of moral values. For instance, by identifying the normal member of each system of creation, such as fish with fins and scales, as clean, God was reminding his people of the need for moral perfection ... In this chapter, holiness is given physical expression at every turn and so emphasis is placed on the fact that holiness is a life characterised by purity and integrity ... It is against the OT background of holiness and cleanness that Paul can speak of individual believers and the local church as a temple which should not be defiled.'

Then, to see the outworking of this, Mr Eveson refers to Wenham's understanding of the matter of forbidden mixtures in vv.19-25. 'In major and minor decisions of life Israel was taught and constantly reminded through such laws that she was different, that she was a holy nation set apart for God. Israel is clean and other nations are unclean. The ban on mixed breeding comes into the same category as the ban on intermarrying with other nations. They are to keep this principle of separateness which is embodied in the divine statutes ... The principle of separation still applies to the new Israel of God. Believers are to keep themselves unspotted from the world, to marry "in the Lord", etc.'

In his conclusion Mr Eveson reaffirmed that the law of Moses cannot save, or change lives. It 'must be seen in a different light since the coming of Christ. The law is fulfilled in Christ and must now be viewed through Christ ... Nevertheless all the principles of OT law are still binding on the NT people of God.' Although Mr Eveson's position seemed to command general approval, it appeared to me that not everyone meant the same thing by 'the underlying principles of the law'!

The final paper, by the Rev John Nicholls, was entitled 'The Kingdom of God'. This hermeneutic of the kingdom was the application of the general principles to a particular scriptural topic and as such was very satisfying. In discussion it did not produce any progress in formulating principles, but it did lead to the most lively session of the conference!

Mr Nicholls began by setting the scene biblically. 'In one sense the message is "the kingdom has come"; in another sense, the longing is for the kingdom that is yet to come. In other words, we meet the kingdom in terms of a tension between the "already" and the "not yet".' Neither element must be removed, as with C.H.Dodd and the dispensationalists (at opposite extremes), for 'the relationship is the key to biblical hermeneutic of the kingdom and the relationship is not a simple one.' In the light of this, the paper presented five salient features of the kingdom as revealed in the ministry of Jesus.

1. The effective presence of the King. This is linked with the basic meaning of kingdom as 'reign', with 'realm' only secondary. 'The kingdom is all about the immanence of God, the sovereign activity of God himself in redemption.'

2. The conquest of Satan and his forces. 'As against the evangelical tendency to "pietise" Satan, i.e., to think of him only in terms of the individual believer's experience,' we must see that 'the kingdom involves a decisive struggle between Jesus and Satan, a struggle in which Jesus is Christus Victor.'

3. The kingdom of God is universal, i.e., salvation is not limited to the Jews. The Acts of the Apostles is 'a description of how Jesus sent his apostles to proclaim the kingdom of God among both Jews and Gentiles.'

4. The kingdom of God is that which brings in true blessedness, effectively remedying the sufferings and miseries caused by sin. Thus 'although material blessings in themselves do not constitute the kingdom of God ... they must not be neglected or despised, for the reversal of the miseries of the Fall involves the restoration of all things.'

5. The kingdom has a quality of mystery about it. It is not 'of this world' and the surprising things associated with the kingdom centre on the 'absurdity' of the Cross.

Mr Nicholls dealt briefly with the Old Testament roots of the concept, before tracing the history of the coming of the kingdom most illuminatingly, by linking it, more closely than others have done, to the history of Jesus. In the light of Matthew 16:28 he concluded that 'Jesus spoke of an important new era in the history of his kingdom, subsequent to its first "coming" in his Galilean ministry, but prior to the

"consummation" of his return. This leads us to recognise that the "already/not yet" framework requires some modification.' This new stage involved Christ's authority over all things by which he equipped and enabled the apostles to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to all the earth, and depends on his presence with them by the Holy Spirit. 'The Bible knows of no other turning-point in the history of the kingdom until the return of Christ.' A most helpful comment, hermeneutically, is that this close relation between the kingdom and the presence of Christ, in whatever form, 'may also help to account for the terminology of the New Testament where Paul speaks of the "lordship" of Christ rather than the kingdom. Certainly there is a close relation also with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.'

Thus we may conclude that what has come is 'the Son of God to wage decisive battle against Satan, to establish a salvation that will ultimately reverse all the effects of sin, and to bring the good news of salvation to all the world. What has not yet come is the final peace ... the complete eradication of all the fruit of sin in the world. These things will be finally achieved with the return of Christ in visible glory, but the achievement is being advanced by Christ's present rule over all things, exercised especially through the giving of his Holy Spirit.'

The relevance of all this to many controversial interpretative issues is obvious but Mr Nicholls had to limit his application to two areas. On the relation between the kingdom and the church, he was unhappy with Herman Ridderbos's idea that they are two entities, which he sees as two concentric circles. If, instead, we think more of reign than realm, the difficulty largely disappears, and we can see the kingdom as a category, not of ethics or social action, but of the church's mission to the world. The church is the community of the kingdom, through which it works in the world.

Mr Nicholls felt that 'Liberation Theology' deserved a more extended treatment than he was able to give it, but he nevertheless succeeded, in short space, in showing the fallacies of this approach to, or abuse of, the concept of the kingdom. He also reminded us, however, on the basis that 'there is always a place where a heresy points to a failure or imbalance in the doctrine, life and work of the church', that we must look again at some of the traditional views and practices within evangelical churches. This initiated a very fruitful discussion on the relation of the church and kingdom to the world in terms of social action,

and on the application of the law to unbelievers and the structures of human society.

The conference must be rated a success on several counts. Under the firm, but spiritually and intellectually challenging, chairmanship of the Rev Hywel Jones, discussion ranged widely, fervently but tolerantly over many issues. Opinions may vary as to how much light was manifested, but at least the heat was only the warmth of fellowship and a common concern to understand and apply the word of God, on the part of men from widely contrasting theological and ecclesiastical traditions. To discuss the law, the Sabbath, veils, the covenant (and even mention baptism) without a trace of rancour is something to be noted in these days.

Frequently we went beyond our mandate to discuss the application of hermeneutical principles rather than the principles themselves. This was good in that it showed that we were not engaged in a fruitless and futile academic discussion. Among many other topics we considered our dependence on the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our work, how to preach so as to be understood and revival. On the debit side, while there was agreement on general hermeneutical principles, our stress on and differences over the outworking of these indicated that more work is needed on detailed principles, which would improve the likelihood of agreement on the outworking.

If such a conference is to be justified, (apart from the pleasure it gave to those who attended!) it must bear fruit in further work by those who gained, as I did, much mental and spiritual stimulus. Who from among or outside that number will produce detailed, practical answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a valid difference between principles and rules in interpretation or life?

2. How do we find Christ in all the scriptures when he is not there directly?

3. How do we decide which stage of kingdom development applies in any given reference?

4. What principles determine whether something in the Old Testament is typical or whether a parable in the New has more than one legitimate point?

5. How far may we bring extra-biblical information to bear in contextual

problems?

There is ample room for future hard work, for the profit of preachers and, through them, of the whole church.

THE NEW HERMENEUTIC

(PART 2)

Dr Eryl Davies

After suggesting some reasons why this is an important and relevant subject, the first article (Issue No.9, November 1982) described the origins and features of the New Hermeneutic. In this second article the weaknesses and challenge of the New Hermeneutic are briefly considered.

Although we are in radical disagreement with the New Hermeneutic, we must nevertheless acknowledge that this new approach has made a contribution to hermeneutics. For example, its emphasis on the existential character of human knowledge has helped to undermine traditional confidence in the role of human 'reason' to establish 'objective', 'impartial' knowledge. The New Hermeneutic has also exposed the barreness and aridity of liberal theology and the critical approach to the Bible while Fuch's treatment of the parables helps us to appreciate the absorbing but disturbing way in which our Lord challenged his original hearers. We also have much to learn from the practical, pastoral concern of Ebeling and Fuchs to apply the Word in contemporary situations. But before we assess the challenge of the New Hermeneutic, we need firstly to draw attention to some of the weaknesses inherent in this approach and teaching.

WEAKNESSES

A major weakness of the New Hermeneutic is its critical view of the Bible.'It is absurd', remarks Ebeling, 'to designate a transmitted text as God's Word'.[1] Many other quotations could be given not only from Ebeling but also from Fuchs and other exponents of the New Hermeneutic to illustrate their rejection of the orthodox doctrine of Scripture. The hermeneutical 'insights' provided by this school stem from a theological and philosophical framework diametrically opposed to 'the faith

once delivered to the saints' (Jude 3).

Having abandoned the objective authority of the Bible, the New Hermeneutic is guilty of a subjectivism which relativises revealed truth in a radical and alarming way. This criticism can be illustrated in several ways. For example, while Ebeling and Fuchs countenance the critical-historical method as a preliminary towards interpretation, they nevertheless seriously disparage the role of the mind in interpretation. Commenting on this, Hans Jonas criticises Herdegger's notion of openness which underlies the approach of Fuchs and Ebeling. If we exchange our initiative in thinking for a mere 'listening' then rather than escaping from our own historicity, he warns, we make everything 'a matter of the chance factor of the historical generation I was born into'.[2] Furthermore, for the New Hermeneutic there can be no 'objective' and final meaning of a text yet, in reply, we insist that because God's self-revelation has been inscripturated perfectly we must take seriously, as the words of God, the text of the Bible and its original, intended meaning. Professor Howard Marshall expresses the point admirably: 'The meaning of a text is constant and objective, whereas its significance may vary for different readers. The significance depends upon both the text and the readers, and is a function of their mutual interaction ... It is of special importance to recognise that the significance flows out of the meaning'.[3]

But what, according to the New Hermeneutic, do we achieve when we interpret the New Testament text? What are we doing? Fuchs replies that 'in the interaction of the text with daily life we experience the truth of the New Testament'. [4] This sounds impressive but the answer is deceptive and ambiguous. Ebeling expresses it differently: 'the text ... becomes a hermeneutic aid in the understanding of present experience.' [5] Fuchs explains in more detail what this means or what the interpreter receives from the understanding of a text. God's Word, he says, concerns 'the meaning of Being' and its truth is the call of Being. The language-event is essentially a call or a pledge and not the communication of doctrines. Instead of conveying ideas, Jesus MAKES a promise, LAYS DOWN a demand, or EFFECTS a gift. [6] In his treatment of the parables, Fuchs explains this essential nature of the language-event as 'call' and 'pledge'. The 'call' involves an engagement with the verdict of Jesus. 'The parable', he writes, 'effects and demands our decision'.[7] Fuchs explains that 'to have faith in Jesus now means essentially to repeat Jesus' decision'.[8] Basically, this means our willingness to abandon pride and self-assertion and thus repeat the 'decision' of Jesus to love

and even suffer, if necessary.[9] No doctrinal instruction then is provided in this language-event and this fact prompts Clark Pinnock to describe the New Hermeneutic as a 'linguistic mysticism. Faith arises in an encounter with words.' [10]

Another weakness inherent in the approach of the New Hermeneutic is its mystical and inadequate view of the nature of language. Ebeling and Fuchs are almost exclusively concerned with imperative, direct language and discredit informative and descriptive language. 'The basic structure of a word is therefore not statement ... but appraisal', writes Ebeling, 'certainly not in the colourless sense of information but in the pregnant sense of participation and communication'.[11] Criticising this position, A.C.Thiselton appeals to Amis Wilder's verdict: 'Fuchs refuses to define the content of faith ... He is afraid of the word as convention or as a means of conveying information ... Fuchs carries this so far that revelation reveals nothing ... Jesus calls, indeed, for decision ... But surely his words, deeds, presence, person, and message rested upon dogma, eschatological and theocratic'.[12]

We must widen the discussion in order to highlight further the inadequacy of this view of human language. According to Hebrews 1:1-2 we have a 'LANGUAGE-USING GOD' [13] but the language God used in his self-revelation was not restricted to performative (eg Genesis 1:3), imperative (eg decalogue and details of God's revealed will relating to human behaviour as well as the command to sinners to repent) or direct language between persons. Another important function of language is to convey information to people who lack the relevant knowledge or data. This must be regarded as one of the primary functions of language within revelation for God has taken the initiative to reveal truth which otherwise we would never have discovered. There is also the illustrative or illuminative use of language where pictures, parables, metaphors are employed to enrich our appreciation or understanding of a doctrine as in Matthew 6:26-29, and other parables of the Lord. Language may also be laudatory conveying the response of astonishment, worship and appreciation. We must also insist that language itself is neither 'reality' nor 'Being' but, for example, the words of scripture point beyond themselves to God Himself.

The New Hermeneutic also exaggerates the difference between the original writers and the interpreter. Admittedly it is not easy to appreciate the background and etymology of many biblical words or the original intention of the authors so here is a challenge for us to use the

grammatico-historical method as thoroughly and extensively as possible. Proponents of the New Hermeneutic, however, argue that the situations and outlook of biblical writers were radically different from those of the contemporary interpreter and, consequently, it is unreasonable to use the traditional hermeneutical method in understanding the text. Professor Howard Marshall replies to this position: 'I should want to stress the close similarities between biblical thinking and our thinking, which are not, I think, wholly due to the fact that as Christians our thinking has been strongly moulded by the Bible. The point is that, like other literature from the past, the Bible presents a picture of man and the human situation which rings true in the modern world and offers a diagnosis of our maladies which is profoundly true and relevant .....' [14] While our criticisms of the New Hermeneutic have not been detailed or exhaustive, we have hopefully said enough to indicate some of the major weaknesses and errors inherent in its teaching.

CHALLENGE

While the New Hermeneutic is in error at many crucial points, it would be foolish for us to ignore its challenge. What then can we learn from this hermeneutical approach?

One immediate challenge to us is the pastoral concern underlying and motivating the New Hermeneutic; it is certainly not an arid, academic approach unrelated to everyday life. 'Our concern is proclamation', declares Gerhard Ebeling and it is from this perspective that he and Fuchs attempt to explain how the language of the Bible speaks afresh to modern man. The answers they provide, of course, are wrong but their concern is nevertheless genuine and practical. Throughout his writings, for example, Fuchs grapples with the problem, 'What do we have to do at our desks, if we want later to set the text in front of us in the pulpit?' [15] Ebeling is concerned that 'the rift between theology and the so-called "faith of the congregation" has become oppresively wide.' [16] He also stresses the ecclesiastical character of theology and warns that absorption 'in theological work should never mislead a person into becoming distant from life and from that which serves it'. [17] Is there not a growing rift among us between theology and the church, between sound doctrine and conduct or experience and between church and society? In addition, there is an increasing number of pressing, contemporary problems to which we need to address ourselves if we are to be faithful to the Word of God and also to our people who are sometimes caught up in complex problems as in the area of social and medical ethics. There

is the added challenge, of course, of the effective and arresting proclamation of the Word. In other words, we must do our theology and hermeneutics well and within a pastoral context deeply sensitive to the questions and needs of our people.

The main contribution of the New Hermeneutic concerns their approach to our Lord's parables - the way in which Jesus creates and uses pictures as a means of identifying his message with the world of his hearers as well as the sense of shock and challenge provided in the application of the parable. Concerning the parable of the Pharisee and Tax-Collector in Luke 18:9-14, for example, Walter Wink claims: 'the scholar, having finished his work (of exegesis) lays down his pen, oblivious to the way in which he has FALSIFIED THE TEXT in accordance with unconscious tendencies; so much so that he has maimed its original intent until it has actually turned into its opposite'.[18] Wink continues: 'Any MODERN reader at all familiar with the text knows that (1) "Pharisees" are hypocrites and (2) Jesus praises the publican. The unreflective tendency of every reader is to identify with the more positive figures in an account. Consequently, modern readers will almost invariably identify with the publican. By that inversion of identification, the paradox of the justification of the ungodly is lost ... The story is then deformed ... All this because the exegete hid behind his descriptive task without examining the recoil of the parable upon contemporary self-understanding.' [19] There is truth in what Wink says here and the challenge of his remarks is two-fold: first of all, we must be thorough in our use of the grammatico-historical method and avoid the mistake which Wink exposes. Secondly, we must try to present the challenge of the Word as powerfully and convincingly as possible.

A third challenge is the importance of applying the text. Gadamer argued that application is essential to the whole experience of understanding a text and he refers to legal hermeneutics to illustrate the point. 'Understanding', he writes, 'is always application' [20] and Fuchs and Ebeling agree with him. Clearly we must not, like the New Hermeneutic, reduce hermeneutics to application because the groundwork of application must always be exegesis and synthesis. But what we learn from them is that our work is not complete when we have established the text's meaning. In his commentary on Romans, Karl Barth pays this compliment to Calvin: 'How energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent. Paul speaks and the man of the

sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject-matter until a distinction between yesterday and today becomes impossible.'[21] We must avoid at least two errors here. The error of ignoring the original, intended meaning of the text and applying only a random, pious thought and the other error of doing no more than exegeting a text. Application, although it means hard work, is a necessity not a luxury or option.

Again, Ebeling's warning that it is possible to understand all the individual words of a text without understanding its message is a salutory warning to us.[22] While detailed exegesis of individual words is important we must at the same time be familiar with the thrust of the whole passage and the message of the book itself, indeed, of the whole Bible.

Do we need the New Hermeneutic to remind us of the need for the interpreter and preacher of the Scripture to be gripped, moved and challenged deeply by the Word he is studying and preaching? Hermeneutics must never become a mere intellectual exercise.

Without questioning the crucial distinction and relationship between Word and Spirit, the New Hermeneutic also reminds us that there are 'existential' factors which affect our interpretation of Scripture. In other words, while the Bible itself is infallible, our own interpretation of the Bible is notoriously fallible. Certainly as children of our age we are predisposed and conditioned in more ways than we imagine. Tradition, family upbringing, education, the prevailing philosophy, temperament and sin, etc. all play a part in the way we come to the sacred text. On the other hand, we need genuine 'mystical' elements in our approach to the text. We are not advocating Heidegger's openness or silence but rather more prayer, the seeking of God Himself as well as a deeper experience of the Word.

It would be a mistake for readers to imagine that they can ignore the New Hermeneutic in their churches. Some of our young people pursuing studies in theology and religious studies may already have been introduced to this teaching and may feel confused. Are we able to help them? Furthermore, we need to appreciate the fact that the influence of the New Hermeneutic is extensive in contemporary theological writings. While discussing recently the extent of the influence of the New Hermeneutic with a reputable publishing company, I was told that 'most of our books take in or acknowledge the New Hermeneutic'. The whole area of Christian

ethics, too, is being affected by this school which contributes to a depreciation of law and objective, biblical standards. Just as serious is the attempt more recently by one of its leading proponents, Walter Wink, to adapt the New Hermeneutic to personal/group bible-study.[23] The approach is revolutionary and far-reaching in its implications. Concerned over the 'split' between the academic study of the Scriptures and the problems of life, Professor Wink in this book marries the principles of the New Hermeneutic to Jungian psychology and the questioning method convinced that the 'split' between an intellectual approach to the Bible and life 'is virtually mirrored in the way the two hemispheres of the brain are specialized.'[24] A review of this book will appear later but, in conclusion, allow me to make two comments. Many ordinary people are reading the book and are imbibing both the principles of the New Hermeneutic and Jungian psychology in the confidence that these are indispensable keys to the interpretation of the Bible. Secondly, the book is destructive of orthodox, biblical teaching. Can we afford to ignore the challenge of the New Hermeneutic?

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OLD TESTAMENT HELPS

Rev Stephen Dray,MA BD, London

The last two years has seen some exciting development in the field of Old Testament publications. In particular there has been the beginning of several major new series of Old Testament commentaries and the progression of some earlier series into areas which are rarely commented upon in the Old Testament literature.

Under the former category comes the series of commentaries entitled 'The Bible Student's Commentary'[1234]. This is a highly promising series with a projected sixty-two volumes on the Old and New Testament. The volumes are a translation of the 'Korte Verklaring Der Heilige Schrift' which was originally published in Dutch between 1930 and 1960. The various contributors take a conservative evangelical stand and the publishers have been willing to comment upon statements made in the Leviticus and Numbers volumes which reflect the unorthodox viewpoint of the original author. This is very helpful and might usefully be adopted by other publishers of commentaries. The series is exegetically very thorough and it majors on exegesis, explanation and background. In these areas the commentaries are invaluable even if they are slightly dated and somewhat pedestrian. Little attention is give to hermeneutics although the volume by Gispen in particular makes use of a controlled typology which seems to reflect the Dutch Biblical Theology Movement. The commentaries take a very strong apologetic slant and this is especially true in the Aalders volume where the documentary hypothesis is brilliantly debunked. Aalders essay on the Pentateuch is of particular value to the student. The style of these volumes makes them very readable, with few footnotes and the standard of translation is consistently high.

In comparison with other commentaries the Aalders volume will now probably rank above that of Leopold. Gispen's work is the best conservative commentary currently available in an area little commented upon by evan-

gelicals. The volume by Noordtzij on Leviticus is superior to that by Harrison in the Tyndale series and ought to compliment Wenham's New International commentaries on the same book. Similarly the Numbers volume should compliment Wenham's excellent commentary in the Tyndale series.

Another major new series of commentaries is 'The Word Bible Commentary'. Fifty-two volumes are projected for the Old and the New Testament and the stance is a broad evangelical one. The first volume to be published in the Old Testament is that which covers the first fifty Psalms and is by Peter Craigie.[5] The author is a suitable commentator for the Psalms in view of his considerable knowledge of Ugaritic Literature. His commentary is scholarly and includes his own translation and exegetical notes which are then followed by a discussion of background and introductory issues, exposition and application. Thus serious attention is given to the context, the overall meaning of the Psalms and the hermeneutical principles involved in applying the psalms to the contemporary world. The general introduction deals in a helpful way with the major critical issues of Psalm study. Discussion includes the origin of psalmody, the compilation and authorship of the Psalter, the theological perspectives of the psalms and is concluded with a discussion of psalms in recent biblical research.

This is an excellent commentary. The preacher in tune with modern developments of the Psalms will find in this volume much to enrich his ministry.

Two new commentaries which ought to be mentioned at this point are the volumes on Daniel and Ecclesiastes with the Song of Solomon by Stuart Olyott.[6] [7] With these titles the Welwyn commentaries have entered the Old Testament for the first time.

Both books are written in a straight-forward style which is aimed at the general reader and which makes the practical application of the scripture the overriding aim. These intentions are admirably achieved. The Daniel volume is the best and its great achievement is to show how the apocalyptic portions of the book may be taught in a practical and relevant way so as to meet the individual pastoral needs of each reader.

The volume which includes Ecclesiastes and the Songs of Solomon is more by way of a summary outline of the content and the message of each book.

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On Ecclesiastes Olyott takes a similar viewpoint to that of Eaton (see below) and on the Song of Solomon he adopts the typological method in a helpful way.

Both these volumes should be a value to preachers in providing a helpful overview to the message of these three Biblical books and also in giving some useful help in the direction of application. The real value of these two titles, however, lies in their potential to make three mysterious Old Testament books come alive for the 'ordinary' Christian. They are to be highly recommended.

Intervarsity Press have also recently published a volume on Ecclesiastes in their Tyndale Old Testament series.[8] Written by Michael Eaton this is a detailed commentary which is the fruit of considerable and prolonged study and reflection on the book of Ecclesiastes. In addition it is clear that Eaton has preached through this material. Thus the book maintains the consistently high standard of the Tyndale Old Testament commentaries while it has the added bonus over some of the earlier volumes of a clear pastoral concern.

Eaton claims that the author of Ecclesiastes has used the resources of the Israelite Wisdom Tradition to weave a message around the life and experience of Solomon. This is consistent with most modern Evangelical Scholarship. Ecclesiastes is an apologetical book which is intended to compare secularism or 'Life under the sun', with the life of faith where 'the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom'.

As such, however, it has a double thrust constituting a powerful appeal for decision as well as a call to obedience amid the many anomalies of experience in life. Perhaps more could have been made of this latter feature of the message of Ecclesiastes since the book surely emphasises that life in a fallen world remains full of tensions even for the believer. Nevertheless, this volume is a must for every student of Ecclesiastes and for the preacher, in particular, its clear, concise, thorough and suggestive format make it of the highest value.

A commentary of some importance is the volume on 1 and 2 Chronicles in the New Century Bible Commentary series by H.G.M.Williamson.[9] Williamson is on the Cambridge Theological Faculty and is a member of the Tyndale fellowship. The evidence of the commentary would place him on the Liberal Wing of evangelicalism, for although he does not regard it as his brief to discuss its historicity, he nevertheless (though holding

a generally high view) can speak of errors within the material of the Chronicler.

The commentary is adequate in exegesis and is excellent in its exposition with special attention being given to the theology of the Chronicler. This is based ona thorough source-critical analysis of the text. The reader who expects such exposition to be accompanied by the hermeneutical hints which enable him to apply the text to the contemporary situation will be disappointed. However, most preachers should be able to build many valuable studies on the basis of Williamson's work if an adequate method for interpreting the Old Testament narrative is adopted.

A final comment. All commentaries should be stitched. Even at extra cost such a feature is an essential requirement if a volume is likely to be consulted with regularity. Marshall Morgan & Scott should do this in all subsequent commentaries in this series.

Another commentary recently published on a rarely touched part of Scripture is the volume on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah by F.C. Fensham.[10] Fensham is one of the top Old Testament scholars in the world and is thoroughly conservative. His special strength is in linguistics and this is reflected in this volume which is very strong in the realm of exegesis and explanation of a text. Fensham shows his conservatism in his discussion of all the major critical issue in the two books but, except for the introductory material where theology is discussed, there is little in the text of a theological nature.

However, this volume compliments Kidner's excellent Tyndale volume and both he and Fensham are essential to the serious preacher in these two books of the Bible.

Turning from commentaries to books which provide valuable background material we come to the volume entitled 'Ugarit and the Old Testament' by Peter Craigie.[11] This is an excellent introduction to the discoveries of Ugarit and the contribution which they make to Old Testament study. The book is interestingly written and well illustrated and is by the foremost evangelical expert on Ras Shamra. The book is of a special value from pages 67 to 90 where the uses and abuses made of the Ugaritic discoveries in modern Old Testament scholarship are discussed. This work is simply written and will be of interest and value to all those interested in Old Testament background.

'The Persian Empire' is a secularly-written history of the Persian Empire. [12] However, it is thoroughly researched and is a well balanced account. It thus provides much useful background to the study of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel. Not the least interesting feature of the book is the fact that it reveals how second-hand most of our knowledge of ancient Persia is. This is especially significant when we consider the dogmatic statements which are made in Old Testament studies on, for example, the date of Ezra's return, the existence or otherwise of Darius the Mede and the considerable scepticism normally expressed in connection with the book of Esther.

The most important volume seen in the last year by the reviewer is, however, the work entitled 'Typos' by Leonard Goppelt.[13] This work was originally and quite remarkably published in Germany in 1939 by a German Liberal-Evangelical scholar. This well written and well translated volume initiates a search for a normative scholarly hermeneutic for the study of the Old Testament, especially with respect to Old Testament narrative and institutions. Goppelt begins with a thorough and seminal study of the hermeneutics contemporary to the New Testament and this is followed by a study of all the New Testament books (excluding Revelation) in which a profound grasp of the principles involved in New Testament (and therefore legitimate!) typology is set out. Here is a volume which at one and the same time will satisfy the Bible student weary of the excesses of typology, allegory and excessive spiritualization which is so often passed off as true biblical interpretation today, and, will also convince all that the whole Old Testament finds its fulfilment legitimately in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Attached to this volume is a late and most valuable essay on 'Apocalyptic and Typology in Paul' and the whole work is preceded by a most useful foreword by the hermeneutical expert E.Earle Ellis which sets the volume in its historical context and outlines recent developments since Goppelt.

This is a superb book. Buy it.

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LEARNING TO CARE by Michael H.Taylor S.P.C.K. Paperback 117pp £3.95
(New Library of Pastoral Care series)

This book by the Principal of the Northern Baptist College concerns itself with an important field of contemporary Christian interest and theological practice, for it deals with the urgent need for interaction between Christian faith and pastoral care on the strength of a carefully wrought theological basis.

Starting with the recognition that much contemporary pastoral care is more indebted to modern psychological practice than theology the author sets out to explore specifics of 'Christian Pastoral Practice'.

Chapter headings will give some clue as to the path it is proposed to explore. These include PASTORAL CARE (Ch.1); WHAT IS CHRISTIAN PASTORAL CARE? (Ch.3); THE RELEVANCE OF DOCTRINE (Ch.5) and a summary by way of practical illustration, on DOING THEOLOGY IN COMMUNITY. Just to cite these captions is to provide initial interest. Our main concern is to find out if expectations are satisfied in Taylor's treatment.

The sub-title of the book, 'Christian Reflection on Pastoral Practice' is soon shown to be misleading because the author is evidently not certain about the determinant of Christian reflection. For him there is no such thing as THE Christian faith which is to be projected in

practice (p31). Pastoral care is to arise out of 'Christian Reflection on Pastoral Practice' (p3) and the theology involved is determined by the process of reflection. Obviously such theology as we shall encounter from within this process will be largely subjective - which may explain the author's inability to give definitive comment on the homosexual who figures in one of his six case studies (p14).

It is strange logic which proceeds to present any claimed variant of Christian thinking when what is specifically Christian cannot be defined or is, perhaps, non-existent (p31). The history of the Christian Church and the development of Christian theology demonstrates that every aberration from a very specific norm did, in fact, help forward the definition and clarification of what that norm was. The rise of Christian Creeds and the continuity in their theological understanding of the Christian Gospel provides just one strand of a process by which the real can be distinguished from the spurious and the orthodox from the heterodox. Moreover, it puts at a very low discount Christ's teaching about himself and the work he had come to accomplish and it disregards completely the contemporary estimate and understanding of what THE (capitals ours) Christian faith is as we have that articulated in the witness of the New Testament. The seeming indifference to exegetical or objective theological exposition in support of such a momentous claim is a serious blemish especially in the present-day context of rigorous biblical studies. It is just one aspect of the difficulties inherent in the relativistic and subjective orientation from within which Taylor attempts to operate. It ignores, also, the very firm return to a more objective view of Scripture and the veracity of its witness which has been emerging on the broad front of theological/exegetical scholarship in more recent years.

Taylor, of course, is well enough informed to forsee the difficulties which adhere to many of his statements and he is constantly anxious to disarm any criticism. 'Some may be alarmed', he writes, 'to note that what might be regarded as the most important resource (not, note, source!) for Christian reflection has not been mentioned, and that is the Bible. The intention is not to leave it out of account but to see it for what it is' (p36). How, in fact does Taylor see it? He sees it, oddly enough, through a medium that one might have thought would have been laid aside with the era which manufactured it. 'It tells stories about what is going on in our human experience ...' (Shades of Bultmann, if not Schleiermacher!) ...' and he goes on, 'in our view it is not of any special importance because it is especially inspired in a way that

other Christian resources, like a twentieth century creed as against a Pauline creed are not' (id). So, clearly, for Taylor, contemporary 'Christian reflection' including, presumably, his own, is just the same type of source, carrying the same authority for Christian faith, as the Apostolic writings in the carefully screened, and early accepted body of the New Testament Canon.

The inadequacy of this framework of reference within which the study is forced to move is confirmed and indeed, emphasised, for us by the orientation it gives to its treatment of the 'historical' Jesus. In chapter 8, entitled THE GOOD SHEPHERD, a fairly lengthy examination of the sources of our knowledge of Jesus and his teaching involves the following kind of reasoning: 'we can assume that the evangelists were fallible human beings who, with the best will in the world, didn't always get things right; and even the Gospels admit that Jesus' teaching was frequently misunderstood' (p87). Leaving aside the strange distinction which the 'even' implies between the veracity of the evangelists and that of the Gospels, we merely note the inference transported into the fact that the Gospel's state, again and again, that Jesus was misunderstood sometimes even by his disciples. Over against the insinuation that this creates a difficulty in understanding Jesus or his message, this feature of their witness is today widely recognised as a strand in the integrity and unity of the view of Jesus which his disciples ultimately attained - and which they so clearly published amongst their contemporaries.

The conclusion to which Taylor is leading in this orchestrated account of the paucity of sources for knowledge of Jesus is now, of course, pretty obvious. His own statement of it is, 'it remains difficult to sort out a picture of Jesus as he really was from the pictures that were soon being painted of him by his devoted followers' (id). Apart from the fact that such an estimate of Jesus and the Gospels is very much dated nowadays, this conclusion ignores some other relevant factors. Amongst these, one would mention the fact that, as more recent New Testament studies have pushed the dating of the Gospels further and further back from that sometimes accepted earlier in this century the entire concept of a 'shadowy' Jesus has had to be abandoned. The fact is that writings which emerged from the contemporary scene in which he lived and acted could just not afford to paint unrealistic pictures of Jesus. It is quite clear from a mass of evidence available to us, from without the New Testament Church as well as from within it, that from the point of resurrection onwards a very clearly developed and amazingly

well-defined and well-rounded doctrine of Christ and his work was being taught and believed. Furthermore, the amount of material available to us from within the New Testament, including not only the Gospels but the early Pauline material (which is not taken into account by Taylor at all) is not nearly so meagre as Taylor's statements and insinuations would wish us to believe. It is a matter of fact that many historical figures whose teachings are well known are not nearly so well-documented as is the person, teaching and work of Jesus. Laying aside altogether the whole question of plenary inspiration and biblical authority - as Taylor does - contemporary studies in the field of New Testament research tend to strengthen, rather than weaken, conviction about the clarity as well as the veracity of the New Testament portrayal of Jesus. Contrary to Taylor's assertion, the surprising thing which is having to be faced afresh in our day is not how little, but how much we know about Jesus and his teaching. The final observation one would wish to make about this conclusion is that it totally ignores the O.T. background into which Jesus came and against which his teachings were understood and interpreted.

It is disappointing, and somewhat frustrating that throughout the book Taylor frequently attempts to work from a core of Christian belief to which his own theological orientation and subjective criteria do not, in strict logic, permit him any access. But that was a conspicuous difficulty facing the older Liberal school which many of its descendants have not been able, as yet, to resolve. Locked-in to a specific presuppositional approach to revelation and a framework full of relatives but devoid of absolutes it is small wonder that Taylor has to acknowledge that 'To judge anything as Christian by its conformity to abiding Christian truths may tend to rely too heavily on absolutes which don't exist' (p33). On that sort of basis it must be extremely difficult to reflect coherently at all.

For this reviewer it is difficult to understand why the reflections in this book are put forward as 'Christian', by a thinker who can no longer define what 'THE Christian faith' is, and for this reason it is impossible to recommend the result, or to denominate it as Christian in any honestly acceptable usage of that easily-abused word. Apart from the religious setting within which the final chapter is structured - DOING THEOLOGY IN COMMUNITY - and Taylor is confused and impractical when he attempts to move from 'reflection on Christian Practice' to the sphere of which he is so unsure, 'Doing Theology' - the work lives and moves in the atmosphere of humanistic, rather than Christian practice. The verdict must be that it has not achieved its aim.

Rev Professor Douglas Macmillan MA Edinburgh

LIBERATING GOD

Private Care and Public Struggle: by Peter Selby 111pp Paperback £3.95 S.P.C.K.

The past decade has witnessed a marked revival of interest in the theology of pastoral activity, particularly among liberal and neo-orthodox writers. While this rather surprising, and, one would have said some years ago, unlikely, surge of interest must be welcomed, it is difficult to refrain from adding that the conclusions reached by beginning with unscriptural views of God and man have been as universally unsatisfactory as those reached, on the same basis, in the other disciplines of theology. While it is axiomatic that theological thought must not isolate itself from the questions being discussed in contemporary society, it should be equally obvious that pastoral theology must never ignore the biblical and theological answers wrought out by careful exegesis and debate over the centuries.

The work under consideration in this review is, itself, part of this new flow and so undoubtedly influenced by it - it cites almost thirty works for 'Further Reading' almost all of them recent and the earliest of them dating to 1942 - that it must, sadly, be brought under the same stricture. No matter how interesting and important its thesis - and it is both - nor how carefully and logically developed its argumentation - and, again it has both these admirable qualities - it is basically dissatisfying because of the weakness of its exegetical/theological presuppositions.

The writer of the book is, we are informed, 'the Diocesan Missioner in the diocese of Newcastle' and the work is part of a series being produced by S.P.C.K. under the title THE NEW LIBRARY OF PASTORAL CARE and the general editorship of Derek Blows, Director of the Westminster Pastoral Foundation and a psychotherapist at University College Hospital. The series has 'been planned to meet the needs of those people concerned with pastoral care, whether clergy or lay, who seek to improve their knowledge and skills in this field'. The series already has seven titles, by various authors, to its credit as it seeks, in its own particular way, to fulfil its laudable aim.

This work, as its pretentious title rather vaguely indicates, sets out to correct an imbalance that its author finds in the 'current conventions of pastoral care' and is directed, the back page blurb tells us,

against 'The obsessive search for personal growth and inner wholeness without concern for the health of society' which the writer maintains has pervaded and distorted the area of pastoral activity and concern.

In the opening chapter, THE PASTORAL COVENANT, the emphasis is upon the scene in which pastoral care has to be exercised. 'Contexts do affect the possibilities open to us and pastoral care has to concern itself with the individual's environment if it is to have integrity' (p5). And of course that is absolutely true. But the power of God's grace to touch a man where he is and to change him and his environment - which the history of the Church demonstrates - is largely ignored. The assertion that, 'It is simplistic and a gross insult to the world's suffering to speak as though poverty and war will be eliminated by means of the progressive conversion of the hearts of individuals' (ibid) is itself a simplistic judgement which concentrates more on the intractable human situation than the transforming power of grace. It also underestimates the kind of creature man is. Poverty and war are not merely the results of bad housing or bad politics they are the inevitable consequences of man's sinnership. The refusal to come to grips with this fundamental and radical area of the biblical teaching on sin and grace vitiates and weakens the interesting - and from some viewpoints, helpful - opening chapter of the book and so forewarns us of the limitations of the framework within which the entire thesis is elaborated.

In order to illustrate this a little further, without entering upon a critique of all seven chapters, it will serve our purpose to look brieflyat chapter two. This chapter is headed, A REVIVAL OF SPIRITUALITY and one would have expected a clear, cogent statement of what Christian spirituality is over against the multifarious non-christian types that arouse such widespread interest in our time - this interest IS acknowledged. But there is no analysis of regeneration or even of biblical faith in Christ; the very basics of the Christian message to man in his lostness - around which the thesis of the book so strongly, and rightly centres - is ignored and the nearest we get to them is, 'There is an increased awareness, among church members, of the possibilities of contemplative prayer and of the resources of the spiritual tradition in Christianity' (p11). There is a demand seen for 'authentic religious experience' (p11), there is even an acknowledgement that 'there are those in the churches who are sure that it is the task of the Church to respond to that demand, and that the resources are available within the Christian tradition to do so' (p11). There is a clear dissatisfaction in the writer with the theological 'currents of the 1960s' (p13)

and with the emphasis of a 'theology of liberation and a discipleship of social action' (p12) which swirled along in their wake but the dissatisfaction is largely because, in the eighties, the 'secular theologies are lying under a pile of debris' (p14). But, lest we think that the debris has sent Peter Selby back to examine his very first principles in theology, this chapter, and indeed the entire book, are clear indicators that it is not so. His basic concern is still with the 'politics of social justice'. Now, that concern is good and healthy; would that many more Christians and pastors were imbued with it; but it must find its expression within a specifically Christian and biblical framework and, disappointingly, no real effort to attempt this is made throughout the book.

The book has its interest for the person concerned with social justice and with the pastoral problems which social injustice stimulates and aggravates and in many ways is suggestive and helpful in this area but it fails to help in the real underlying sphere of the personal, spiritual problems which sin carries along in its wake and out of which the wider problems of society arise. Because it fails to deal with the root problem of what man is, it cannot satisfactorily come to grips with the problem of where man is. Ultimately, only the biblical remedy of God's saving grace in Christ can help the Christian pastor to deal with either sphere, for they impinge on one another (as the book makes clear) and this is where the whole approach of the writer is at its weakest. It may find a sphere of usefulness within the dialectics of the neo-orthodox pastoral scene but there are other more satisfying works available to the biblically oriented pastor and counsellor which this book will do nothing to replace.

Rev Professor Douglas Macmillan MA Edinburgh

JESUS SON OF MAN by Barnabas Lindars S.S.F. Published by S.P.C.K. (1983). Hardback at £15. 244pp

This work from the pen of the Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at Manchester University, has the sub-title, 'A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels in the light of Recent Research'. The copious footnotes, extending to thirty-three pages at the end of the volume, and the Bibliography occupying another thirteen pages bear testimony to the author's familiarity with a great deal of recent research as well as with not-so-recent writings dealing with his subject. The index of modern authors quoted or referred to in the text totals 158. There is also an index of references to Scripture

and other ancient writings set out on just over seven pages with three columns to the page.

The question of the use and meaning of the term Son of Man is approached with the conviction that it is one of fundamental importance for Christian origins. The number of authentic Son of Man sayings, that is those that can be traced back to Jesus Himself, are limited to nine. The first six are a varied group of sayings which are seen to have come into the Synoptic Gospels from Mark and Q and come down to us fairly close to the form in which Jesus spoke them. The other three are three passion sayings represented in the three formal predictions of the passion in Mark 8:31; 9:13; 10:33-4. These three are taken to be the basis of all the other Son of Man passion sayings in the Synoptics and perhaps even in John.

Lindars' criterion for determining which may be regarded as authentic Son of Man sayings is that in these the saying functions according to Aramaic idiom. His contention is that when this idiom is recognised and properly understood these Son of Man sayings give us important information about the ways in which Jesus spoke about his mission from God and about his own personal destiny.

What then is to be done with the many other occurrences of the Son of Man phrase in the sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels (over 70 in all)? Are they just to be ignored? Not at all, Lindars would say: 'Their presence in the tradition still has to be accounted for. If a proper appreciation of the authentic sayings casts new light upon the historical Jesus himself, study of the development of the tradition may be expected to make some contribution to the perennial problem of bridging the gap between Jesus and the faith of the Church' (p85). Study of all the Son of Man sayings is important then. The authentic ones, because, when properly understood, they give us information about the historical Jesus, his claims and his understanding of himself: the others, because they give information about the faith of the church, in particular the growing developments in Christology.

The above quotation reveals Lindars' position. The Gospels in general and the Son of Man sayings in particular are only in a very limited way sources for knowledge about Jesus: they are rather sources for knowledge of the faith of the church. Even the few authentic sayings can be of value only after they have been rescued from their treatment at the hand of the Evangelists who failing, with others, to recognise the subtlety

of the generic usage in the Aramaic, translated the phrase into Greek as a title with implications of reference to the Danielic Son of Man, which, according to Lindars plays no part at all in the authentic sayings. When so rescued they do provide important evidence concerning Jesus. The unauthentic sayings show a titural usage of the Son of Man phrase with allusions to Daniel 7:13-14. They are for the most the work of the Evangelists themselves. Each Evangelist creates his own Son of Man sayings in persuance of his own particular Christological purpose in writing his gospel. It was the fact that the bar enasha idiom was clearly remembered as a feature of Jesus' personal style as well as the fact that his three (authentic) passion sayings recorded in Mark 8 played such a fundamental part in the first attempts at formulation of the faith (cf Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4), that, according to Lindars, explain why the Evangelists confine to the sayings of Jesus the Son of Man phrases which they themselves created.

In his opening chapter Lindars argues that there never was a Son of Man title in Judaism. Therefore in using the expression Jesus did not identify himself with a current messianic designation. His use of the phrase is to be otherwise understood. Along lines opened up by Geza Vermes and Maurice Casey he goes on in his next chapter to make a detailed study of the usage of the phrase bar enasha (the Aramaic behind the Greek ho huios tou anthropou) in the language spoken by Jesus. While agreeing with Casey and Vermes that the Aramaic phrase means a man, a specimen of mankind, he insists that its significance in any given instance must be deduced from the context and he claims that where Casey and Vermes failed he has succeeded in catching the precise nuance of Jesus' usages of the phrase. This Aramaic idiom enabled Jesus to refer to himself with a mixture of irony and reticence, on the one hand not making claims for himself, yet on the other showing that rejection of him involved rejection of God. The authentic sayings are in the two subsequent chapters given detailed consideration in the light of this understanding of the phrase. A further five chapters deal with the way Q and the Evangelists extended these sayings in connection with his own Christological emphasis. A final summarising chapter is entitled, 'The Son of Man and Christology'.

One of the fundamental assumptions behind this book is that the Son of Man phrase did not have a specialised use in New Testament times as the title of an eschatological figure. He takes time to support this position by examining Jewish writings previously used to prove the opposite. Perhaps he does show that the Similitudes of Enoch have been

misused or misunderstood in this connection and his comments on the date of the Similitudes (perhaps late first early second Century) cannot be lightly dismissed. What he does appear to admit is a current messianic interpretation of Daniel 7. Given that, what is important is not so much what use, if any, was made of the phrase as a title in Judaism but what use Jesus made of the phrase, how did He understand it and what meaning did he give it? Lindars is confident that he understands the phrase as used by Jesus. The sayings that don't suit this usage must be rejected as unauthentic (on this basis all the future Son of Man sayings are unauthentic). The Evangelists, unlike Lindars, did not recognise Jesus' subtle use of the Aramaic idiom and translated bar enasha very literally into Greek, which was in fact a mistranslation and involved a misrepresentation of Jesus. Yet at other times they translated the Aramaic into Greek in other ways. Lindars says that Jesus may have used the phrase many more times than the nine authentic sayings he identifies. These other instances cannot be detected now because the bar enasha phrase has not been translated by ho huios tou anthropou but by the personal pronoun or some other form of personal identity. Notwithstanding the considerable evidence produced from contemporary Aramaic we cannot accept that Lindars has ground for the confidence he shows - first in asserting what the phrase meant to Jesus and then on that basis identifying a small group of authentic sayings and designating the others as creations of the Evangelists.

If the Aramaic bar enasha does in fact lie behind the Greek ho huois tou anthropou and if it was a phrase frequently used by Jesus, the selectivity on the part of the Evangelists in the way they translated it needs a better explanation than Lindars has given. At the level of mere human intelligence, not to say anything about the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit, it is difficult to accept that the Evangelists were as insensitive and inept as this book makes them out to be. After all they were familiar with Aramaic and when it came to translating into Greek and recording the sayings of Jesus we don't believe that they were left to their own resources but were guided by the Holy Spirit.

One does not regret having read this work. In reading the detailed studies of particular texts, although not always agreeing with the conclusions, one found much to stimulate. Further thinking on the individual contribution of each Evangelist was also provoked. However, the author's underlying attitude to the Gospel writers is quite unsatisfactory. Even when they are reporting authentic sayings of Jesus they cannot be relied on to get it right.

At other times they put into the lips of Jesus what He never said. It is one thing to recognise that the various Evangelists edited, selected and arranged the material at their disposal in the interests of the particular purpose that each had, under God, to fulfil. It is quite another to accept that they created or even substantially modified their material without reference to questions of historicity.

Rev Professor A.C.Boyd MA BD Edinburgh

HEBREWS (Tyndale New Testament Commentary) Donald Guthrie

The IVP having decided that in the light of changed needs the time had come to replace some of the volumes of the original Tyndale Commentaries series, the volume on Hebrews was among those selected for replacement and Dr Guthrie's Introduction and Commentary on the Epistle was the second replacement volume to appear.

The aims of the original series remain: they seek to help the non-technical reader to understand fully and clearly the meaning of the New Testament, without being too short to be useful or too extensive or detailed to be off-putting. One of the considerations leading to the decision to replace certain volumes was that the discussion of critical questions has moved on. Critical questions therefore, while not dealt with in detail, are not ignored. In this particular volume some of these are dealt with more fully in the Introduction. With regard to others, the text of the Commentary shows the conclusions come to without the process by which these are come to.

Another of the reasons for deciding to produce new volumes was the considerable departure from the Authorised Version among Bible readers. As in most of the new volumes, in this one the English text commented on is the Revised Standard Version, although the author writes in the light of the Greek and Greek words, transliterated, are frequently referred to. Inasmuch as the English text is not printed in the Commentary and only selected phrases or words from each verse are quoted in the exposition, the volume will not be of much use to those who do not possess a Revised Standard Version. It cannot be assumed that among the Bible students the series is aimed at, the RSV is the most commonly used version. Again we are reminded that the multiplication of English versions in recent years has not been altogether a boon.

The nature of this series certainly places limitations on the author and the Commentary ought not simply to be compared with other

commentaries, recent and not so recent, on the Epistle. As one of a series that aims, within prescribed limits of length, to be exegetical, rather than homiletic, to bring out the meaning of the text without going into scholarly technicalities, this Commentary is largely successful.

Good exegesis calls not only for language skills but also for a grasp of the overall teaching and purpose of any book. The author of this Commentary in his preface draws attention to the difficulties of this New Testament book. In his introduction he shows that we cannot be certain who wrote it, or who exactly were the people to whom it was written or where they were. He does, however, make a good case for adhering to the traditional position that they were Hebrew Christians and above all he recognises that they were real people with very real spiritual problems. The author of the Epistle, whoever he was, knew the people he wrote to; he was deeply concerned for them; he writes with pastoral concern. The exhortatory and warning passages are never just asides. The profound theological statements and the closely argued, carefully thought out doctrinal passages are not produced without the readers and their situation and needs in view. Recognition of all this on Guthrie's part makes for accurate exegesis. And although the Commentary is not homiletical this careful exegesis helps the student to recognise the abiding relevance of this Epistle. All his problems of understanding will not be solved but he will find his understanding clarified and this with reference to himself was the author's first aim in writing the Commentary - 'to clarify my own understanding'.

The Introduction is substantial (about a fifth of the length of the Commentary) without being burdensome. Its final section giving a summary of the theology of the Letter will be particularly helpful for those taking up for the first time a serious study of the Letter.

Inevitably, in a short work of this nature the treatment of many words, phrases, statements, passages is inadequate, e.g. the highly significant language of verse 10 of chapter 2 is only partially expounded, and the crucial verb of verse 26 of chapter 11 is left without comment; other examples could be given.

In some places also one would question Guthrie's interpretation, e.g. in chapter 2:9, 'the grace of God' is taken to be a reference to the resources made available to Christ rather than the grace by which God gave Christ to be Saviour. On the positive side, some fundamental

themes, e.g. 'rest' in chapters 3 and 4 and Melchisedec in chapter 7 are helpfully handled in a few paragraphs.

There is no shortage of good commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is nothing in this one that cannot be found elsewhere and perhaps more fully dealt with. The divinity student, the minister, the preacher will have, or will wish to have, one of these other (but, of course, at at least four times the cost of the Tyndale Commentary, priced £2.95). Others with limited funds and limited time for studying who are beginning to build up a library of Bible Commentaries for their own use or toshare with others, can be encouraged to buy Dr Guthrie's volume. They will find here help in grasping some of the great Biblical doctrines (e.g. the Person and work of Christ, the Covenant) dealt with in this Letter. They will hear more clearly the call to faithfulness. The authority of the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament will be uncompromisingly set before them.

Rev Professor A.C.Boyd MA BD Edinburgh

TEND MY SHEEP H.Taylor T.E.F. Study Guide 19 S.P.C.K. 305pp £6.50

It appears that there are already 19 volumes published in this Study Guide Series. The present volume is the second under the general caption of 'Applied Theology'. According to the fly-leaf note the 'series was first sponsored and subsidised by the Theological Education Fund of the W.C.C. ...' and such is one's reaction to the WCC that one confesses to approaching a perusal of the book with cautionary bells ringing in one's mind. 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Come and see.

One came and saw or rather read and pondered and gladly acknowledges that the exercise was informative and helpful and refreshing. Of course there are statements here and there that suggest undue hospitality to ideas that cannot be confidently labelled 'Biblical'. But more often than not this emerges in a tolerant narrative of how people think and the writer advances no personal judgement upon their thinking. It may be that this is the accepted posture of a good counsellor - one who is willing to listen, to attempt to understand and slow to condemn. Yet the author is not forgetful that what he wishes to present is a picture of the Christian counsellor whose claim to be Christian must be made good in the acceptance of Christian doctrine and Christian ethical standards. Practical examples and case histories are drawn mainly from the new Churches of Papua, Africa and India and one is aware of a

catholic tolerance that springs from a direct and intimate experience of the different cultural backgrounds that influence Christian praxis.

Like a good traditional sermon the book has an Introduction, Three Divisions and an Epilogue, and like the best of sermons it has appropriate application from time to time in the shape of suggested study exercises at the close of each chapter. There are besides, useful indices and throughout the text bibliographical references.

Only the briefest of outlines can be given here as indicating more clearly the path the author takes. Beginning with the Biblical concept of the Good Shepherd, a figure common to Old and New Testament and featuring significantly in the teaching of our Lord, there is emphasis on the need to identify with the interests of those to be served. Service is indeed a key-note. There is timely recognition that the shepherd figure has been perpetuated in the history of the Church. Though many people may think that Church history is just a matter of theological controversy the fact is that the permanent life-force of the Church has been directed to the care and help of the needy. Pastors serve the Church and fulfil their pastoral mission as they mediate the knowledge of Christ in his compassion.

The second main division of the work is concerned with 'the ministry of Counselling' and reflects on people's need and how this can be met in ways that will be supportive, comforting, corrective and preventive as each situation demands. The pastor's approach is considered in as far as this determines aim, understanding and attitude - great importance being attached to a positive rather than a negative attitude. A positive attitude towards those being counselled does not imply that an amoral stance is adopted by the counsellor - but there **in** avoidance of an attitude of superiority or pride which will inhibit sympathy.

Guide-lines are given as to the practice of counselling and attention is drawn to the pastor's spiritual resources which give him an advantage over others. He has the aid of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of Scripture and the instrument of prayer and this reviewer was specially gladdened by the emphasis put upon the importance of knowing the content of Scripture.

The third division of the book is concerned with 'some common counselling situations' and here the author's wide missionary experience comes to light in his appreciation of the various cultural forces that shape

people's thinking and behaviour. The common situations envisaged concern marriage and sickness and death and bereavement.

All in all a lot is written and much that is very good and timely. And one is appreciative of the fact that the author of this book has not gone wild with enthusiasm for counselling techniques that ape the psychiatric clinic. Mostly it is good common sense, directed by a recognition of Biblical truth and aware that man as a sinner is partly irrational, partly deceitful and self-deceived and mostly very needy with need that the Grace of God can meet.

Rev Principal Clement Graham MA Edinburgh

WHAT HOPE IN AN ARMED WORLD? Edited by Richard Harries
Pickering & Inglis 1982 £2.95

This is a symposium of essays written by well known scholars associated with King's College, London, on the question of nuclear deterrence. They discuss the strategic issues, the relationship between nuclear and conventional deterrence, the feasibility of arms control, the question of strategic unilateral disarmament, and the ethics of the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons. Their varied views are based on healthy realism about the human situation but they do believe that 'there is hope, some hope, both of avoiding a nuclear catastrophe, and of preserving a cherished way of life and values.'

Sir Neil Cameron thinks that the possible break-up of Soviet political and social uniformity increases the risk of diversionary aggression. Therefore, nuclear deterrence is a necessity. It provides a framework within which mutual confidence must be developed. The growing number of Christians in Russia, he believes, is the only real ground for hope.

Professor Lawrence Freedman challenges the conventional option, not only on financial grounds (would the West be willing to sacrifice its standard of living in order to pay for conventional deterrence?) but also because it is based on the false assumption that conventional warfare would be less terrible than nuclear warfare. All war, he says, is terrible. Nuclear deterrence is the best way to prevent wars.

Professor Laurence Martin discusses the possibility of arms control. He concludes that nuclear deterrence is necessary, but argues for more controllable and more discriminating weapons.

In a chapter entitled 'Nuclear deterrence is irrational, disarmament is rational', Professor Maurice Wilkins suggests that nuclear deterrence is irrational because nations are resentful and aggressive enough to use nuclear weapons. Therefore, if reason is to prevail, disarmament is the only sensible option, but only if it is strategic and verified, and only in the climate of mutual co-operation in other areas.

Dr Barrie Paskins argues that US policy is based on a misjudged hostility towards the Soviet Union and on an over aggressive policy of capitalist expansion. He would replace it with tactical unilateralism, the promotion of partnership, the pursuit of alternative sources of energy, and the deployment of Western wealth for the Third World. He is a believer in the power of political liberty to win the world.

The most valuable chapter from a Christian standpoint is Richard Harries' 'The morality of nuclear deterrence'. He discusses the place of the State in the divine order; the 'just war' tradition; the criteria of discrimination and proportion; and the basic question as to the morality of using or threatening to use nuclear weapons. He argues that it is morally wrong to use nuclear weapons (because that would entail greater evil than submission to an alien power), but that the threat to use them is justifiable (because that conditional intention is less evil than the alternatives, i.e. allowing aggressors to get away with it; leaving people unprotected; refusing to stand up for our own values; and nuclear war itself).

There is a final chapter by Professor G.R.Dunstan summarizing the views of the other contributors, and suggesting that, ultimately, the answer is not to be found in historical perspective, strategic evaluation, rational optimism, or arms control, but in the power of the Word of God and of faith.

It is a pity that the Scriptures are hardly referred to at all. There is no biblical exposition to speak of. That is the major weakness in the book. However, it is a valuable summary of the main areas of controversy, and does grapple with the fundamental ethical dilemma from the standpoint of Christian presuppositions and predispositions.

Rev Andrew A.Davies, Swansea

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