

foundations

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

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Focus: What is the Church?

Literal or Literary?

Exegesis

Ecumenical Theology

Book Reviews

Old Testament Titles: an update

Theological Journals 1985-6

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

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Editorial

In this sixteenth issue of *Foundations* we are majoring on reviews of books, commentaries and journals. This is a valuable service to readers, especially busy pastors, in keeping them informed of new publications as well as trends in theology or areas requiring further study.

Our first article, however, turns our attention once again in the **Focus** series to the doctrine of the Church. This time we are publishing the considered response of the BEC Executive Council to the British Council of Churches Inter Church Programme which is entitled **What is the Church?** The subject is clearly important with its wide-ranging implications and is only one of several items in this issue on ecumenism which merit your careful consideration.

One of our Associate Editors, the Rev Hywel Jones, contributes a review article entitled **Literal or Literary?** It takes up the hermeneutical question of the form of language used in Genesis 1—3 raised by Henri Blocher's book 'In the Beginning'. The reviewer considers this an important new work and 'a stimulus to the production of a genuinely contemporary but biblical and evangelical theology of creation'.

For **Exegesis** this time, Professor Leahy has written a detailed treatment of 'the man of sin' in 2 Thessalonians and because of its contemporary relevance we ask readers to appraise his exegetical work carefully, even though they may not all agree with its conclusion.

Books about the history and nature of ecumenism form the basis of the second part of the Editor's article on **Ecumenical Theology** begun in Issue 15. This is followed by a review of the BCC Study Document, '**What on Earth is the Church for?**' provided by the Rev Alan Gibson. The topic of unity among evangelicals also arises in the Rev Peter Seccombe's review of '**Restoring the Kingdom**', a book on Restorationism which has aroused considerable interest.

The Rev Stephen Dray provides us with an extensive review of **Old Testament Titles: an Update** which is packed with information and guidance about commentaries and other works of a more general nature.

The final article is by an obedient Editor who has received numerous requests to include more regularly a **Review of Theological Journals**. The first part of the 1985—6 Review appears this time and it is hoped to complete it in the next issue.

We trust you will benefit from reading this issue and that you will further help us by commending the journal to your friends and church leaders.

Focus

In each issue Focus aims to examine one biblical doctrine in a contemporary setting. Readers will recall that Issue 15 carried an extensive report of the 1985 BEC Study Conference on the topic of the Church, entitled 'Union and Separation'. There are particular reasons for returning to the matter of the Church again this time. In February 1986 the BEC Executive Council responded to the request of the British Council of Churches for submissions from bodies both within and beyond their own ecumenical constituency about the nature of the Church. We publish here the full text of their statement because we believe it is both an unashamed testimony to our evangelical principles and a stimulus to our own further theological reflection.

Focus: 4 What is the Church?

This response on the topic 'What is the Church and what is it for?' is offered to the British Council of Churches INTER CHURCH PROGRAMME. Its paragraphs represent our views on three aspects of the question, 'In your tradition and experience how do you understand the nature and purpose of your church (or churches) in relation to other Christian denominations and as together we share in God's mission to the world?'

Introduction

The British Evangelical Council (BEC) represents evangelical churches outside the usual range of ecumenical life. The fact that we are making this submission does not reflect any change in our conviction that ecumenicity that is not based on vital Christian truth is actually a danger to Christian people as it obscures the distinctives of the Gospel. We regret that many ecumenical statements do not recognise the conscientious separation of a significant number of evangelical churches when they imprecisely refer to a particular project involving 'all the churches'. We do, however, value this opportunity to bear witness to a positive experience of unity which does exist within authentic evangelicalism.

The Nature and Purpose of the Church

a) The Nature of the Church

It is our understanding that the Church belongs to God: in conception, creation and purpose it is His. The Church belongs to the Triune God: it is the Father who elects its members, the Son who redeems them and the Spirit who sanctifies them. As to its fundamental nature the Church is not an institution. It is above all else a spiritual company of redeemed people. This fact needs to be remembered when many seem to be preoccupied with institutional re-organisation and re-alignment. It is therefore in the following theological terms that we would see the nature of the Church delineated.

(i) The Church and Scripture

The authority for the very existence of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ and Scripture is the witness to Christ in words. The revelation of God in the person of Christ must not be seen as inconsistent with the revelation of God in propositional form in the Bible. Scripture's God-breathed origin ensures its authority, infallibility and inerrancy. We affirm the sufficiency of Scripture, that nothing is to be required as essential to the Church which is not found there. The Bible stands above all Church tradition, human reason and contemporary prophetic utterance as the final arbiter of truth. Its timeless principles do need to be expressed in each appropriate cultural context as the Church is called to confess and expound the truth. In so doing we seek to be ruled by Scripture's own principles of interpretation.

(ii) The Church and the Mediator

In the mystery of the eternal Trinity God covenanted to save the Church. The incarnate Christ became the Mediator of God's covenant people. The Church is a New Testament reality resulting from the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. The pictures of the Church are related to Him; e.g. His flock, His temple, His body. He fulfilled covenant obligations, underwent the penalty of a broken covenant and secured covenant blessings for the people of God and for them only. This fact must close the door to all notions about universal salvation.

(iii) The Church and the Gospel

The Saviour calls sinners to repentance and faith by His Spirit through the Gospel. The Good News is Christ Himself, the objective facts of history concerning Him, e.g. His virgin birth and bodily resurrection, and the significance of these revealed in the Bible. His atoning sacrifice was essential for the propitiation of God and the reconciling of fallen man. 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3). When God regenerates the spiritually dead, that new life is expressed by their confessing faith in Christ and giving evidence of holiness. Justification is God's forensic act of declaring righteous those who trust in Christ and is not a process conditional upon the sanctified life.

(iv) The Corporate Life of the Church

All those united to Christ inwardly by the regenerating work of the Spirit are joined to His Body, the Church. Its corporate life will reflect the diversity of ministries and gifts of those who have experienced God's grace in Christ. Christ, who alone is the head of the Church, instituted only two sacraments or ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The observance of those cannot automatically convey grace but calls for their reception in faith with the blessing of Christ. The Lord's Supper is never to be considered a sacrifice for sin, nor is there ever any change in the substance of the bread and wine. Christ also ordained offices for the ministry of His Word and the oversight of His flock. We recognise there are differences in understanding the present structure of those ministries but cannot accept that the 'historic episcopate' with its claim to apostolic succession and its hierarchical structure is essential to the nature or unity of the visible Church.

(v) The Historical Continuity of the Church

The Church is the central focus of God's purpose in history. Christ is appointed 'to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills everything in every way' (Ephesians 1:22-23). Throughout history and in a wide range of cultures the true Church of Christ has been sustained by His grace. All local fellowships of His Church display a reality which everyone born of the Spirit rejoices to see. Regrettably there are churches retaining outward forms of order and confession which are apostate as to truth and life and have ceased to be churches in the New Testament sense of the word. To use Scriptural standards to discern whether a particular church bears the marks of genuine spiritual reality is not a search for an unrealisable perfection in this age. Consequently every church needs constantly to be reforming itself according to God's word in the Bible. Nevertheless, we do recognise an urgent need for the whole Church today to seek God's face for that recovery of His manifested presence and power which characterised periods of Revival in former times.

b) The Purpose of the Church

Since the Church is 'a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit' (Ephesians 2:22) and 'the pillar and foundation of the truth' (1 Timothy 3:15) we believe it is altogether inappropriate to accept secular categories of what the world expects of the Church and adapt her programmes to meet man-made goals. God has made the Church what she is because of His purposes for her, purposes which extend into eternity. These are firstly Godward in worship and then manward in edification, mission and social concern.

(i) Worship

The Church is the new creation of God, 'that you may declare the praise of Him' (1 Peter 2:9). The vertical purpose of doing everything for the glory of God is primary. The gratitude of the redeemed motivates their dedication of life to Him for whom no sacrifice is too great. That which is imperfectly offered in this life will be gloriously expressed in heaven.

(ii) Edification

The ascended Lord has given gifts to every member 'to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up' (Ephesians 4:12). Maturity in holiness means developing in usefulness. One aspect of this progressive sanctification is that unfolding oneness which the Spirit of God creates. 'May they be brought to complete unity' (John 17:23).

(iii) Mission

That worship which consists in obedience of God's commands and the purpose for which she is built up prepares the Church to be sent out into the world. (A fuller treatment is given under Section 3).

(iv) Social Concern

We welcome renewed interest among Christians in reflecting God's righteousness and Christ's compassion in the face of man's desperate temporal needs. Whilst recognising the Church's calling to bring in Christ's

Kingdom we deny that this can be done by changing social structures because 'unless a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God' (John 3:3). However, given a change in human nature the structures in which men are involved will be affected for good. We view with deep concern the adoption of humanist, even Marxist, pre-suppositions by some Christians today in their giving priority to social rather than eternal issues.

Church Relationships

We cannot conceive that any church is so independent that it has no need of support and help from the gifts displayed in others outside that church but equally part of the universal body of Christ. The New Testament assumes that relationships between churches will exist and directs us to the principles by which their mutual fellowship is to be fostered.

a) Unity

Christians are charged to 'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit' (Ephesians 4:3). What God has created we are to express and preserve. There is a valid ecumenicity in the communion of saints. Wherever possible this unity must be exemplified in personal, parachurch, denominational and inter-denominational co-operation. The BEC is not an anti-ecumenical body but it represents the kind of ecumenicity which takes evangelical principles seriously. We understand 'evangelical' to denote that Christianity which affirms the historicity of the New Testament accounts of the life and work of Christ, the inerrancy of the Scriptures and the necessity of a supernatural, personal experience of the living Christ today. These are the unifying factors and church relationships need to be governed by the authority of Scripture and its constraints.

b) Separation

However reluctantly expressed, there is need for separation from error in the world, false teaching in the Church and those supporting either. This would include for us separation from that form of ecumenicity which embraces those who deny Gospel essentials. This duty is commanded in Scripture and is necessary in order to bear positive witness to the truth. This necessarily limits realistic co-operation to those sharing the same convictions on Gospel essentials and precludes those substituting subjective or pragmatic re-interpretations of the clear teaching of Christ, the Bible and orthodox Christians throughout church history.

c) Contacts

Separation does not imply monastic isolation without any human contact with other Christians or churches. We respect the sincerity of those holding other convictions in professing churches as we respect the consciences of those of other faiths in a pluralist society. Only by retaining personal friendships can we fulfil our calling to share any light God has given us and do any good to our fellows. We rejoice that there are many Christians outside the BEC who speak His truth in the spirit of His love. We regret what separates us from them and especially those alliances some evangelicals retain with those in error which limit their closer association with us.

The Church's Mission

We understand the task for which God has called His Church into being to be consonant with its spiritual nature. Essentially it is to glorify God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ by proclaiming to the whole world the Gospel of Salvation through faith in Him.

a) The Great Commission

Our Lord's charge to the Church (Matthew 28:18-20) retains an abiding relevance even in this age of religious pluralism. Its world-wide scope is grounded in Christ's universal Lordship; it commits us to the primacy of preaching; it involves incorporation into the visible church; it requires practical Christian living and it is reliant on the continuing presence of Christ in a work which will not be complete until His return at the end of this age. His future Kingdom is the goal of our mission, with the awesome challenge that every child of Adam must spend eternity, either in heaven with Christ or in hell without Him.

b) Co-operation

The assumption in the specific question being addressed that 'together we share in God's mission' needs to be queried. Co-operation is only possible where the same Gospel is preached and the same priorities observed. It would be unrealistic to assume otherwise. There are so-called churches which have embraced such a syncretistic ideology and others which give such priority to a political programme that we cannot identify with them.

For thirty years the BEC has sought to exemplify co-operation between churches and church-bodies differing on matters not essential to salvation but united in evangelical principles and priorities.

c) Humanitarian Projects

The same Gospel which requires us to 'render to God' requires us also to 'render to Caesar'. We are committed to civic responsibility, to seeking the good of our fellow men and to the stewardship of natural resources for the relief of material needs. It is right to recognise that other agencies are involved in similar humanitarian projects on grounds different from our own. Although there may be times when it is possible to co-operate with them, for us to be officially identified with such could confuse our testimony to spiritual distinctives.

Conclusion

The Executive Council of the British Evangelical Council cannot recommend that constituent churches should have any involvement in the Local Level of the Inter-Church Programme either at Phase I or Phase II. Neither would there seem to be any value in our being involved at National Level in Phase II. We would, however, be willing to amplify, clarify or justify any of the points in this submission if BCC consultants so desired.

Literal or Literary?

A review article of

In the Beginning by Henri Blocher

240 pp. IVP £5.95

Hywel Jones

This is a most valuable and important book. It is a scholarly and spiritual treatment of Genesis 1—3. Full of able discussion both of general and detailed matters which are bound up with a study of these chapters, this book is quite simply a **must** for all serious students of the Bible. IVP is to be congratulated for making the book available and Dr. David Preston for his very readable translation of the French original. Most of all, Professor Blocher has placed the evangelical world in great debt by this study.

Here the reader will find a thorough exegetical and theological study of these chapters. By omitting those sections printed in smaller type and also the footnotes, one can avoid much technical discussion without the flow of the remainder being impaired. To do this, however, would be to deprive oneself of a volume of information. These pieces include references to other scholarly views and writings, discussions of general matters such as the proper place of the sciences in the interpretation of the Bible and particular subjects such as the interpretations of the image of God, the location of the garden of Eden, the meaning of “waste and void” and “good and evil”. The book is an education. The appendix entitled “Scientific hypotheses and the beginning of Genesis” is most useful. There is almost certainly a misprint at the top of page 69 where “test” should read “text”.

The bulk of the book is given over to a study of the content of Genesis 1—3. Dr. Preston tells us that Blocher’s aim was “to establish the original meaning” of the text (p.7). This is presented in seven chapters successively entitled “Being, order and life”; “The image of God”; “Man and woman”; “The covenant in Eden”; “The breaking of the covenant”; “The wages of sin” and “The aftermath and the promise”. This material is to be read either with the content of Genesis 1—3 in our minds or with the passage open before us. In this way, more benefit will be derived from the rich content of these chapters. They are full of penetrating insights, memorizably expressed.

In the reviewer’s judgment, of particular help were the discussions of the significances of order, the image of God, the relation between male and female, the two trees, the nature of sin, its connection with death and its consequences for man and woman, in themselves, with regard to each other, but particularly before God. There are also illuminating comments on liberty, fear, shame, nakedness and guilt. There is so much of value in this book that it is very cheap at this price.

This review, however, will pass over the abundance of exegetical and theological wisdom in this book to consider in detail Blocher's view of the form of language represented by these chapters. It is the hermeneutical crux of his whole approach and it raises inevitable questions for those who regard the literalness of every detail of the text as being necessarily bound up with an orthodox doctrine of Scripture.

The fact of the matter is that Blocher does not adopt these views either because he has a heretical or defective view of the nature and status of Holy Scripture or because he capitulates to unbiblical theological, philosophical or scientific thought in his exegesis. He comes to these conclusions as a result of a strenuous attempt to treat Holy Scripture as it requires, both because of its divine inspired-ness, but also its undoubted human-ness.

There is, therefore, to this reviewer, no difference between Blocher and E.J. Young (with whose writings on Genesis 1 and 3¹ this work will doubtless be compared and to whom Blocher refers more than to any other author) in their views on the nature and status of Holy Scripture and of Genesis 1—3 in particular. Both believe Moses to be its author, but more importantly, they agree that God is its author in the sense that He breathed it out and hence it has His authority. The disagreement between them is not about inspiration, but about interpretation.

To narrow down the area of difference as has just been done does not mean ~~that the matter at issue between Young and Blocher is of no importance~~. All it amounts to is a recognition of the situation, together with a plea that the difference should not be widened to become one which on the one hand supports and on the other hand opposes an orthodox view of the Bible. Having said that, the difference does need to be gauged in its true dimensions, both for the sake of understanding Scripture and any consequences which it may have for the doctrine of Scripture.

Expressed in general terms, the difference between Young and Blocher concerns the nature of Genesis 1—3 as **literature**, which it is, and which to both means the form in which the revelation of God is conveyed. Both reject the categories (genres) of myth and poetry as suitable descriptions of its literary form. Young regards it as fundamentally prose, but with certain symbolic and figurative elements. Blocher regards the genre of prose as being inadequate for it. He sees it as being more than prose — its genre is "composite", "akin to the hymn", whether "a strophic hymn in prose or a hymn which is a unique blend of prose and poetry" (p.32).

In spite of this difference (which is not as minimal as might appear) neither Young nor Blocher would want the hermeneutical (or literary) question concerning Genesis 1—3 to be framed as follows — "It is figurative or factual?" This is because **both** would say that what is factual is capable of being figuratively expressed. Though Blocher treats Genesis 1—3 in a literary and not in a literal manner, he writes: "The use of figurative language by no means determines the main question, that of the connection of the narrative with events that are located and dated from the beginning. The acknowledgment

of symbolic elements hardly weighs at all in favour of a symbolic interpretation of the whole. Conversely, those who favour the literal historicity of the content have no reason to demand the same literalness of the language” (p.37).

It will have been perceived that we have entered into a discussion of the hermeneutics of Genesis 1—3. In defence of, or rather by way of justification for this are the twin considerations that exegesis apart from hermeneutics is impossible and that hermeneutics affects, not to say at times governs, exegesis. Nowhere is this more important with regard to a section of Scripture than with Genesis 1—3. One’s view of the type of literature with which one is dealing is bound to influence **to some degree at least** what one will teach from it. While there is substantial agreement between Young and Blocher on major doctrines found in Genesis 1—3, they do not agree on other things. Taking the literary view, Blocher regards the days, the trees, the rib, the snake as being non-literal. Taking the literal view (and this is not the same as literalistic), Young sees them as being actual. The **validity** of one’s general view, therefore, depends on supporting evidence in the text and in the rest of Scripture — the analogy of faith. Both Young and Blocher claim such support for their views. As it is Blocher’s book which is under consideration, it is his position and its substantiation which we present.

In Chapter 2 which Blocher entitles “The week of Creation”, he presents and examines four approaches by way of formulating a general reply to the question “How are we to understand Genesis when it enumerates the days of the divine handiwork?” He sets aside the views that the days were days of revelation to the author or days of reconstruction after chaos. He rejects the gap theory as decisively as Young does. He also sets aside the view that the days were geological eras. For him the choice is between “the literal” and “the literary” interpretations. Of the former he says “one must be sure that the text **demands**” it. Of the latter he says “whether or not one opts for a literal interpretation depends finally on possible indications of non-literal language” (p.49). As he favours the literary view, the question which arises is “what are these indications?” The indications in the text which Blocher presents as favouring the literary view come in the category of philology and concern the related matters of Language and Structure. Both come to a focus with regard to the Days of Genesis 1.

The main question to be faced in connection with Language concerns the presence of figures of speech or tropes. All will know that such exist in the Bible and that it is important to recognise them in order to treat them properly. Blocher does not see these as being merely individual expressions scattered here and there and being obviously what they are. In addition, he sees an intimate connection between figurative language and literary genre so that they become expressions for one and the same thing. It, therefore, becomes possible to regard a unit as large as Genesis 1—3 as “figurative” (remember that this does not mean “non-factual”).

He proposes two rules for discovering whether language is figurative or not. These are presented by him without any actual reference to Scripture or support in Scripture, but they are declared to be relevant to it as to other books

“because of its humanity” (p.19). In other words, canons of general literary appreciation are applied to Scripture. They may be relevant, or even at first sight unexceptionable, but their suitability or effect must be studied.

The first of these rules is “the more an author works at the form, the more possible it is that he is stepping away from the zero point”. By “zero point” is meant the ordinary meaning of plain prose. It would seem to follow from this that evidence of literary craftsmanship and plain prose as a literary category are incompatible. Given the former, one must not think of words having their plain meaning. Are there not bound to be consequences of this position for the long-term maintenance and proper interpretation of Holy Scripture? Are ideas about the study of language becoming too influential at this point? Are they even improper to the particular kind of literature which the Word of God is?

The second is “the more a trope or genre is commonplace or stereotyped in the author’s historical setting, the easier it is for him to leave the ordinary mode of expression (i.e. the zero point)”. Blocher expands this by saying that an author can depart from the zero point **without appearing to do so in the text** (emphasis mine) if he is confident that his readers will understand his language in the same way as that in which he is using it. If he were to decide to innovate then he could not do so without leaving some signposts in the text so that his readers might be able to follow him.

This rule depends for its strength on the element of contemporaneity, i.e. it applies only to an author and his first readership or at least sharers of his universe of discourse. Given this factor, does not a question arise which touches on the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture, i.e. its general intelligibility to believers in all ages and cultures? Is there not in this position the inherent possibility that an author did not indicate in his writing something essential for its understanding because he knew his contemporaries would not need it? What then of twentieth century Western believers who would need it and need it desperately in order to keep them on the right track? Such an unclosed possibility reflects adversely on the inspired-ness, not to mention the inspirer, of Scripture. Leave may therefore be taken at least to wonder whether these rules are all that helpful or even fitting when applied to **Scripture** for all their usefulness with regard to other literature because Scripture is not just human, but also divine.

It is Blocher’s contention that this “stylistic variation”, i.e. moving away from the zero point, can be fairly easily deduced. In this, “knowledge of the historical situation and the cultural setting play a decisive part” (p.19). This means that a biblical text must be located in its extra-biblical context to identify those features in the former which are also found in the latter. While this is an important task, it is also a difficult one from which as Blocher admits “one rarely obtains formal proof”. However, even when there is coincidence of material, e.g. the six days plus one pattern which is found in ancient Near Eastern literature (p.53), one has to face the problem of relative dating to see who borrowed from whom and also whether the terms mean the same in the various texts or inscriptions. In addition, the mention of culture immerses us in

a rapidly expanding area of contemporary theological study in which there is real danger of what is not cultural being regarded as such and dismissed as having no real bearing on our situation.

With regard to structural analysis of Genesis 1—3, Blocher points to the existence of two tablets (1:1-2:3 and 2:4-3:24), the seven day pattern of the first and the seven paragraphed format of the second. Narrowing down his focus, he refers to “a careful construction which uses symbolic numbers: 10, 3 and 7”, i.e. the numbers of times in which various expressions and words are used, e.g. “and God said”, “Let there be”, “and it was so”, “and God saw that it was good”. Even the number of words in a verse are counted or in each half of the first tablet. On this basis, he writes: “Beyond any doubt here we have no ordinary history such as might be written in response to a simple request to be told what happened” (p.33).

As has been mentioned, what brings the literary-literal debate to a focus is the nature of the days of Genesis 1. Blocher’s view of the whole of Genesis 1 disposes him to consider these as “an artistic arrangement”, logically and not chronologically ordered. While he grants the possibility of there being a broad coincidence between the data of Genesis 1 and the facts of cosmogony, he regards this as immaterial to Moses whose intention was to present certain theological truths — and therefore to be immaterial to us. He finds support for this in the text in terms of the Framework hypothesis which posits a relation between Days 1 and 4, 2 and 5, 3 and 6 and their respective works. This relation Blocher describes as “spaces demarcated by divine acts of separation”, i.e. Days 1, 2 and 3 and “their corresponding peopling”, i.e. Days 4, 5 and 6. The first three days amount to a structuring of the *TÓHŪ*, i.e. the formless and the second three to a filling of the *BÓHŪ*, i.e. the void referred to in verse 2 — an interesting suggestion.

Leaving aside a detailed discussion of the ease or otherwise with which the works of these days can be correlated (cf. footnote 41 on page 51 and Young’s critique and its source referred to there), the fact of an exceeding skilful arrangement does not preclude all possibility that the Genesis 1 presentation is constructed on a chronological base. Blocher recognises this and asks:

“But could this extremely careful construction of the narrative not coincide with the chronological reality of the divine work, as certain literalists attempt to plead?” (p.53)

He responds with the comment:

“You can always **imagine** anything” (emphasis original).

Is this really fair? Is it only imagination? Blocher regards the mode of inspiration used in the production of Genesis 1—3 as that which lay behind Wisdom literature. This amounts to a process of active but Spirit-controlled reflection on the works of God by Moses. Given such ability on the part of Moses (Deut. 34:9; Acts 7:22), is it impossible or only imagination that such a skilful literary product should be composed? What of the acrostic arrangement used in the composition of Lamentations 1—4, especially chapter 3, together with Psalm 119? And these are poetry not prose!

There is one final area to consider. It is the use made of Genesis 1—3 elsewhere in the Bible. Blocher is too committed to the integral unity of Scripture to overlook this. It is one of the strengths of this book that whenever Blocher regards the New Testament as speaking definitively on a matter which falls within the Genesis 1—3 corpus that settles the exegesis of the Genesis passage for him, e.g. his treatment of man and woman on page 104.

He faces up, therefore, to Ex. 20:11, Matt. 19:4 and II Peter 3:5 in the course of dealing with the literal view. He claims that Matt. 19:4 and II Peter 3:5 are beside the point because they do not refer “to the days and the week whose meaning we are trying to determine” (p.47). While this has to be admitted, two things need to be borne in mind. The first is that the references harmonise with the factual content of the Genesis narrative which though not questioned by Blocher is also supportive more naturally of the chronological view. The second is that the Petrine refers to the state of things at the end of Day 3 as a result of the works of Days 2 and 3 specifically. That is also supportive of a chronological view.

Exodus 20:11 is a text which cannot be regarded as figurative language because it is part of the Decalogue. This Blocher asserts, but, in spite of the *prima facie* sense (and force) of the verse, he raises the question “Does Exodus inevitably demand the literal reading?” (p.47). Because he thinks the verse “makes no commentary on Genesis and does not ask questions about its interpretation”, he concludes “it sends us back to the first ‘tablet’ ... and leaves us to face the task of interpreting”. One may wonder whether Exodus 20:11 could have endorsed the chronological nature of Genesis 1:1-2:3 more clearly, if it tried.

Blocher associates Exodus 20:11 with 31:17 and Deut. 5:12 + 15. From these other texts, he supports his view of Exodus 20:11 in the following ways. As Exodus 31:17 contains a clear anthropomorphism viz. “God was refreshed”, he regards the rest of the verse which speaks of the six days as being figurative too. Strictly speaking, an anthropomorphism can only be applied to God and not to everything in a passage where such an expression occurs. Young’s treatment of Genesis 2:7 is more discriminating. While recognising that “God breathed” is an anthropomorphism, he says of the rest of the verse “The man was real, the dust was real, the ground was real as was also the breath of life.”¹² With regard to Deut. 5:12 + 15 in which the reason for keeping the sabbath is expressly grounded in redemption from Egypt rather than creation, it is not strictly accurate to speak as Blocher does of redemption as a “substitution” for creation because the text does refer to the earlier form of the legislation in verses 12-14. It is better to speak of an additional motive rather than a different or alternative one. Does not redemption increase certain creational obligations or arrangements?

Blocher’s treatment of the trees, the use of Adam’s rib and the speaking snake demand just a brief notice. He sees these in the light of his general perspective on the text, but he also faces up to the New Testament references to these matters.

On the basis of the references in Proverbs and Revelation to the tree of life which are not to be construed in a literal manner, Blocher concludes that the Genesis reference is not literal either and the same must, therefore, apply to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But the literary character of the Proverbs passage is poetry and personification is used in it while the character of the Apocalypse is full of prophetic imagery. That makes a difference.

While I Cor. 11:8 and 12 speak of the woman being “from” (the) man, this, Blocher maintains, does not **have** to be understood in terms of a literal reading of Genesis 2 concerning the creation. The preposition *ek* can just mean that man was the prototype. But *ek* can also mean “out of”. It, therefore, supports a literal though not literalistic view of the Genesis passage.

The snake is viewed as being non-literal because otherwise, Blocher maintains, Genesis 3:1 would carry us into the realm of magic which is so alien to the theology of the author of Genesis. Regarding it as a figure of Satan is borne out by references such as Rev. 12:9 and II Cor. 11:3. It also avoids the theological difficulty just mentioned. But is it not significant that the context of II Cor. 11:3 demands the use of the more historico-factual reference whereas Revelation 12 which is prophetic employs the full range of theological symbolism and imagery?

Though this attentiveness to the literary genre of Scripture is a serious attempt to treat it properly as the Word of God in human form, there is a **possibility** that in this book linguistic study is carried too far and that too much weight is given to it. An interesting comparison can throw some light on this. In a footnote (p.32), Blocher refers to an article by Allan MacRae on the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 which appeared in the Bulletin of Evangelical Theological Studies in 1959. In that issue there are several articles on this subject and in them attention is paid to questions of language and style. In these articles the work on language is nowhere near as detailed as in this book or the sources which Blocher quotes, most of which are post 1960. Something happened about this time in evangelical scholarly study and presentation of the nature of Scripture and its interpretation.

It occurred by way of response to a fresh challenge to re-state the doctrine of inspiration and infallibility in the face of, or in the context of an emphasis on the human-ness of the Bible and to grapple with the problem and characteristics of human language in its interpretation. These contemporary pressures form the broad background for this interpretative study.

In pointing this out, no charge is being made that Blocher denies or even loses sight of the divine character of the Bible nor that something illegitimate is being done in being attentive to its language. An attempt is being made in this article to inquire as to why two scholars, i.e. Young and Blocher, can differ significantly in their study of the text. The suggested answer is that there is a difference in evaluation of the contemporary pressures referred to which in turn colours the evaluation of data in the text. Most of the works Blocher cites in his select bibliography are post 1960.

Blocher takes the literary view because he finds “convergent pointers, of

significance in their context” accumulating in its favour (p.19). The debate will continue on the validity of these **and it should** because it is over the understanding of the Word of God and not its inspiration — at least as far as Blocher is concerned. But will all evangelical scholars (the question can at least be put) who adopt the literary view be always as devotedly committed to Scripture as Blocher is? There are signs already that this is not the case, e.g. the male and female debate. However, while exegesis must not be regulated by the fear which lies at the heart of a domino theory, it must be restricted by the dogmatic construction of the nature and status of Scripture as Blocher’s is. The debate must continue **in that framework** and may this great book be a stimulus to the production of a genuinely contemporary, but biblical and evangelical theology of creation.

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 2. STUDIES IN GENESIS ONE, p.57
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If there is a body of truth revealed in the Scriptures which is one and absolute, but which the various Christian communities interpret in say, twenty different ways, it is clear that their twenty divergent versions of it cannot all be correct. The alternatives are (a) that one interpretation is right and all the other nineteen are wrong, or (b) that each of the twenty interpretations contains varying proportions of truth and error. Will any man outside Rome have the hardihood to claim that the religious assembly to which he belongs is alone infallible? The very fact that there are divergences should inculcate humility. The utmost that any can say is that his creed is a statement of Scriptural truth as he sees it, and, therefore, binding on his own conscience. To attempt to make it binding on that of his brethren, and to exclude them from communion because their interpretation of “the one faith” is different from his, is to claim for an exegesis of Scripture the infallibility of Scripture itself.

E.J. Poole-Connor
Evangelical Unity, p.191-2

Exegesis

Our primary aim in this regular series is to exegete specific biblical texts which are relevant but also differently understood by evangelicals. We are not advocating any one interpretation but contributors are free to provide their own responsible exegesis in the hope that readers will be stimulated to undertake an even more careful examination of the particular verse or passage themselves.

The Rev. Alan Gibson, in Issue 14, gave us a helpful exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:19 relating to Christian unity under the title, 'Why Differences in the Church are Inevitable'; in the present study, Professor Leahy concentrates on the difficult problem of the identity of the man of sin. He does so by way of an exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and against the background of various interpretations of this passage.

At a time when Christianity is not only under attack from world religions and the religion of worldliness but also from a spurious version of itself which is becoming more and more associated with the figure of a single, earthly leader, we should look again at this important passage.

Exegesis: 2 The Man of Sin

Fred Leahy

In this letter, Paul indicates two events which will precede the second coming of Christ: a general apostasy and the revelation of the 'man of sin' or 'lawlessness'. In the final and most exhaustive sense of the term, and it is a complex idea, 'the day of the Lord' had not yet come, nor would it come until there had been 'the falling away' and the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition.

Note that the Apostle speaks about "**the** apostasy", "**the** falling away", "**the** rebellion", for the word has that association of revolt. There has always been apostasy. There is a sense, however, in which the New Testament sees apostasy as an eschatological phenomenon: it is heightened and intensified in the last hour. Consequently, the Apostle speaks of **the** apostasy. This apostasy will occur in the Christian Church; Calvin reminds us, "None can be termed apostates, but such as have previously made a profession of Christ and the gospel" (comment on v.3).

Paul then associates the revelation of the man of sin with the apostasy; he emerges in connection with **the** rebellion as its leader. This is not to say that the rebellion and the revelation of the lawless one are simultaneous but the Apostle sees them as closely connected. It is significant that while the apostasy is said to 'come', the man of lawlessness is said to be 'revealed' (v.3).

It is what Dr. George Milligan describes as “the mocking counterpart of the *apokalupsis* of the Lord Jesus Himself” (cf. 1:17). In verse 9, Paul speaks of the man of sin’s ‘coming’, (*‘parousia’*) and again we have the idea of a mocking counterpart.

We may say, then, that in the last days there will be an intensification of evil and a great departure from the truth, reaching its climax in the appearance of the man of lawlessness. Most commentators agree that this figure described by Paul is to be identified with the antichrist mentioned by John. Most of the Church Fathers, including Augustine, held that view and this position has never been seriously challenged. In the man of lawlessness therefore we find all the marks of antichristianity and consequently we may proceed on the assumption that the New Testament teaching on antichristianity does help us to understand more fully the teaching of this passage. This is particularly true of our Lord’s statements concerning false Christs and false prophets, and the Apostle John’s use of the term ‘antichrist’. In a more detailed examination of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, we can notice the salient features of the man of lawlessness and his activities.

His Titles (v.3)

(a) **‘Man of Sin’ or ‘Lawlessness’**: the latter is probably the better reading, although there is support for the former reading. There is no essential difference, because, as we read in 1 John 3:4, “sin is lawlessness”. Quite literally this title reads, “the man of the sin” or “the lawlessness”. The lawlessness in view is not lawlessness in general, but a special and unprecedented lawlessness which characterises the rebellion of which the man of lawlessness is head. Not only is the man of lawlessness wicked in himself, but he encourages others to follow a course of lawlessness, a way which is contrary to the Word and the truth of God. The expression ‘lawless one’ (v.8) means, as Lenski puts it, “the height of opposition to the gospel”. Consequently we read of “the deception of wickedness for those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved”; belief of what is false, not believing the truth, taking pleasure in wickedness constitutes “the lawlessness” described in this passage.

(b) **‘the Son of Perdition’**, lit. ‘the perdition’. Perdition or destruction, marks him from the outset and there is only **one** such perdition; it is unique. Christ called Judas “the son of perdition” (Jn. 17:12) and he was apostate in a unique sense. His apparent devotion masked a disloyal heart and he was a type of the antichrist or lawless one. The type and the antitype are characterized by doom. Leon Morris writes, “The Man of Lawlessness will certainly be lost”.¹ The expression ‘son of’ has a Hebraic twist. See, e.g. 2 Sam. 12:5, A.V. marg., i.e. he must certainly die; Matthew 23:15, “a son of hell”, indicates that perdition is certain. So it is with this arrogant figure described by Paul.

Paul’s thinking in this passage is considerably influenced by the predictions of antichrist in the book of Daniel but Paul’s discussion is distinct and independent. However the basic concepts are derived from Daniel and this is true of

these titles. See, e.g. Daniel 7:25-6 which describe the certain destruction of this lawless one.

His Character (v.4)

Our Lord warned against ‘pseudoprophets’ in sheep’s clothing (Mt. 7:15) and these false prophets would deceive many (Mt. 24:11). There will also be pseudochrists, showing great signs and wonders, “so as to mislead, if possible even the elect” (Mt. 24:24).

The Apostle John warned against the pseudoprophets (1 Jn. 4:1; cf. Acts 20:29,31). Our Lord alone foretold the appearance of false Christs and initially they arose without the Christian community (e.g. John 5:43). We cannot restrict our Lord’s prediction of false Christs to Jewish pretenders, for He was instructing His own disciples. As Patrick Fairbairn affirms, “He wished them to regard the immediate future as but the beginning of a remoter end — a beginning that should in substance be often repeating itself, though the particular form might undergo many alterations”.² Fairbairn goes on to argue that when men assume to be, or do what by exclusive right belongs to Christ, “they then become, if not in name, at least in reality, false Christs.”

How should we view the terms ‘antichrists’ and ‘antichrist’? The prefix ‘anti’ can denote open opposition or a supplanting by usurpation which is a much more subtle form of hostility. Etymologically, an antichrist may be an open opponent of Christ or cunning usurper of Christ’s Name and prerogatives (cf. the term ‘antipope’ in history).

John was conscious of antichristianity as such and speaks of “the spirit of the antichrist” (1 Jn. 4:3) and the activity of “many antichrists” (1 Jn. 2:18). He asks, “Who is **the liar**”, the liar by pre-eminence “but the one that denies that Jesus is the Christ”. This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son (1 Jn. 2:22). Now such denial of the truth by itself could not be regarded as a supplanting of Christ by a blasphemous usurpation of His office, and yet it does indicate a peculiar manner of denying the truth, a manner wholly different from that of atheism or heathenism. It is a manner common to all forms of antichristianity, namely that of denying the truth not from an openly antagonistic position, but under the guise of Christianity and with an apparently friendly attitude. The antichrists of John’s day had not always been such. 1 John 2:18 may be rendered, “Many have become antichrists ...” They were not so originally, but by a gradual, downward progress they became such. John adds: “They went out from us, but they were not (really) of us ...” For a time they belonged to the Christian community, but showed by their apostasy that they were no part of its true life. Therefore John gives a theological test to be used in view, probably, of the Gnostic heresy.

The Gnostics professed to honour the name of Jesus, yet denied that He was a personal incarnation of the Eternal Word. Like the old serpent, such teachers were deceivers and antichrists. Without renouncing the name of Christ, they forsook the simplicity of the Faith and turned His truth into a lie. Without openly or formally supplanting Christ we see here, in Fairbairn’s words, “a cer-

tain use of Christ's name, with a spirit and design entirely opposed to Christ's cause".³

The opposer *ho antikeimenos* of 2 Thessalonians 2:4 sets himself against God and arrogates the highest prerogatives, yet such self-deification is in **fact** rather than in **form**, for it is described as "the **mystery** of lawlessness", it is associated with signs and false wonders and with all deception of wickedness then to those who are beguiled by it God sends "a deluding influence so that they believe what is false", or "**the lie**".

The 'temple of God' is said to be the theatre of the opposer's wicked presumptions and with reference to the Christian Church, the apostle knows of no temple but that Church itself. This conclusion agrees with Paul's general use of *naos*, a word applied to the Holy Place in the temple of Jerusalem (Mt. 23:35; Lk. 1:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). The *naos* or sanctuary of God is His Church, His dwelling.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:4 we see that the lawless one takes his seat in the *naos*, the sanctuary, a word not to be confused with *heiron* which refers to the entire Temple complex with its various buildings and courts. The Antichrist's opposition to God is seen in his coming as a usurper into the *naos*, the Church, there "showing himself off that he is a God". It is significant that Judas, the son of perdition, is the type of antichrist, for Judas betrayed the Master with a kiss.

Berkouwer remarks, "The New Testament picture of Antichrist shows clear traces of a pseudo-religiosity. Furthermore, the **anti** forewarns us that the **contra** is complete in the sphere of false imitation and sham. The opponent not only opposes but assumes the allure of a new and a **contra**-salvation. Thus the **contra** of sin wraps itself in the vesture of the apostles and toga of the Messiah himself. This is the method of the devil's appeal. His invitation is accompanied by signs and wonders and by marvellous and astounding powers. His deception reaches its goal in the attitude of bewilderment and amazement on the part of the man who is 'bewitched' (Rev. 13:3 cf. v.12). Sin discloses its true essence by hiding **its deepest intents**." We have, then, in antichristianity what Berkouwer terms "the ultimate heresy".⁴ Antichrist is one who masquerades as Christ. Calvin says: "Paul sets Antichrist in the very sanctuary of God. He is not an enemy from the outside, but from the household of faith, and opposes Christ under the very name of Christ."

Assuming that John's 'Antichrist', and Paul's man of lawlessness are identical, Westcott says the word 'antichrist', "means far more than simply 'an adversary of Christ'. As far as the form is concerned it may describe 'one who takes the place of Christ' ... or 'one who under the same character opposes Christ. It seems most consonant to the context to hold that *antichristos* here describes one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ. In this sense it embodies an important truth: That hostility is really formidable in which the adversary preserves the semblance of the characteristic excellence which he opposes ... The Antichrist assails Christ by proposing to do or to preserve what He did while he denies Him."⁵ No enemy is so dangerous as a false friend.

His Rise to Power (vv. 5-7)

One of our main difficulties in interpreting this passage is that it is a supplement to the Apostle's oral teaching; in addition the style is rather disjointed for he is excited and writes with considerable feeling. It is clear that the Apostle and his readers knew what he had said in Thessalonica (vv. 5,6), so our problem is "to fill in the gaps and to catch his allusions" (Leon Morris).

There have been a number of conjectures as to what is meant by the restraining power which in Paul's day hindered the full emergence of the lawless one. These include the Roman empire, the Jewish State (Warfield), the Holy Spirit (Dispensationalists, cf. Scofield Reference Bible), the preaching of the Gospel (Cullmann), law and order, etc.

In verse 6 the restraining agency is impersonal: "You know **what** restrains him now." In verse 7 it is personal: "**He who** now restrains will do so until **he** is taken out of the way." Professor F.F. Bruce favours the view that Paul had the Roman empire in mind.

The Apostle emphasises the historical connection between the present activity of the "mystery of this lawlessness" and the eventual revelation of the lawless one; "the mystery of lawlessness is already a mystery at work". Biblically, a mystery is a secret which man can never fathom by his own unaided reason: it can only be known by revelation. This 'mystery of lawlessness' has been described by Fairbairn as "a complex and subtle operation of the worst principles and designs, as might be carried on under the fairest and most hypocritical pretences ..."⁶ Lenski remarks, "It is not merely dormant, but is already operative (*energetai*) although as yet unseen. It is like a viper in its shell that will presently crawl out and then be blasted."

Thus we find a tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. Paul rejected the 'already' of the Thessalonians: the day of the Lord had not fully come. He replaced it with another and sinister 'already'. "The mystery of lawlessness is **already** at work," and so the actuality of Christ's kingdom and the actuality of Satan's blasphemous mimicry and counterfeit stand in irreconcilable antithesis and conflict. God is the Lord of history; and in God's time and God's way that which **holds back** the appearance of the lawless one will be removed and the one who apes God will be revealed.

In the meantime "the mystery of this lawlessness" is compelled to work under cover until, within the sovereign purpose of God, it is permitted to develop a personal head as described in verses 3 and 4. What will eventually emerge on the scene of time, the ultimate expression of antichristianity, will stand in historical continuity with and represent the final disclosure of that which was veiled in mystery yet constantly at work when Paul wrote.

John Calvin comments that Satan was "carrying on secretly and clandestinely what he would do openly in his own time. He was therefore at that time secretly laying the foundations on which he would afterwards rear the edifice, as actually took place. And this tends to confirm more fully that it is not an in-

dividual that is represented under the term Antichrist, but one kingdom, which extends itself through many ages.”

His Reign (vv. 9-12)

Antichrist's '*parousia*' is 'in accord with the activity of Satan'. The norm of Antichrist's conduct is Satanic: lying, deception and error. Lenski remarks: "We see it in the deception of Eve and in the story of the fall. The climax appears in the Antichrist, beyond whom the lie and the destruction cannot go." Paul in no way underestimates the Antichrist or his evil mission. He will come with 'all power and signs and false wonders with all the deception of wickedness'. Such limited power as Satan has is at the disposal of Antichrist for his false signs and wonders. Here we see the destructive power of Satan active in **the lie** — a sham reality, a sham truth and worst of all, men accepting the lie as the truth. The wonders associated with Antichrist's mission are real enough, but they are "false" in the sense that they are wrought in a spirit of falsehood and in the interests of falsehood.

A 'sign' points beyond itself and signifies a certain reality. But a sign associated with **the lie** of Satan pretends to signify something as being real and true which in fact is neither. Such a sign can only deceive and destroy. It belongs to "the deception of wickedness" (v.10), "the deceit of unrighteousness" which accords with Satan's working. The Antichrist will come to lure men to their destruction and will use every weapon of Satan to deceive "those who perish".

It is of paramount importance that we recognize the deceptive, lying role played by Antichrist. He does not appear as an enemy of truth, but with diabolical cunning succeeds in making men believe that **the lie is the truth**. As Calvin says: Satan ... "puts on Christ's mask, while he, nevertheless, at the same time chooses armour, with which he may directly oppose Christ."

Antichrist cannot injure the elect of God. He finds his subjects among "those who perish". A false Christ cannot deceive the elect, on the other hand, the Antichrist's subjects "did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved". This truth is "the truth as it is in Jesus", the saving truth of the Gospel which centres in Christ and cannot be separated from Him. Their whole bent is away from the truth of God which alone can give them salvation.

For this reason "God will send them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, and took pleasure in wickedness." Here we have guilt and penalty side by side. God is not passive and inactive while Antichrist works but sends righteous retribution upon the sinner. It is not some abstract, moral law that confronts us here, but a moral God Who upholds His righteousness and maintains His kingdom against Satan's challenge and attempted usurpation.

The reign of Antichrist, then, is an implementation of Satan's sway in the hearts and lives of those who love not the truth, but it is a peculiar implementation of it. It is a blasphemous mimicry of the reign of Christ and a diabolically clever counterfeit of Christianity, an activity taking place not within the ranks of paganism or scepticism, but within the professed Church of God!

His Overthrow (v.8)

We are not to think that there is a simple contest between God and Satan; there is more to it than that for God uses the very machinations of Satan to serve His own sovereign purpose. This happened supremely at the crucifixion of our Lord and the Bible affords many examples of this principle. God uses men's sins in a way which works out their punishment and this is clearly taught in verses 11 and 12. It is equally true of the very appearance of the man of lawlessness on the scene of time. Christ's revelation (1:7) is active and is made by Himself; that of the Antichrist is passive (2:3,6,8) and is made by God. Antichrist's revelation is an exposure and it sets the scene for his final doom: "whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end, or abolish, by the appearance, or 'outshining' (*epiphany*) of His coming or presence (*parousia*)."

The expression 'breath of His mouth' may well be a quotation from Isaiah 11:4. Two things are stated about the overthrow of Antichrist: 1. the Lord will slay him, remove, destroy; 2. the Lord will abolish the Antichrist by the *epiphany*, the outshining of His *parousia* or presence. The lawless one is revealed in God's time and will find himself swept away by the breath of the Lord's mouth and completely undone by the Lord's *parousia*.

It seems best to take the expression 'breath of His mouth' as referring to the Word of Christ. As Lenski remarks, "The Word is poison to Antichrist." Some commentators regard the expression as merely indicating the ease with which Christ will overthrow Antichrist but it is doubtful if that interpretation does justice to the statement. The Antichrist, says Calvin, "will be reduced to nothing by the word of the Lord". He adds: "This victory of the word, therefore, will show itself in this world, for the spirit of His mouth simply means the word, as it does in Isaiah 11:4, to which Paul seems to allude."

When the Apostle speaks of Christ **abolishing** (A.V. 'destroy') the Antichrist, he uses one of his favourite words, *katargein*. It occurs 25 times in the Pauline corpus and only twice elsewhere in the New Testament, and in the A.V., it has 17 different renderings in the 27 places of its occurrence. It means 'to put out of commission' or, as we might say, 'knock out of gear'. The splendour and majesty of the Lord will overwhelm the lawless one.

His Identity

We must now consider whether or not the term '**man** of lawlessness' indicates the future emergence of a single, personal antichrist. Many hold that it does. Dr. A.A. Hoekema writes, "The description given in this chapter cannot refer to anything but a definite person. He is called **the** man of lawlessness, **the** son of perdition (v.3), **the one who** opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship (v.4)." Hoekema refers to the personal pronouns used in this passage in support of his view. He concludes that "the Scriptures do seem to teach, particularly in 2 Thessalonians 2, that there will be a final climactic antichrist whom Christ Himself will destroy at His Second Coming".⁷ Similar opinions have been expressed by theologians and commentators, especially since the end of the 19th century, including such

names as Trench, Vos, Norris, Hendriksen, etc.

However, the case is not quite so simple as has been claimed. Berkouwer warns "That Paul speaks of the antichrist here in 'personal' terms does not decide the issue ... This is too facile a way to deal with the elements of Old Testament apocalyptic present here." He seriously questions the futuristic view of a personal antichrist at the end of history. "This", he says, "has frequently been supposed, partly on the grounds of 2 Thessalonians 2 ... partly because the personal aspect lends itself to being taken more seriously than 'antichristian powers'. Obviously this latter is erroneous reasoning, if only because 'person' and 'powers' are not all that easy to separate."⁸ Charles Hodge argues in support of the view that Antichrist is an institution under a personal head. He maintains that it is "according to the analogy of prophecy to speak of nations, institutions or kingdoms, as individuals and he further maintains that "the work assigned to Antichrist in prophecy, extends over far too long a period to be accomplished by one man."⁹ Calvin sees the man of lawlessness as "the vicar of Satan" who "would hold supreme power in the Church, and would preside there in the place of God. Now he describes that reign of abomination under the name of a single person, because it is only one reign though one succeeds another."

It is easier to believe in the future appearance of a single and final personal antichrist, if we hold that Antichrist is essentially atheistic or agnostic. Many believe that Antichrist will be an infidel and the very embodiment of evil, e.g. Trench, various dispensationalists and some Roman Catholic expositors. J.N. Darby, founder of the Brethren movement, was once a member of the High Church party in the Anglican Church. It was then that he was influenced by the views of the Jesuits Ribera and Lacunza, who endeavoured to divert attention from the Papacy, hitherto regarded by most Protestants as the Antichrist, by teaching that there would be a future, infidel Antichrist. Thus an originally Jesuit view of Antichrist was unthinkingly accepted and widely propagated by modern dispensationalists. The concept of a single, infidel Antichrist is untenable if we concede that the figure described in 2 Thessalonians 2 is essentially ecclesiastical nor does it agree with the New Testament description of antichristianity as such and loses sight of the historical connection which the Apostle establishes between the 'mystery of lawlessness' already at work in his day and the revelation of this same mystery in the appearance of the man of lawlessness.

Charles Hodge remarks, "If Antichrist is to be a single person, concentrating in himself all worldly power as a universal monarch, to appear shortly before the end of the world, as is assumed by so many expounders of prophecy, it is hard to see how he was to be the product of the leaven already working in the times of the Apostles."¹⁰ We may add that it is equally hard to reconcile such a view of Antichrist with Antichrist's type, Judas, who was ostensibly a devoted follower of Christ. If Paul is describing the infidel Antichrist of Ribera, Darby and many more, then verses 6 and 7 of this chapter present us with the greatest difficulty, for, as Hodge reminds us, the causes which would bring such a person to power were not in operation in Paul's day.

We may now ask if there is any system or power in history which corresponds to the description of Antichrist given by Paul. In his discussion of this subject Hodge writes that the Papacy is the Antichrist and thus “the passage is perfectly intelligible”. He continues, “This portrait suits the Papacy so exactly, that Protestants at least have rarely doubted that it is the Antichrist which the Apostle intended to describe.”¹¹

The role of the Papacy in the context of the present ecumenical apostasy is too great to be easily set aside. All the old arguments against the Papacy stand and it is sad that so many Reformed theologians are so ill-informed in their consideration of Roman Catholicism. A Lutheran, Professor J.T. Mueller, has written, “If modern Protestant theologians fail to recognize that the Pope at Rome is the Antichrist, it is because they themselves do not understand what an abomination it is to reject God’s Word as the only source and standard of faith and to anathematize the doctrine of justification by faith. Since the Papacy destroys the central article of the Christian Faith, its outward adherence to the Apostles’ Creed is only one of the many lies by which it deceives the unwary. To these lies belong also the many ‘good works’ of which it boasts. Luther rightly says (St.L., XVIII, 1530): ‘The Papacy is a kingdom which destroys both faith and the Gospel.’”¹²

Today we have fresh arguments in support of the old Protestant view of the Papacy. In the context of the ecumenical movement, Rome has assumed a position of subtle influence and leadership — wooing and coaxing unfaithful church leaders into closer fellowship with herself and at the same time weaving a clever and all-embracing net of religious synthesis.

There may well be a further development of antichristianity as apostasy grows and deepens but it seems likely that the Papacy will remain the focal point of the new and tyrannical amalgam of pseudo-Christianity. It will be a “tyranny”, to use the words of Calvin, “such as does not wipe out either the name of Christ or of the church, but rather misuses a semblance of Christ and lurks under the name of the church as under a mask.” The pretended vicar of Christ will remain in reality, until the day of his final overthrow, the vicar of Satan.

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Ecumenical Theology: Part II

Eryl Davies

In Part I, **Lesslie Newbigin's** autobiography **Unfinished Agenda** (SPCK, 263 pp. £7.50, pbk) was reviewed in detail and also a brief introduction was provided to **JOHN R. MOTT, 1865—1955: A BIOGRAPHY** (C. Howard Hopkins, Eerdmans, 816 pp., £19.95, hbk). This book will now be considered in more detail.

Converted at the age of thirteen, helped later by Christians in College and D.L. Moody's College Students' Summer School, Mott eventually became a travelling secretary and then a senior leader of the YMCA in the United States. This youth movement was a major contributory factor in the development of the ecumenical movement and the young Mott appreciated its strong interdenominational emphasis. He was actively involved in work amongst students and as early as 1894, convinced that "the time had at last arrived when a world-wide union of Christian students might be achieved" (p.111) so he travelled overseas extensively during the following years in order to achieve this goal. "If the students of the Protestant world are linked together by the power of the Spirit in this Movement, it will greatly hasten the establishment of Christ's kingdom throughout the world"; this was Mott's conviction and motivation. But Mott was determined to include Roman Catholic and Russian, Eastern Orthodox Church students within his new students' fellowship.

For example, when the **World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)** was formed in Scandinavia in August 1895, the basis for membership was to be "flexible enough to bring students of Orthodox and R.C. Churches and non-Christian countries into an ecumenical fellowship".

John Mott certainly had a passion for evangelising the world and in the 1900 'Ecumenical Missionary Conference' in New York he spoke on the obligations of his generation to evangelise the world. An important agency in this evangelism was the **Student Volunteer Movement**. The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 was a "watershed in missionary discussion" and again Mott was a key figure both in preparations for it and participating in it. Mott was a member of the international planning committee and also chairman of Commission I, '**Carrying the Gospel to all the World**' and he was also invited to chair the conference sessions. Prior to the conference, the different study groups or commissions were warned that 'no questions concerning doctrine or church polity' would be accepted in the conference and this was a necessary rule to ensure Anglican representation there. Once again John Mott had a crucial role in the negotiations that persuaded the Archbishop of Canterbury to support the Edinburgh Conference.

One of the most important decisions at Edinburgh was that of establishing a 'Continuation Committee' to implement 'co-operation and the promotion of unity'. The chairman? Well, John Mott, of course!

Within months this important committee was meeting in London and at Auckland Castle, Durham, conferring with and gaining the active support of Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who himself stressed the need for “better understanding, better feeling and better relations between Christian Churches everywhere”. Handley C.G. Moule, Bishop of Durham, hosted the Committee and “in four days Mott moved the Committee through eighty-eight items of business at sixteen sessions” (p.378). Some important decisions were made as well. It was decided, for example, to initiate the now famous **International Review of Missions** and also to invite John Mott to give most of his time to “visiting the missionary field, acquainting missionaries and native leaders with its work and plans ...” (idem).

Mott soon felt that it was right for him to respond positively to this invitation and he threw himself even more whole-heartedly into the work. Another world trip in 1911 was “a prime ecumenical venture outside the limits of Anglo-American Protestantism” and he visited several of the Patriarchs from various Orthodox Churches in the East, including Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III in Constantinople who remarked to Mott, “Your work is apostolic ... it will have the blessing of God and I shall follow it always with prayer”. Successful attempts were then made by Mott and others over a long period to bridge the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant divide and to include their members within the World Student Christian Fellowship and eventually the basis of membership was broadened in order to ensure this “wider fellowship”.

Due to the 1914-18 war, the Continuation Committee did not meet after 1913 and the move towards unity was temporarily slowed down but only after numerous international and national ecumenical bodies and conferences had been established throughout the world. The Edinburgh message and vision had been taken as far as China and Japan by Mott so that in 1913 the younger churches there were caught up in this drive for unity.

Soon after the 1914-18 war, plans were resumed for establishing a permanent international organisation geared to both unity and evangelism. In June 1920, therefore, an international conference was convened at Geneva in Switzerland and John Mott was appointed chairman of the Business Committee and plans were made immediately to establish an **International Missionary Council**. This was constituted in October 1921 and so the dream of Edinburgh 1910 had become a reality. By 1948 the membership of the IMC had increased from 17 to 30 national or regional organisations/societies and John Mott was the leader of the IMC until 1941. The IMC held a number of important conferences; for example, in 1928, 1938 and 1947 and its influence was considerable.

Not all the Protestant missionary agencies joined the IMC partly because of its compromised stance in relation to doctrine so that the movement tended to be dominated by Anglicans, including many Anglo-Catholics, Baptists, Quakers, etc. The IMC influenced the growth of young churches in the Third World, encouraged religious liberty, nourished and supported interdenominational co-operation in evangelism. On matters of doctrine, the IMC was deliberately neutral and refused to enter the territory of the **Faith and Order** movement so

a cleavage between some liberal and conservative leaders emerged but Mott was not interested in systematic theology and believed it was his duty to spur the IMC and other organisations for which he was responsible into social action. His biographer acknowledges that it is correct to describe Mott as a “liberal-evangelical” and even in the early 1920’s he was heavily committed to co-operating with many non-evangelical churches such as the Eastern Orthodox. Mott took no part at all in the doctrinal controversies of the twenties and yet was fascinated by the newer theological trends.

During the early thirties, the ecumenical movement went through a period of uncertainty and confusion. There were new leaders, money was in short supply, the movement was not rooted in the churches and there was the added problem of a multiplicity of ecumenical organisations — e.g. World Student Christian Fellowship, Faith and Order, Faith and Work, the IMC and the World Alliance of Friendship through Churches. Some form of integration of these groups was deemed necessary if the movement for unity was to succeed. Further discussions took place and in a meeting with Archbishop William Temple in 1933 a group of ten were united in their determination to create a large umbrella organisation which would be universal and all-embracing. In 1937 the actual title the **World Council of Churches** was proposed by an American and Visser’t Hooft was invited to become its General Secretary. The intention was to inaugurate the WCC in 1940 or 1941 and, in the meantime, representatives of the Faith and Order and Life and Work movements formed themselves into a Provisional Commission of the WCC in Process of Formation. John Mott agreed to lead a joint commission of the IMC and WCC in order to encourage the younger churches in Third World countries to affiliate to the WCC.

The Second World War clearly delayed the implementation of those plans and it was not until the 23rd August 1948 that the World Council of Churches was constituted in Amsterdam. Mott helped extensively in preparations for Amsterdam and he chaired the business committee at Amsterdam before he was made Honorary President of the WCC for his “unrivalled contribution to the growth of the ecumenical outlook and of ecumenical activity” (p.697). Mott was also the first speaker at Amsterdam.

Despite his age, Mott attended the WCC central committee near Lausanne and in 1954 the WCC Assembly at Evanston, Illinois. He died in 1955 at the age of ninety.

This is a book of major importance and the author is commended for his meticulous and extensive research into Mott’s life and work. In many respects it is a sad story as this young, converted man, although eager to evangelise and proclaim Christ as the unique Saviour of sinners, became increasingly deceived by liberal theology and was indifferent to crucial matters of doctrine. His life is a clear warning to us today but his passion for evangelism is a powerful challenge as well.

In addition to the excellent biography, there are forty pages packed with notes to chapters, sources, a bibliography and a 35 page index which further add to

the value of this competently-researched book.

I want now to refer to another book, namely, **THE ECUMENICAL MOMENT: CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CHURCH**, (Geoffrey Wainwright, Eerdmans, 263 pp., £7.95, pbk).

The author, a British Methodist and now currently Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary, reflects in this book over his twenty years of active involvement in ecumenical work. He is convinced that “the church stands before a moment of critical opportunity, a *kairos* which includes a *krisis*” (p.vii).

Against the background of global crisis, the emergence of the World Council of Churches, the “great contribution of the Eastern Orthodox Churches to the modern ecumenical movement ” (p.3, ‘their strong awareness of a unified patristic heritage ... enabling Roman Catholics and classical Protestants to go back behind the Western distortions and counter-distortions to join with themselves at a place where differing theological voices can be combined in a symphony without disrupting the unity of the faith ... their presence in the WCC in recent years is a counter to the liberal Protestant tendency minimising questions of doctrine’), and the 1982 **Lima** text on ‘Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry’, the author concludes that “the opportunity is unprecedented. Never has such a wide range of churches had the opportunity explicitly to own such a broad measure of agreement on these matters ... From many different points of departure, responsible Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Anglican, Methodist, Disciples and Pentecostal theologians have, over three generations and with increasing participation from Africa and Asia, elaborated a document which comes as close as we are historically likely to come to substantial and practical agreement on the stated themes” (p.6). The Lima text is clearly a compromise statement in more senses than one but Wainwright claims it “is a mature fruit of the biblical, patristic, liturgical, and ecumenical movements of the twentieth century that have provided the churches with a vocabulary and concepts within the framework of which they can attain consensus; it is now the time to pass to the deeds of greater mutual recognition and ever increasing sacramental and structural unity”.

By now you will probably have realised that the author conceives of the church in sacramental terms and we need not describe his position in detail. He concedes a lot of ground to Rome and, amazingly, imagines “there is a high degree of compatibility between the soteriological accents of Methodism and Catholicism”.

Chapter Two deals with the subject of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. Rather ambiguously and inadequately he notes four marks of the Church — unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. Concerning the latter, the author quotes the WCC distinction between “succession of the apostolic ministry” and “apostolic tradition in the Church” (p.28). Very little is actually said here about the work of the Holy Spirit except to suggest that His work is tied in with the sacraments. It is no surprise, therefore, that under the title **Baptism and Unity** the third chapter boldly assumes baptismal regeneration. Chapters

Four and Five touch on the Eucharist and once again the author disappoints the reviewer with his unbiblical and syncretistic approach which results in universalism.

Another controversial question is discussed in Chapter Six, namely, the Ordained Ministry. "One of the chief gifts of the modern liturgical movement to the Western churches", affirms the author, "has been the return of Hippolytus' **Apostolic Tradition**" (p.95) and his reflections in this chapter are based on an ordination prayer of Hippolytus.

He assumes there is a general agreement in most church traditions about what he calls an "essential ministry" marked by ordination whether in Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian or Baptist contexts. Quite obviously he assumes too much and fails to grapple with the biblical teaching.

Chapters Seven to Nine continue the theme of the sacraments while Chapter Ten discusses **Mary and Methodism**. He pinpoints six of the doctrinal or spiritual emphases characteristic of Methodism and then looks for the nearest corresponding feature in the Roman Catholic attitude toward Mary and, finally, he assesses to what extent Methodism can accept this Catholic approach.

One Methodist emphasis is 'Faith as active receptivity' which Wainwright feels has a close correspondence in the Roman Catholic stress on Mary's fiat at the Annunciation (Luke 1:38,45). Another Methodist distinctive is **Entire Sanctification** which the author relates to the R.C. dogmas of Mary's immaculate conception and assumption. There are still objections to the Roman dogma, he insists, and that "only the obedient Christ has reversed the trespass of Adam (Romans 5:12-21)". In other words, the Roman dogma "of Mary's immaculate conception seems to deny that 'all people need to be saved' on account of sin 'in Adam' and the dogma of Mary's assumption seems a case of over-realized eschatology" (p.176).

Assurance is the third Methodist distinctive and Wainwright regards the Catholic equivalent in Mary's role as mediatrix! "Psychologically", he tries rather pathetically to tell us, "she brings warmth and comfort and the sense of 'being her children' " (p.177). The fourth Methodist distinctive referred to is **The Universal Offer of the Gospel** which he suggests finds closest correspondence in Mariology, namely, that Mary is the mother of humankind. One is relieved at least to find the author acknowledging that Protestants find this refinement unacceptable. "Through Christ to Mary is not a slogan which commends itself to Protestants whose theology and spirituality depend on the **direct** relation between Christ and the believer" (p.180). Fifthly, the **Social Implications of the Gospel** find a correspondence in Pope Paul VI's **Marialis Cultus** in which he underlined the social and political clauses of Mary's Magnificat. Finally, the Methodist emphasis on the **Communion of Saints** is briefly mentioned and somewhat provocatively the question is asked: 'Could we accept that Mary is their queen?' His conclusion in this chapter is: "If Catholics and Methodists could join together in a search for the truth concerning Mary, surprises might happen on both sides" (p.187). Earlier, the author hints that perhaps Methodists should "bring themselves to 'tolerate' Marian

devotion among Catholics while dispensing themselves from sharing in it” (p.16). Chapter Eleven is a critical assessment of the author’s Methodist ecclesiastical tradition.

Altogether the reviewer was disappointed in the book; it leans heavily and somewhat uncritically on the Lima text and sacramentalist theology and if this is what the author calls **The Ecumenical Moment**, I appeal to readers to give it a wide berth and regard it as a non-event. I did find the notes and bibliography at the end of the book informative and helpful.

Although published six years ago, I want to draw your attention now to a book which I regard as extremely useful and important. The book is **EVANGELISM IN ECLIPSE: WORLD MISSION AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES** (Harvey T. Hoekstra, Paternoster Press, £7.00, 300pp. pbk).

The book is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the WCC nor of missionary work as such. It is “limited to tracing the new concept of mission that has emerged within the structured offices of the WCC. The study will examine the historical context in which this concept evolved and it will identify theological and ideological assumptions underlying this concept. It will also look at key world meetings of the missionary and ecumenical movements ...” (p.11).

In many respects this is a frightening book with its account of the way in which the WCC lost the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ by re-interpreting ‘mission’ radically in terms of its message and methods. To those tempted to compromise by becoming involved in a broad, ecumenical-type evangelism, this book should serve as a deterrent and yet also as an incentive to more vigorous involvement in thorough-going biblical evangelism.

Briefly, we can remind ourselves of the facts:

The Continuation Committee appointed by the 1910 Edinburgh Conference eventually found more adequate expression in 1921 when the **International Missionary Council** was established. The purpose of the IMC was to encourage and help churches and mission societies in their missionary work. In 1957 an assurance was given by WCC leaders to the IMC that it would be able to achieve more for “missions and evangelism” from within the WCC than by remaining outside. At Ghana that same year “the fateful decision” was taken by the IMC to integrate itself into the WCC and in 1961 at New Delhi the IMC officially became the **Division of World Mission and Evangelism** within the WCC. The purpose of this integration was to place the missionary obligation of the church right in the centre of the Ecumenical Movement. What happened later, of course, was very different — the actual demise of mission.

How did this happen? New member churches of the WCC — including some Eastern Orthodox — now began to challenge the traditional view of mission and they objected to their own people being proselytised. There were other significant changes in theology also. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, for example, felt his own missiology to be too exclusively church-centred. “Only a fully Trinitarian doctrine would be adequate, setting the work of Christ in the context of the overruling providence of the Father in all the life of the world and the

sovereign freedom of the Spirit who is the Lord and not the auxiliary of the Church” (Unfinished Agenda, SPCK, p.199). The process of secularisation in theology was accelerated, particularly after the full meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) at Mexico City in 1963. The new, radical theology of the sixties made the Commission members doubt whether secular man needed God at all. This shift in theology and in the understanding of mission was more apparent at the fourth WCC Assembly held at Uppsala in 1968 when evangelism was identified with relieving the poor and the oppressed. Familiar theological words were now re-interpreted and not once in the Uppsala Assembly was the real Gospel declared.

“Uppsala had compassion”, declares Hoekstra, “and rightly voiced it powerfully. This compassion was for the hungry millions and for those deprived of justice and equality ... It had no compassion at all (in its written report) for those deprived of the knowledge of God’s love made known in Christ and condemned to live in fear and superstition or by a false faith ... It had no sense of urgency for preaching the Gospel where it had never been heard” (p.84).

Hoekstra describes the Conference organised by CWME under the title of ‘**Salvation Today**’ in Bangkok in 1973 as being “pivotal in the history of world mission” for it decided against a biblical understanding of mission. Instead the CWME “was to take its place and fulfil its role for harnessing the energies and resources of churches in social struggle in order to bring about a just, sustainable and participatory society” (p.99). Nor was the Fifth WCC Assembly at **Nairobi 1975** any better. The Assembly theme was: ‘Jesus Christ frees and unites’. The official report of the WCC General Secretary was most revealing for he acknowledged the acceptance by the WCC of a new theological understanding of the Church-world relationship. The aim of the WCC now was “a new kind of world order along socialist lines”!

The final chapter of the book contains the author’s ‘**Reflections and Recommendations**’ in which he accuses the WCC of having “eclipsed the missionary task” of the Church (p.148).

Although writing as a member of the WCC, the author writes honestly and passionately concerning the failure of this movement to preserve the true Gospel and to retain the vision for reaching a lost world with the glorious and unique Gospel of Christ. His recommendations to the WCC are good but inadequate and, in some respects, naive. If the constituent member-churches of the WCC are unbiblical in their theology and particularly concerning the nature of the Gospel, how can believers or churches continue to remain within such a pluralist organisation?

Let the last words be from Hoekstra himself who warns: “Churches that fail to be concerned with the unfinished missionary and evangelistic task become little more than religious clubs or political and social action groups. Such churches soon divide and shrivel” (p.200).

This is an excellent book and its contents deserve to be shared with the officers and members of your church. Thank you, Dr. Hoekstra, for such a compelling, honest and informative book.

Book Reviews

What on Earth is the Church For?

Martin Reardon

British Council of Churches and Catholic Truth Society 1985

54pp £1.00

This attractive production of large page size (half as big again as *Foundations*) is the study course booklet for Lent '86. It was to be used in conjunction with broadcasts from 50 local radio stations and the whole scheme is only one part of the Inter-Church Process called 'Not Strangers But Pilgrims'. There are clear headings, suggested Bible readings, questions for discussion and a questionnaire for readers to return to register personal views. Photographs illuminate the pages although some will question the taste of the cartoons.

Called a 'resource book', it covers five questions, Why believe in God? What did Jesus come for? Why did the Church begin? Why different Churches? and What now? There is more material than any discussion group could cover in one evening but it genuinely aims to get people thinking and learning. It must be said that much good material is included, as when the 18th century Revival in Wales is said to have 'greatly stimulated the growth of evangelical religion based on powerful preaching, individual conversion and shared subsequent experience' (p.36). The use of the adjective 'cosmic' is an appropriate modernisation for the universal Church. So much of what is said about the

Church is valid and true, if one could assume that it is the genuine body of the redeemed who were being so described.

Evangelicals, however, will be far from happy with the perspective of the approach. Despite extensive reference to and quotation from Scripture the theological interpretations of biblical writers are called into question. They are revered 'like the paintings of old masters but centuries of grime and retouching have dulled their colours'. 'The words of Scripture, which originally helped the reader or hearer to grasp the Gospel, can today sometimes actually obscure it' (p.16). Time and time again biblical truth is stated, only to be qualified and its effect denied. 'Paul claims that we are justified (acquitted, declared righteous) not as a result of our fulfilling all the demands of the Law, but through our faith in Christ.' But a few lines later we read, 'Moreover, this justification is not something outside ourselves, achieved without us' (p.16). Here, too, we find the outright rejection of genuine atonement, 'Through his self-sacrifice Jesus is not propitiating an angry Father' (p.17). Conversion to Christ is said to mean that, '... we become conscious that we have been saved by Christ's life, death and resurrection; and that in response and by God's help we trust him and try to follow him in everything' (p.48). There is no mention of becoming conscious of sin and repenting, instead we become conscious that we have already been saved!

The interpretation of Matthew 16:18 and 19 as referring to Peter personally is said to be accepted by 'Christians generally' (p.21) and the Roman Church of the fifth century to have 'established a primacy of right and jurisdiction over other churches in the West, based on the promises to Peter recorded in the Gospels' (p.31). Roman Catholic churches are, incidentally, fully involved in this project.

It would be easy to find further fault with this glossy guide but for myself I take it as something of a rebuke to those of us who are unlikely to read or use it. How many ministers of churches outside the ecumenical stream would ever dream of putting the last question on the last page to

their members? 'List things you think the churches in your neighbourhood should be doing together' (p.54). The motivation for this course is not academic. Its goal is unity for mission. Its burden is to reach the nation and the world. None of us would want to deny that this is what the Church is on earth for. The tragedy is that whilst ecumenically-minded Christians are putting so much effort, time and money into promoting spurious unity based on an inadequate, if not false Gospel, those who know better do so much less.

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is General Secretary of the British Evangelical Council

Restoring the Kingdom

Andrew Walker

Hodders

303pp £5.95

This is a fascinating and important book. Subtitled "The radical Christianity of the House Church Movement", it is not an examination of the charismatic movement generally, nor of the whole 'house church' scene, but of that particular part of it which the author identifies as 'the Restoration' or 'the kingdom people'.

Whether or not we have one or more of these churches in our backyard, none of us can afford to ignore this development in the contemporary Christian scene. Even if we might wish to, few of us will be allowed to do so for long. "Not since the Pentecostal movements of Elim and the Assemblies of God

were established in the late 1920s has such a distinctive and indigenous grouping arrived on the religious scene". The present membership is 30,000 or more, and growing fast. Members of our churches, not least our young people, are bound sooner or later to encounter Christians who are committed to it or influences which flow from it. They will be urged to attend their Bible weeks or festivals and to read their books and magazines. Restorationist songs and choruses are prominent in most selections of contemporary material, including those used in, or even produced by, non-charismatic churches. So, at the very least, we need to know what is going on and what is being taught and practiced. Better still, we need to address ourselves seriously to some of the questions raised by the emergence of this movement over the past 20 years.

Not least is this important for those of us in the 'BEC constituency' since some of the basic concerns and emphases are strikingly similar to our own. We need to be clear wherein we differ.

Part of the fascination of this book — and its usefulness — lies in the background of its author. At present director of the C.S. Lewis Centre, he describes himself as a professional investigator of charismatic groups for the past 15 years. He was brought up in a Pentecostal church of which his father was a minister. He is now a member of the Russian Orthodox Church and their representative, for example, of the Inter-Church Programme set up recently by the British Council of Churches as a new initiative to promote Christian unity. Whatever the reasons for his own spiritual migration, it does mean that he has intimate knowledge and sympathetic understanding of conservative evangelicalism, pentecostalism and the charismatic movement. One has the feeling his heart is still where his roots were. We have then an author who can address the subject matter with that measure of objectivity that comes from being an outside observer, yet with a degree of understanding that could only be possessed by an insider.

The resultant book is, so it seems to me, something of a model. If you are looking for something that will leave the Restoration in tatters, you'll be disappointed; maybe even angered. But that will be your fault not the author's. In seeking to provide a critical assessment of the movement he has done his homework well, not least by having a very

considerable amount of personal contact with its leaders with whom he seems to have established relationships of mutual respect. He is well aware of some of the accusations made against some of these men and the movement as a whole. But he does not go in for hearsay or exaggeration. His researches have indicated to his satisfaction that some of the charges cannot be substantiated. Others he thinks may be but he has discussed them with the leaders concerned before going into print. He is clearly concerned to be rigorously fair. He is willing to commend as well as to criticise. "Restorationists have not persuaded me that their song is one I want to sing but I have been deeply impressed by many of the singers. They won my respect by the quality of their life". Those of us who stand closer to, and feel more threatened by, restoration churches may find it hard to be so dispassionate. But we have much to learn from Dr. Walker's basic attitude and approach and, not least, his distinction between people and issues. Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to tell us to be tolerant towards people, intolerant towards their false ideas. We have often not done well at heeding his advice.

The very spirit of the author gives the greater weight to such criticisms as he does offer and the facts he relates without comment. He does not attempt a detailed theological or Biblical critique of Restorationism and nor shall I. His book is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It provides a situation map and will enable many of us to put together the main features of the jigsaw puzzle of which we may have picked up any number of separate pieces over the past few

years. The movement is traced from its beginnings in the 1960s to its blossoming in the 1970s. It is also related to its roots (as Walker sees them) in Irvingism, Brethrenism and Pentecostalism. We are given thumb nail sketches of many of its leaders — Arthur Wallis, Bryn Jones, John Noble, Gerald Coates, George Tarleton (one-time apostle now no longer associated with the movement) and many others. At times the story suggested to me that the law of the jungle has operated within it. But would evangelical independency fare any better under similar investigation?

The use of the term ‘the movement’ by this review would be one the author would not altogether accept. Since a major split in 1976 he sees the Restoration consisting of two main groups of churches which, for convenience, he dubs R1 and R2. R1 is the more structured as well as the larger of the two and consists of churches that relate to Bryn Jones, his 500-strong church at Bradford and his fellow apostles including Terry Virgo and Tony Morton in the south. R2 is used to cover churches with a looser association with one another, yet recognising the leadership of such men as John Noble, Gerald Coates and David Tomlinson. Although the churches and leaders of R1 and R2 have at present little to do with, and are openly critical of, each other, both share and propagate certain distinctive emphases and outlooks. They see themselves as called to establish the Kingdom of God on earth in readiness for the imminent return of the King. Hence the triumphalism in the songs and that strange phrase “kingdom authority”. Denomina-

tions are not in God’s plan. If we want to be where the action is (that is, where God is working) we need to be amongst the Restorationists. Vital to the fulfilment of their task is a return to New Testament church order, including as they see it, apostles, prophets and elders. The apostles are in a different category to the 12 disciples but in the same one as Paul. Arising from this, but also very much as a result of American influence, is the emphasis on submission, shepherding, discipleship and delegated authority. Everybody must be ‘covered’ by somebody. According to Dr. Walker this is not quite the pyramid it sounds like. I wonder. The importance of spiritual gifts in worship and church life goes without saying.

All of this brings us to the points at which the concerns and the emphases of the Restorationists appear to touch ours within the B.E.C. We too have heard the call to scrub church history, return to square one and re-form the church on a New Testament foundation and pattern. We also claim that the Bible is our sole authority for church life and relationships no less than for any other aspect of Christian belief and practice. Many of us, like them, insist that the true church consists of the regenerate only. When we read “to become a restorationist is to adopt a total way of life” we surely react by saying that that is **our** understanding of living a consistent Christian life; we don’t want to settle for anything less. We too are concerned for true church unity, for a unified testimony to the Gospel, and see the fellowship of which we are part as the proper focus for that unity; on occasions people have even been urged to

leave their denominations to join us.

Yet, despite all this in common, and only partly because of differences with regard to the possession and exercise of spiritual gifts, most of us feel poles apart from Restorationism. Indeed we might feel, especially if we have attended some of their gatherings, that we live in a different world. Even the air we breathe seems to be different. Why is this? Is it fact or fantasy? Is there room for rapprochement (some leaders in R2 seem to be seeking this) or is there reason to build our defences higher? What are the really important differences between us? And is there any sense in which this movement has arisen because of our failure? What can we learn to emulate or avoid?

This book will not answer these questions — but it will be a powerful help in thinking about them. Let me suggest a few lines of thought. Firstly, for many of us at least, the contention that there are modern day apostles appears both unbiblical and dangerous. Ephesians 4:11 (to which Restorationists turn for support) must be understood in the light of Ephesians 2:20. *Foundations* may be published often but they only need to be laid once! Whatever the disclaimers, this particular claim along with the prominent place given to prophets and

prophecy has led some to question the uniqueness and sufficiency of Scripture. It harmonises well with the frequently heard distinction between God's 'now' word and his 'then' word. That of course is not unique to the Restorationists. But their particular emphasis on apostles reinforces it. In the restorationist system it is also closely linked with the shepherding doctrine which seems to sail perilously close to putting subjection to man in the place of subjection to God. In their view the former is but an outworking of the latter. But, in practice, is not the impression given that if someone further along, or higher up, the way is in closer touch with God than I am, then I simply have to do what they say? Shades of Roman Catholicism and Exclusive Brethrenism! Furthermore, the insistence on the acceptance of a particular form or church order and of particular church leaders as a basis for unity is a totally different view to that accepted among us.

But I am getting into a review of Restorationism rather than this excellent book about it! Read it for yourself and do your own thinking.

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The end of all particular churches is the edification of the church catholic, unto the glory of God in Christ. And that particular church which extends not its duty beyond its own assemblies and members is fallen off from the principal 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 neglective of all due means of the edification of the church catholic, is schismatical.

John Owen
Works, Vol.16, p.196

OLD TESTAMENT TITLES: an update

Stephen Dray

The last twelve months has been marked by the publication of a large number of Old Testament commentaries: most of high quality. The preacher has seldom had so many helps to enable him to proclaim faithfully God's word from the Old Testament.

Two new volumes have been added to the **Bible Student's Commentary Series**. As previously noted¹ this series is characterised by faithful, detailed exegesis and explanation of the Bible text. Thus, the work of **J. Ridderbos on Deuteronomy and Isaiah** is most welcome. The former volume will compliment the **NICOT volume by P.C. Craigie** and the latter will slide alongside **E.J. Young** as an excellent conservative companion commentary.²

The Daily Study Bible has also continued to expand in a most prodigious way: seven new titles have been issued! The series continues to be rather uneven and this is vividly illustrated by the most recent volumes. By far the worst is the title by **A.G. Auld on Joshua, Judges and Ruth**.³ This is the modern equivalent of the volume which was reviewed by Spurgeon and was considered suitable only for house maids to light fires with! Making a pretence at greater scholarship than the other volumes in the series it completely ignores all the results of modern conservative criticism on

these books. No mention is made, for example, to **Woudstra, Cundall** or **Morris**.⁴ The 'assured' results of modern criticism are trotted out with arrogant disregard for the considerable number of scholars who depart from such conclusions. Thus the pretence at scholarship is just that since true scholarship arises from the interaction of views and not from shouting loud even when the argument is weak. In sum the title is a remarkable example of bull-necked liberal scholarship. Ignore it.

In complete contrast are the two volumes by **J.G. McConville on Chronicles and Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther**.⁵ In them conservative exposition of these books is found at its best. McConville has a good eye for the theological purpose which lay behind the writing of the Bible books and he uses it fully. His books are worthy of placing alongside **Atkinson on Ruth**⁶ as examples of how Old Testament narrative books should be understood and expounded. Two excellent additions to any OT library are provided in these books.

The evangelical world has lost a considerable scholar in the recent death of **P.C. Craigie** in a car accident. However, before his death he was able to complete two further volumes in the **Daily Study Bible**: a double volume set on the **Minor**

Prophets.⁷ These are characterised by the same thoroughly researched comments as his earlier volume on **Ezekiel**.⁸ A helpful outline of the contents of these books together with an eye for the Christian application is a feature which should commend these titles to many Christian preachers.

The first 32 chapters of **Isaiah** have been expounded in a further volume in the same series by **J.F.A. Sawyer**.⁹ Sawyer is a liberal scholar who doubts that much of Isaiah is authentic to the prophet of Jerusalem. However, he is an excellent Hebrew scholar with a special expertise in biblical semantics. Thus his work is characterised by helpful exegesis and by an attempt to set the ideas of the Book in the wider biblical setting. This idiosyncrasy means that it is not a comprehensive commentary but does include many helpful and stimulating observations.

A further volume on **Deuteronomy** has recently been issued¹⁰ but has not yet been seen by the reviewer.

Any attempt to ascertain the formal elements in biblical writing is to be welcomed in clarifying the structure and meaning of the text. Thus, form criticism is, in and of itself, a valuable tool to Bible study, especially for the more academically inclined preacher. Two commentary series are at present engaged in Old Testament works which are intended to bring the fruits of such research before the Christian public. Examples from both these series have already been mentioned in this journal: the **Word Biblical Commentary** and the **Forms of Old Testament Literature (FOTL)**

series.¹¹ Five new titles have recently been added to the former series.¹² **L.C. Allen's** volume is complementary to the earlier book on **Psalms 1-50** by **P.C. Craigie**.¹³ It shows a responsible use of form criticism and a sensitivity to the Christian application. The three volume work (**M.E. Tate** is writing on **Psalms 51-100**) promises to be a most useful tool for the serious student of the Psalter.

What does become distressing is when form criticism is used by so-called evangelicals with an almost total acceptance of the gratuitous assumptions of liberal form-criticism. In the three titles on historical books this is very apparent. The volume by **Budd** so capitulates to the conclusions of liberalism that conservative options are not even considered. Thus a commentary in a series which heralds itself as 'the best in evangelical critical scholarship' presents the unmodified views of reactionary liberalism. The title by **Butler** is little better, as the introductory page warns. The book of Joshua is dated late after a long period of oral tradition had modified the stories to serve the cult. A similar approach is adopted by **Klein**. Nevertheless, the second two titles do seek to view the theological purpose of the respective books against the canonical context and make a number of helpful observations as to the message of the scriptures under consideration. This feature is lost in **Budd** who seeks to show how Numbers met the needs of the immediate post-exilic community rather than look at the final canonical context for the Book. With the excellent volume by

Wenham available¹⁴, **Budd's** work can be safely ignored. **Butler** may, however, prove a useful supplement to **Woudstra** and **Klein** will provide help until something more satisfactory is produced on **1 Samuel**.

Form criticism proves a more useful and less contentious tool in the study of the prophets. Thus the book by **R.L. Smith** will be more widely useful, providing some detailed exegetical work on **Micah-Malachi**.

However, the most recent volume in the **Expositors Bible Commentary**¹⁵ is probably a better buy. Covering **Daniel-Malachi** it provides thorough conservative evangelical exegesis and exposition from a mildly pre-millennial perspective. A volume such as this is bound to be uneven. Thus, **Zephaniah** (**Larry Walker**) is weak and **Hosea** (**Leon Wood**) is flawed by an intrusive pre-millennialism. However the work by **Gleason Archer** (**Daniel**), **Thomas McComiskey** (**Amos and Micah**) and **Carl Armerding** (**Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk**) is of the highest standard. **Archer, H.L. Ellison** (**Jonah**) and **Robert Alden** (**Haggai**) show an eye for application although the work as a whole is more concerned with explaining the meaning of the text in its original context.

This is an excellent all-round volume on the **Minor Prophets**. However, if specific books are being tackled on this part of the Bible it would probably be better to consult **Baldwin** on **Daniel**, **Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi** (**Tyndale O.T. Commentaries**); **Allen** on **Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah** (**New International O.T. Commentary**)

and **Kidner** on **Hosea** and **Motyer** on **Amos** (**The Bible Speaks Today Series**).

The **FOTL** series has recently added a commentary on **Daniel** by **J.J. Collins**.¹⁶ A late date for **Daniel** is assumed and since the series does not set out to be a comprehensive exposition of the book it will be of less value to the preacher. However, for the student of apocalyptic in general and **Daniel** in particular it will prove useful, though criminally expensive!

Evangelical Press are really getting to work on their **Welwyn Commentary Series** and have recently added three titles on OT books.¹⁷ They are all high quality expositions of the respective books and are well worth purchasing. **J. Benton's** work on **Malachi** is exemplary in showing how the prophets are to be preached today. It should supplement **Baldwin** and **Kaiser**.¹⁸ The preacher furnished with each of these titles will have little excuse if he fail to minister adequately from **Malachi**, in particular. Similarly, **Keddie's** volume on **Amos** should be used together with **Motyer**.¹⁹

The studies on **Judges** and **Ruth** are even more welcome and provide a generally unspeculative Christian exposition of the two books. Occasionally **Keddie** seems guilty of unwarranted spiritualisation and he does not seem to have given sufficient thought to the structure of **Judges** and how that structure is to influence interpretation of the Book. Nevertheless, with this minor proviso, the volume is highly recommended and we look forward to other titles in the OT from both the publishers and these two men.

We conclude these reviews with the mention of three titles of more general usefulness. The first is the recently reissued work 'A survey of Old Testament Introduction' by G.L. Archer.²⁰ Archer is a conservative evangelical with especial expertise in the biblical languages, textual studies and the answers such studies give to liberal criticism of the Bible. This is a particularly readable introduction which exposes the bankruptcy of liberal criticism of the OT. No book is more effective in establishing the case for a scholarly conservative evangelical approach to the OT. Archer is pre-millennial and adopts the 'day-age' theory for Genesis 1, thus being forced to recognise that death was in the world prior to the Fall. Some will regard these as blemishes: but they are small and overall this book is highly recommended.

A satisfying introduction to the wisdom literature by an evangelical has been long awaited. It has now arrived with the work of Kidner.²¹ Serving a double purpose of outline exposition of **Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes** and technical discussion of critical issues the book succeeds admirably. This work is fully up to Kidner's usual high standard: except the material on Proverbs which exceeds it! Buy it.

Finally, W.C. Kaiser has produced another book: this time on the use of the OT by the NT writers.²² He attempts to show that this usage was based upon a serious and proper attempt to exegete and expound the OT text. It is not rabbinic exegesis (as even many evangelicals tend to assume). Rather the NT writers use the OT in a number of different but

legitimate ways. Consequently, Kaiser argues, dominical and apostolic exegesis is the key to developing a truly Christian OT theology. The key relationship upon which the NT writers built was that of promise. Promises were made in the OT which formed the basis of its structure and pointed forward to the NT.

Kaiser's basic thesis is timely. Its basic principles lie at the heart of OT interpretation and his work lays out the ground for further studies and elaboration. However, because of his pre-millennialism, he fails to see how the whole of the NT finds its focus and fulfilment in Jesus. Insisting, as he does, on literal fulfilment of prophecy, he fails to observe adequately the symbolic nature of much OT prophecy and, accordingly, continues to see the Jewish race as the object of many prophecies. The reviewer thinks that Hoekema has a more satisfactory eschatology which enables Christ to be seen as the end of all the OT scriptures.²³

Nevertheless, this is an important book with much of very great value within its pages. It should be the basic textbook on the subject among evangelicals for some time to come.

References

- 1 See *Foundations* No.12
- 2 J. Ridderbos, DEUTERONOMY, Zondervan, 318pp, £13.60
ISAIAH, Zondervan, 580pp, £17.50
P.C. Craigie, DEUTERONOMY, Eerdmans, 424pp, £16.95
E.J. Young, ISAIAH, 3 vols., Eerdmans, 534, 604 & 579 pp, £55.85
- 3 A.G. Auld, JOSHUA, JUDGES & RUTH, St. Andrews Press, 282pp, £3.50
- 4 M.H. Woudstra, JOSHUA, Eerdmans, 396pp, £21.95
A.E. Cundall & L. Morris, JUDGES &

- RUTH, IVP, 318pp, £5.95
- 5 J.G. McConville, CHRONICLES, St. Andrews Press, 271pp, £3.50
 - EZRA, NEHEMIAH & ESTHER, St. Andrews Press, 199pp, £3.50
 - 6 D. Atkinson, THE WINGS OF REFUGE, IVP, 128pp, £3.95
 - 7 P.C. Craigie, TWELVE PROPHETS, 2 vols., St. Andrews Press, 239 & 249pp, £3.50 each
 - 8 See *Foundations* No.13
 - 9 J.F.A. Sawyer, ISAIAH 1, St. Andrews Press, 268pp, £3.50
 - 10 D.F. Payne, DEUTERONOMY, St. Andrews Press, 196pp, £3.95
 - 11 See *Foundations* Nos. 12 & 14
 - 12 P.J. Budd, NUMBERS, Word, 409pp
 - T.C. Butler, JOSHUA, Word, 304pp
 - R.W. Klein, 1 SAMUEL, Word, 307pp
 - L.C. Allen, PSALMS 101-150, Word, 342pp
 - R.L. Smith, MICAH-MALACHI, Word, 358pp
 - All in hardback £17.95 or paperback £7.95
 - 13 See *Foundations* No.12
 - 14 G.W. Wenham, NUMBERS, IVP, 240pp, £4.95
 - 15 F.E. Gaebelin (Ed), THE EXPOSITORS BIBLE COMMENTARY, VOL.7, DANIEL & MINOR PROPHETS, Zondervan, 725pp, £20.00
 - We hope to review this volume in a subsequent *Foundations*.
 - 16 J.J. Collins, DANIEL WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE, Eerdmans, 120pp, £12.95
 - 17 J. Benton, LOSING TOUCH WITH THE LIVING GOD: THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI, Evangelical Press, 140pp, £3.50
 - G.J. Keddie, EVEN IN DARKNESS: STUDIES IN JUDGES & RUTH, Evangelical Press, 126pp, £3.50
 - THE LORD IS HIS NAME: STUDIES IN AMOS, Evangelical Press, 137pp, £3.95
 - 18 J.G. Baldwin, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, MALACHI, IVP, 253pp, £4.95
 - W.C. Kaiser, MALACHI, Baker, 171pp, £5.15
 - 19 J.A. Motyer, THE DAY OF THE LION: THE MESSAGE OF AMOS, IVP, 208pp, £4.50
 - 20 G.L. Archer, A SURVEY OF OLD TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION, Moody, 537pp, £13.95
 - 21 D. Kidner, WISDOM TO LIVE BY, IVP, 175pp, £4.95
 - 22 W.C. Kaiser, THE USES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW, Moody, 270pp, £10.50
 - 23 A.A. Hoekema, THE BIBLE AND THE FUTURE, Paternoster, 343pp, £10.60

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As Brother Lawrence had found such comfort and blessing in walking in the Presence of God, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others; but his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying; such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it, as could not but affect all beholders. And it was observed, that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and his heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit. "The time of business," said he, "does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity, as if I were upon my knees."

The Practice of the Presence of God, 1906, pp. 25-6

Review of Theological Journals: 1985—6

(Part 1)

The Editor

The United Nations has declared 1986 as the International Year of Peace and it is this theme which **Theological News** (Vol.18, No.1, March 1986) takes for its editorial.

The World Evangelical Fellowship which publishes **Theological News** and the **Evangelical Review of Theology** is sponsoring, through its Theological Commission, a consultation on violence and peace under the title, 'Christ our Liberator and Redeemer'. This will be held in Singapore from the 27 June — 2 July 1986. The Consultation will be grappling with the basic issues of a theology of evangelism, peace and justice, the role of the Church in giving practical leadership in a world of escalating violence and death. "The phenomenon of violence will be studied in its many manifestations — sin and alienation from God, violence in family life from abortion to euthanasia, violence in the community and society from terrorism to religious and political oppression, violence in the global threat of war and nuclear holocaust ... We will work towards a more biblical and evangelical theology of liberation and redemption" (p3). Papers are being prepared by Rene Padilla, Rodrigo Tano, Don Carson, Ron Sider and others.

The Evangelical Review of Theology (vol.9, No.1, Jan. 1985) continues the theme of peace in a helpful exegesis of Ephesians 2:11 — 3:21 with its salutary reminder that "Ours is a world of which God has a purpose, a world of axioms, of religion, of politics, of history, and of culture. And what is that purpose? It is that the wisdom of God be made known to this very world through the Church. God's wisdom is nothing other than the peace of Christ that comes through the Cross ..." (p17).

A number of articles, including the editorial, in this same issue deal with various aspects of the peace theme. The editor reminds us: "Today there are many claimants to world peace and justice. Islam with its claim of religious superiority offers its **Shar'iah** law of moral absolutes and detailed rules for daily living, while Marxism offers an ideology pledged to 'the consolidation and flowering of the world socialist system'. The NATO and Warsaw Alliances offer peace through nuclear deterrents to a world threatened with self-annihilation ... Unless the Church is both salt and light it can be neither the conscience of the nations nor the hope of eternal salvation for a transformed society. But first the church must know the way of the Cross ... It must participate in the miraculous power of prayer. It must be a peace maker to its own fragmented community before it can be a peace maker to the world. The Church must believe and obey the whole Gospel" (p199).

Another related article is **Key Issues in Missiology Today** by John Grafton. He argues that "the relationship between the Church and the kingdom and the significance of this relationship to missions should receive increasing attention on the part of evangelicals" (p244). The nature of this relationship then determines our answers to a number of other questions. For example, what is the primary aim of evangelism? Is it to preach Christ and the kingdom or to plant churches? Or, to put it another way, is the task of missions based on the nature of the church or the nature of the kingdom?

The author then asks a series of searching questions relating to evangelism. What is 'evangelism'? Is social action an inherent part of it? Again, what is the 'gospel'? To what extent is it correct to say that many evangelicals are preaching an "emasculated gospel, an easy believism, and 'cheap grace' "? Another key question is that of the gospel and culture. Will culture alter the gospel? Will the context take precedence over the text of Scripture? Will over-contextualizing lead to syncretism?

I am now turning in more detail to the area of **New Testament** studies. In **Themelios** (Vol.11, No.1, Sept. 1985) there were two interesting articles. The first was an editorial on the Virgin Birth and bodily resurrection. Referring to David Jenkins, the Anglican Bishop of Durham, and his denial of both the virgin birth and the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the editor observes that not only has the Bishop "sided with certain scholarly opinions rather than with traditional and biblical orthodoxy" but he has also "aligned himself with some very questionable theological opinions" (p3).

One important task in relation to the virgin birth is the harmonising of the Matthean and Lukan accounts but three significant points need to be noted. First of all, Matthew and Luke are our earliest sources and they are independent accounts which nevertheless agree that Jesus was miraculously born of Mary before she married Joseph. Secondly, the fact that other N.T. writers do not mention the virgin birth proves nothing and it is likely that "the tradition of Jesus' virginal conception antedates Matthew and Luke". Thirdly, the earliest non-Christian version of the event, i.e. the Jewish charge that Jesus was an illegitimate child, acknowledges the unusual character of Jesus' birth. Therefore, the biblical view "has a lot going for it historically as well as theologically and it is accepted by many scholars". Raymond Brown in his standard, classical work on the subject entitled **The Birth of the Messiah** (Geoffrey Chapman, 1977) allows for the virgin birth "as a serious possibility". It is therefore "premature" concludes the editor, "for a bishop of the church to side with those who deny traditional Christian orthodoxy at this point".

He also argues that the case for the Lord's physical resurrection is even stronger. Harmonisation again is an area of the subject demanding attention but all the independent sources teach the raising of the dead, physical body of Jesus. It is ironical "that at a time when a Jewish theologian has published his arguments in favour of the physical resurrection of Jesus" (**The Resurrection of Jesus**, Pinchas Lapide, SPCK London, 1984, 160pp, £4.95) that the Bishop of Durham "can publicly question this traditional element of the Christian

good news; this time the historical evidence favours the Jew's interpretation rather than the Bishop's!

Readers who want to research the subject further may like to know of some of the following articles/books recently published:

Scripture, Tradition and History in the Infancy Narratives of Matthew in Gospel Perspectives II, ed. R.T. France and D. Wenham, Sheffield; JSOT, 1981, pp 239—266.

A new and important commentary on **Matthew** by **D.A. Carson** with a helpful discussion of the infancy and resurrection narratives. **Volume 8 in Expositor's Bible Commentary**, Zondervan, 1984.

On the resurrection see: **Easter at Durham**, **M. Harris**, Paternoster, 1985, which is a lucid and critical treatment of the Bishop of Durham's views in the light of New Testament teaching.

The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study, **G. Osborne**, Baker, 1984.
Easter Enigma, **J.W. Wenham**, Paternoster, 1984.

The Hope of a New Age: The Kingdom of God in the New Testament is the title of another article in **Themelios** and written by Professor Howard Marshall. This is a lengthy and detailed treatment of an important subject which will up-date readers on recent scholarly contributions. Professor Marshall in his introduction observes that the phrase, 'the kingdom of God' has been the subject "of much biblical research in recent years, and although it is bandied about with great frequency in discussions of social action, it is unfortunately often the case that it is used in a very vague manner and that there is a lack of clear biblical exposition in the churches on the meaning of the term" (p5). This article is part of a new Book, **The Spirit in the New Age**, edited by L. Shelton and A. Deasely and published by the Warner Press of Anderson, Indiana, U.S.A.; it is one of a five-volume series of Wesleyan Theological Perspectives available only from the Warner Press at P.O. Box 2499, 1200 East Fifth Street, Anderson, Indiana, 46018.

The **Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society** has also published some interesting New Testament material. I enjoyed reading Robert Cook's contribution, **The 'Glory' Motif in the Johannine Corpus**. Relating 'glory' (Greek *doxa*:LXX and the Hebrew: *KABOD*) to God's self-manifestation and its impact on man, he discusses the primary objects of glory and then the forms of glory in the Johannine writings. Concerning the former, apart from two exceptions (John 5:44; 17:22) the 'glory' is directed toward the first or second Person of the Godhead while, in the latter, the focus of glory is largely Christological although a small number of references relate to the Christian life and a few are eschatological. In his conclusion, the author remarks: "The focal point of much contemporary theology is man. In marked contrast, the theme of a genuinely Biblical theology is the God of reality. Among the NT writers John's theology is Christological in emphasis, and one of the chief themes of his Christology is the incarnation. This particular emphasis is highlighted in the introductory section of John's three major works (the gospel, the first epistle, and the Apocalypse). Thus John's intent is not merely to call our attention to God as God but to his personal self-disclosure ... the ra-

diance of God's many-splendoured character is seen in his redemptive work (the gospel), in the life of his redeemed people (the epistles), and ultimately in the triumph of the kingdom of God in history and beyond (the Apocalypse). It does not seem extravagant, then, to say that 'glory' is not merely a motif **IN** the Johannine corpus, but rather that it is the motif **OF** the Johannine corpus" (p297, Volume 27, No.3).

Another helpful article is by Kendell Easley and entitled, **The Pauline Usage of Pneumati as a Reference to the Spirit of God**. "Apart from the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit", argues Easley, "there is no Christianity ... this study probes a particular aspect of the NT witness to the experience of the Spirit: that experience designated *pneumati*, "in the Spirit" (idem, p299). Two factors suggest the need to study this subject carefully. First of all, terms like "in the Spirit", "walking in the Spirit", "singing in the Spirit", "baptism in the Spirit" and even "slain in the Spirit" are often used carelessly and unbiblically. Secondly, Easley claims that while considerable attention has been given to specific aspects of the NT teaching about the Spirit (e.g. detailed studies of the phrase "in Christ"), very little study has been given to the category "in the Spirit". "The fundamental issue", Easley wisely observes, "is exegesis. Do the writers of the NT use *pneumati* as a technical term with one consistent meaning, or is the meaning of the term determined purely by contextual considerations? Or is the truth perhaps somewhere between?"

There follows a detailed table and analysis of the 91 instances of *pneumati* in the Greek N.T. and another diagram indicating the distribution of Paul's usage of the form *pneumati*. His conclusion is that Paul uses the term "not as a precise technical term but rather to refer generally to that effective agent of the power of God whereby certain Christian experiences come to pass and whereby believers are enabled to fulfil certain expectations" (p313).

Details of Journals

Theological News

Published quarterly by World Evangelical Fellowship, Theological Commission. Donations invited in lieu of subscriptions. Available from: Paternoster Press, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW.

Evangelical Review of Theology

Published in January, April, June and October by the Paternoster Press for the World Evangelical Fellowship. Annual subscription: £7.20.

Themelios

An international journal for theological students. Published three times a year by the Theological Students Fellowship of the UCCF and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Annual subscription: £3.00; two years £5.80; three years £8.40. Available from: TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP.

Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

Published in March, June, September and December. \$4.00 per copy or \$15.00 per year. Subscriptions should be sent to: Dr. Simon J. Kistemaker, Reformed Theological Seminary, 5422 Clinton Boulevard, Jackson MS 39209, U.S.A.

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