

# Foundations

Issue No.19      Autumn 1987

---

## Contents

---

The Servant of the Lord in the NT <i>Tom Holland</i>	1
The Cults: an Update <i>Eryl Davies</i>	12
Exegesis 5: Holy Spirit Baptism and Suffering <i>Keith Walker</i>	20
Scripture: the Current Debate Review Article on 'Hermeneutics, Authority & Canon' <i>Austin Walker</i>	24
ERCDOM and ARCIC II <i>Eryl Davies</i>	29
Nettleton and Finney <i>John Carrick</i>	33
Book Reviews	43

---

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

---



**BRITISH EVANGELICAL COUNCIL**

General Secretary: Rev Alan Gibson BD, 113 Victoria Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3TJ

Tel: 0727 55655

# Foundations

No.19 Autumn 1987 Price £1.50

---

A Theological Journal  
published by the  
British Evangelical Council

---

The Servant of the Lord in the NT

Cults

Holy Spirit Baptism & Suffering

Scripture & Hermeneutics

ARCIC II

Nettleton and Finney

foundations

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

---

**Editor**            Rev Dr Eryl Davies MA BD  
                         9 St. Isan Road  
                         CARDIFF Wales  
                         CF4 4LU  
                         UK

All MSS, Editorial Correspondence and Publications for Review should be sent to the Editor.

---

**Associate Editors**    Rev Professor A.C. Boyd MA BD  
                         Rev S. Dray MA BD  
                         Rev N. Richards  
                         Rev H.R. Jones MA  
                         Rev Professor J.D. MacMillan MA

---

**Price**                £1.50 post free within the UK.  
                         Overseas subscribers PLEASE NOTE:-  
                         If remitting in currencies other than those drawn in Sterling on a bank with a UK office allow IN ADDITION at least £1 equivalent to cover exchange costs.  
                         Cheques to be made out to "BEC".

---

**Orders**              should be sent to:  
                         BEC  
                         113 Victoria Street  
                         ST. ALBANS AL1 3TJ  
                         UK

---

# The Servant of the Lord: A Study in its New Testament Significance

---

*Tom Holland*

---

The prophecy of Isaiah is the most important part of the OT in understanding of the New. This statement is obviously open to challenge but a brief reflection on the major themes of Isaiah and how they are developed or possibly better, applied in the NT, would point to the truth of this statement. Such subjects as the attributes of God, God's work in creation, the work of salvation touching on such important issues as covenant, election, prophetic call, the remnant, and other vital biblical doctrines, all have their origin in the prophecy of Isaiah.

The extent of this article cannot possibly present the evidence for the extent of Isaiah's influence. However, by way of showing an example of his influence a brief look at eschatology in the NT will illustrate his underlying and often unnoticed contribution. Boremann<sup>1</sup> has traced 19 OT influences in the five verses of 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, eight of them from Isaiah.

The oversight of Isaiah's contribution to NT eschatology may be in part due to too much attention being given to the Son of Man prophecy given by Daniel, which whilst very important is only a small part of the overall OT contribution.

The theme I wish to focus on is that of **the Servant of the Lord**. Justification

## *Attention Please!*

We welcome regular and new readers and trust you will all find the contents of this nineteenth issue both stimulating and informative.

This issue of *Foundations* is the first in the new subscription series. The cover is different and the price has regrettably been slightly increased.

It is being sent to all those who have been subscribing up to and including issue 18. We are confident that you will want to continue receiving subsequent issues. Many of you have already taken advantage of the **SPECIAL OFFER** of £9 for the next **SEVEN** issues, 19—25.

If we have not yet received your renewal a blue slip is enclosed for you to complete and return to the BEC office.

You will be supporting improvements in future issues by recommending *Foundations* to new readers and encouraging them to take up this **SPECIAL OFFER**.

for choice of this topic can be had from N W Porteous<sup>2</sup> who said, 'Isaiah is the theologian par excellence of the Old Testament, but his importance for theology lies, not so much in any abstract formulations he may have reached about the oneness and creative power of God, as in the way in which he seems to have given living embodiment to his understanding of Isaiah's call to be God's servant in the world'.

### Concept in the OT

An examination of the Hebrew text of the OT will show that *EBED*, servant, was a title that was applied to a whole range of people. There were no alternative titles available for the OT writers, so the variations in meaning had to be got from the context the individual word was used in. So *EBED* was used for kings, Is 37:24; prophets, Is 20:3; the nation of Israel, Is 41:8,9; the Messiah, Is 42:1; and even ordinary Israelites, Is 65:13-15. What can be said of *EBED* is that it spoke of someone who was in submission in some way to another, whether the master be God or man.

Where the problem arose was when the OT was translated into Greek. A study of the Hebrew text alongside the Septuagint LXX will show that there was no uniformity in the minds of the translators as to the selection of an appropriate Greek word for a particular type of *EBED*. The two terms available were *doulos* and *pais*. The evidence shows that *pais* was not only used of the ideal servant, but also of Israel, and in such a way as to remind her of her unworthiness, for her 'unadopted' name Jacob is used in parallel to this term (cf Is 42:19; 44:1-2; 44:21; 45:4). *Pais* is also used of individual prophets (cf Is 20:3; 32:20; 44:26; 50:10). The problem is made even more complicated when we see that this same term is applied to domestic servants or used generally as a title of anyone who is in an inferior position to another (Is 24:2; 36:11; 37:5). What adds confusion to confusion is that this very term used in these various ways is augmented by the use of *doulos* in each respect. So we find *doulos* applied to the ideal servant (Is 53:11); to the nation in Is 42:19; 48:20; 49:3; 49:7; and to domestic servants in Is 14:2. In the Hebrew text the context clearly was the key to the proper understanding of the particular use of the term. The translators of the LXX evidently failed to distinguish accurately between the various usages, and hence to designate a corresponding Greek word to cover a particular category of servant being considered.

This apparent indiscriminate use of *pais* and *doulos* is not limited to the LXX. We also find the same range of usages for both terms in the New Testament. We find *pais* used for a domestic servant, Mt 8:6,13; for Israel, Lk 1:54; for David, Lk 1:69. We also find *doulos* being used with an equally wide range of meanings. It was used for a slave, Mt 8:9; for a domestic help, Jn 18:10; for a prophet, Rev 10:7; for Christians, Rom 6:17 and for Christ himself, Phil 2:7. It is evident that the indiscriminate use of *pais* and *doulos* by the translators of the LXX influenced the thinking of the NT writers, and it would, therefore, be imprudent to attach significance to the use of either term without deliberate reference to the context.

This confusion has obscured the significance of the repeated use Paul made of

the term *doulos*. It has normally been seen as a reference to a bond slave, someone without legal standing or personal claims; someone owned by another for that is what the *doulos* was in Greek/Roman Society. This connection assumes two fundamental points. First, that the Roman idea of *doulos* was the same as Paul's concept, and secondly, that the Roman concept was the same as the OT concept. This latter connection must be assumed to exist for Paul assumed that his understanding of *doulos* was the same as that of the *EBED/doulos* in the OT. Now it is a point in dispute as to whether Israel ever knew of slavery amongst her own people in the classical Greek or Roman sense.

De Vaux summarises the general picture:

'Certain writers, and especially Jewish scholars, have denied that real slavery ever existed in Israel; at least they maintain Israelites were never reduced to slavery. There is a semblance of justification for this view if we compare Israel with classical antiquity. In Israel and the neighbouring countries there never existed those enormous gangs of slaves which in Greece and Rome continually threatened the balance of social order. Nor was the position of the slave ever so low in Israel and the ancient East as in republican Rome, where Varro could define a slave as 'a sort of talking tool', 'instrumenti genur vocale'. The flexibility of the vocabulary may also be deceptive. Strictly speaking *EBED* means slave, a man who is not his own master and is in the power of another. The king, however, had absolute power, and consequently the word *EBED* also means the king's subjects, especially his mercenaries, officers and ministers; by joining his service they had broken off their other social bonds. By a fresh extension of meaning, the word became a term of courtesy. We may compare it with the development of its equivalents 'servant' in English or 'serviteur' in French, both derive from *servus*, a slave. Moreover, because a man's relations with God are often conceived on the model of his relations with his earthly sovereign, *EBED* became a title for pious men, and was applied to Abraham, Moses, Josue or David, and finally to the mysterious Servant of Yahweh.

By 'slave' in the strict sense we mean a man who is deprived of his freedom, at least for a time, who is bought and sold, who is the property of a master, who makes use of him as he likes; in this sense there were slaves in Israel and some were Israelites.<sup>3</sup>

De Vaux then proceeds to make comparison between the semitic form of slavery and the Greek/Roman form, to show how the former was much more controlled and humane.

De Vaux however fails to distinguish the essential difference between the Hebrew slave who is sold into the possession of another, and the slave of Yahweh. It is not merely one of the status of the owner. The essential difference is one of covenant. The king was the *EBED* of Yahweh because he had been elected, called and anointed to that office, and not because of anything less (1 Sam 10:1; 11:4; 16:1; 2 Sam 7:8,9). The ministers of the king

in turn represented Yahweh and fulfilled the purpose of the covenant, to establish righteousness. To fail to see this is to miss the whole point of the *EBED* of Yahweh. In social terms it would be equivalent of seeing little difference between the role of a housekeeper and the role of a housewife in Western society today. It would also be foolish to think that the role of the housekeeper could evolve into the role of the housewife. Language may evolve, but a covenant relationship does not; it requires a decisive act of commitment and acceptance.

## Concept in the NT

It is inevitable that ambiguity in Old Testament theology will lead to ambiguity in New Testament theology, and indeed this is the very thing we find. For example, C K Barrett notes an aspect of the problem produced, when, on commenting on Romans 1:1 he says 'Paul describes himself in the first instance as a slave of Jesus Christ. This is a common term with him (cf especially Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1), imitated by other New Testament writers (James 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1). It is particularly appropriate to an apostle, but can be used of any Christian before he goes on to mention his special status and vocation. The description is more striking in a Greek work, such as this epistle, than in semitic literature. A Greek did not think of himself as a slave (*doulos*) of his ruler or king, nor did he think of himself as the slave of his divine king, or god, or speak of his service to the god as slavery. The Semitic king, however, was a slave (e.g. 2 Sam 9:19). Other distinguished members of the theocracy are described in the same terms (e.g. Ps 26:42; Amos 3:7). Thus Paul, as the slave of Jesus Christ, appears as a member of a people of God analogous with the People of God in the Old Testament.'<sup>4</sup>

Barrett is suggesting that the Old Testament concept of the servant of Yahweh was the same as slavery, only elevated from a human situation. But this is not so, as we have seen. Barrett does move in the right direction when he goes on to say Paul 'appears as a member of a people of God analogous with the people of God in the Old Testament', but as we have seen, misunderstands the Old Testament theology of the Servant of God.

If we allow the trend of de Vaux's and Barrett's arguments to continue, and seek to work out a slave concept in the New Testament, there are some important questions that must be raised. Are we to conclude that Paul not only claims that he has no rights of his own because he is in bondage to Christ, but also that he is serving Christ against his own will? If Paul is saying he has no rights, how can he look forward to a reward or payment for his labour; a 'crown of life'? (2 Tim 4:8). A slave concept totally precludes such a possibility. Furthermore, when Paul's use of the term in Romans 6 is examined carefully we come up against these same problems in specific statements. 'Do you know', he says, 'that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or obedience, which leads to righteousness' (Rom 6:16). This slavery begins in an act of 'offering to someone' and the slave is clearly choosing which master he will serve, something which would never arise in slavery. It may be argued that this is a reference to the Old Testament practice

of the slave choosing to stay with his master when the year of jubilee arrives, and that it alludes to the free decision that the slave takes to have his ear bored and be the lifetime possession of his master (Deut 15:16-17). This argument, however, fails to resolve the problem. First it is moving between Hellenistic or classical concepts into Semitic concepts without any indication as to which practice is being followed in which part of the illustration. Also, the basic meaning of *doulos*<sup>5</sup> is that of one born into slavery. Under the controlled form of 'slavery' which the Old Testament permitted for those needing to sell themselves into service for a period of time to recover from debt, children were not born into permanent slavery. In such a case the 'slave' was released, along with all that was his, in the year of jubilee (Lev 25:39-43). Finally, at the conclusion of the chapter Paul states 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 6:23). It is inconceivable that Paul could speak of a wage being paid in a slave relationship.

## NT Terms

Before we attempt to unravel the information we have available, it will help if we clarify some of the usages of terms found in the New Testament regarding Christian service, setting them against their corresponding Greek terms and assessing their relevance for our present enquiry.

The first term to take note of is the verbal form of *doulos*, *douleuo*. The thing which becomes apparent from an examination of the use of this verb throughout the New Testament is that it is never used of unwilling service. It always describes service, regardless of the motive which may be either moral or immoral, as willingly rendered. The older son in the parable of the prodigal son says 'all these years I've been slaving (*douleuo*) for you and never disobeyed your orders' (Luke 15:29). The translators of the NIV may feel justified in rendering *douleuo* as slaving in order to emphasise the bitter feeling of the son at what his unworthy brother is receiving, but he is arguing that it was rightfully his property because the younger son had already taken his portion. In addition he had worked for his father, and what was now being 'misused' he had earned by his devoted work. Paul testifies to the Ephesian Elders 'I served (*douleuo*) the Lord with great humility and with tears' (Acts 20:10). He exhorts the Romans 'Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving (*douleuo*) the Lord' (Rom 12:11). See also Luke 16:13; Rom 6:6; 6:25; 9:12; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; Gal 4:8; 5:13; Eph 6:7; Phil 2:22; Col 3:24; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 6:2; Tit 3:3. The very use of the verbal form of *doulos* therefore suggests a situation quite different from a bond slave concept. There are other terms which Paul employs in regard to serving, but these relate to tasks to which one is appointed within the Christian community; i.e. *latreuo*, a task done solely for God, *diakonia*, spiritual ministry and *diakonis*, the position the servant has in relation to those to whom he ministers.

The last term is '*diakoneo*'. It is the verbal form used for the outworking of the position that the '*diakonos*' holds. So, Matt 20:28, 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many'.

(See also Matt 4:11; 8:15; 27:55; Mark 1:13,31; 10:45; 15:41; Luke 4:39; Acts 19:22; 2 Cor 3:3; 2 Tim 1:18; Philemon 5; Heb 6:10; 1 Pet 1:12; 4:10,11).

Now all these references, to the deacon or minister, pinpoint his position and the work he does. However, they fail to make specific reference to the relationship that existed between him and the Lord he served. These terms have nothing to say on this. In the LXX '*doulos*' can have a whole range of meanings, from a slave made so by being taken as a prisoner of war, to one who serves Yahweh in the context of the covenant purpose. We have also seen that in the New Testament the verbal form of *doulos* suggests willing service, and that there are also statements made by Paul which seem to conflict with a slave situation.

## **Paul the Servant**

How then did Paul understand the context of the title *doulos*? Did he see it in some 'adjusted' classical sense, as Barrett suggests, or was there some other perspective from which he viewed it? Paul's claim to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews not only points to competence in the Hebrew language, but also a zeal for the Hebrew culture.<sup>6</sup> What did he intend to convey to those who could not share directly in his training but had to be taught through the medium of a common language?

For Paul's biographer, so deeply influenced by Paul himself, Paul was not in the classical mould (which would have been most natural for Luke as a Greek) but the Hebrew theological one. Luke saw Paul's calling to be the Shadow of his Master, who so clearly fulfilled Old Testament expectation of the ideal servant. Throughout Paul's biography he is constantly robed with the mantle of Christ. Paul is separated to do the Messianic covenant work spoken of by Isaiah, to be a light to the nations (Acts 9:15; 13:47). He is rejected, especially by his own countrymen as was Christ (Acts 9:29; 13:50; 14:19; 17:13; 22:17-21). As G Bornkamm points out, there is a parallel in the offence of their work. Christ was rejected because he sought to win sinners, Paul because he sought to win Gentiles — who to the Jews were sinners.<sup>7</sup> The preaching of Christ and of Paul produce the same effects on those who do not believe, blindness and hardening, and both outcomes are based on the predicted results of Isaiah's ministry in Isaiah 6:9-10 (Luke 8:10; cf Acts 28:26). Paul's vision in the Temple is acknowledged by some<sup>8</sup> to be based on Isaiah's own vision (Acts 22:17,18). Paul's journey to Jerusalem is certainly paralleled with that which Luke had already recorded (Luke 9:51; 13:22; 18:31), of One who set his face like a flint to go up and be betrayed. Both are subjected to similar exhortations to consider the unreasonableness of their missions (Luke 13:31; Acts 21:10-14). And finally, like Christ, Paul is misrepresented by the leaders, hounded by the mob and tried by the governor of Jerusalem (Luke 23:1; Acts 25:1,2). Here the parallel finishes, for Christ's death at Jerusalem was inevitable, Paul's was not.

This picture of Paul as the servant, in the Hebraic theological sense, is no coincidence. It is upheld by Paul's own description of his ministry. He considered his call, described in Galatians 1:15 as being set apart from birth, a

call which parallels the Old Testament prophets.<sup>9</sup> In 2 Cor 3-7 Paul compares the Old and New Covenants and their ministries. In 3:6 Paul says 'He (God) has enabled us to be ministers of the New Covenant'. In 4:1 he says 'Since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart'. Paul then proceeds to develop his comparison between the two covenants with reference to the motive of his ministry. He says 'Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again' (5:14,15). This reference to the death of 'one for all' links with Romans 5:12-19 a passage accepted by some scholars<sup>10</sup> as referring to Isaiah 53. That this Corinthian passage also reflects that same prophetic passage is borne out in that Paul proceeds to speak of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17) which is produced by this representative death (2 Cor 5:21). This is the very theme of Isaiah, for he also goes on to speak of all things being made new (Is 65:17) in the context of the New Covenant which the Servant's death establishes. Thus Paul sees his ministry to proclaim the fulfilment of all that Isaiah had predicted. He is elevated above the evangelical prophet in that he proclaims the fulfilment and not the anticipation.

Perhaps the most significant passage of the epistle is Chapter 6. Paul starts the section which describes the sufferings into which his work brings him by quoting from the Servant Songs, and concludes it with a further quote from the Songs (Is 49:8 and 52:11). 'As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain — for he says, "At the time of my favour I heard you and on the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation' (vv 1-2).

'As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" ' (vv 16-18).

It is evident Paul saw his own ministry as a servant of the New Covenant, as did Moses, Isaiah and Israel herself, the servants of the Old. As the prophets addressed Israel and appealed for fidelity, so Paul appeals to the church at Corinth. The credentials of Paul's ministry, as outlined before his appeal to separation, is that he is fulfilling all that the suffering servant(s) suffered in their ministry to Israel.

## **Christian Suffering**

The question is, does Paul see himself in line as a suffering servant because he is an apostle, or because he is a Christian? The importance of this question lies in that, if it is because he is an apostle, then it follows that this experience of suffering is part of the apostolic office and does not apply to Christians in general. If it is because he is a Christian, then all Christians are called to this same realm of suffering, and when *doulos* is applied to Christians, as in Romans 6, it is not to be equated with slavery, but with the covenant figure of the servant of the Old Testament.

There can be no question that Paul ever saw his sufferings as unique. They were part of the sufferings to which **the corporate servant**, i.e. the Church, was called. 'For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out ...' (1 Thess 2:14,15). This suffering was not a thing to be merely endured, for it actually formed part of the will of God (2 Thess 1:4-5).

This suffering is in no way vicarious, as was Christ's passion, but it is essentially the same as the sufferings Christ experienced during his ministry of proclamation. Because of this, Paul frequently links his own suffering, and that of other believers, with Christ. To be God's servants means being rejected by those who purpose to walk in darkness.

'Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fulness — the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of the mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:24-27).

Such suffering is not in isolation, for the believer is part of Christ's body, and he is the head. 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting' (Acts 9:5). 'Its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it' (1 Cor 12:25-26).

For Paul, suffering is not merely a sign of being a part of the kingdom of God. It is a means of spiritual maturing and preparation for the glory and splendour of Christ's appearing. This parallels the theme of Isaiah who saw Israel's suffering being necessary for the bringing in of the Messianic Kingdom (Is 40:1-10; 53:54).

'Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, whom He has given us' (Rom 5:3-5).

'Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us' (Rom 8:17-18).

## **Kingdom Purpose**

There is deep significance in this passage which speaks of the suffering of believers. As we have seen, the theme of suffering for the believer goes back to Romans 5:3-5. Not that that is considered to be the first reference to suffering in Romans. In chapter 4:25 Paul has stated of Christ 'He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification'. Some see both

4:25 and 5:15-17 reflecting Isaiah 53.<sup>11</sup> Now if this is so, and Paul links all believers (as he does in 5:12ff) with the suffering of their representative, they will not only be his servants (6:14) but also share his rejection and suffering. This is the theme of 5:3-5 and also of Romans 8. In chapter 8 Paul emphasises the relationship and its blessings. They are in Christ Jesus, they have no condemnation, but they do share in his sufferings as the suffering servant.

We may note firstly how Paul links his own suffering with those of other believers e.g. 'I consider that our present sufferings (8:18); the Spirit helps us in our weakness (8:26); if God is for us, who can be against us (8:31); we are more than conquerors (8:37)'. This is an attitude quite different from that which Paul adopts towards the Corinthians and Galatians, who had moved from the truth of the Gospel because of its intellectual or religious offence. There he sets his sufferings against their considered superior position (2 Cor 10-11; Gal 2:17-3:5). He relates to the Thessalonians and the Philippians as he does to the Romans, because they are partakers of the sufferings of the Gospel (Rom 8:22-38; 1 Thess 2:14f; Phil 1:2,9f).

Secondly, Paul in this section (8:36) quotes from Ps 44:8. Examination of this Psalm shows it to summarise the message of Is 40-66<sup>12</sup> the message to those suffering in exile. The same historical background is alluded to, and even the same language is used, not for an individual, as in Is 53, but for the nation. Paul seems to be deliberately linking the experience of the Church waiting the consummation of its salvation with the faithful Jews awaiting their deliverance from exile to return to the place of promise.

That it is no coincidence that Paul selects Psalm 44 is shown in that in Romans 10 he goes on to describe the work of the Church in proclaiming its message, and he quotes from Is 52:7. This passage gives a similar picture to that painted by Psalm 44, but it tells of the work of the faithful remnant who have waited for God's redemptive act. They are God's servants chosen to proclaim the message of deliverance and renewal.

'How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" ' (Rom 10:14-15).

G Bornkamm sets the original passage in Isaiah in its context when he says, 'In its original context the quotation describes the situation of the few who at the time of the exile stayed on in Jerusalem after it was laid waste and eagerly awaited the return of the exiles from Babylon. Watchmen were posted on the heights surrounding the city and looked forward to seeing the forerunners of the return. At long last the first messenger appeared afar off on the mountains. Thereupon the watcher broke into shouts of rejoicing. These passed from mouth to mouth. The forsaken city resounded with jubilation. Their tidings of joy were the dawn of Jerusalem's salvation. This, as Paul sees it, is the condition of the whole world; the message about Christ which sets men free is to sound to the ends of the earth (Rom 10:18 with its citation of Ps 19:6).'<sup>13</sup>

Thus Paul is not only quoting from the prophecy, but actually drawing his theology from the prophecy.<sup>14</sup> As Jerusalem was under judgment for its sin, so is the world. As Yahweh reserved to himself a remnant so he has also now. As the task of the remnant, isolated by Isaiah from the nation in its faithlessness, and given the title servant, was to announce the restoration, so it is the Church's task to prepare men for that Day. God has put all men, Jew and Gentile alike, under judgment. The true remnant is made up of all who have saving faith, which is what distinguishes the true Jew from the mere physical descendant of Abraham (Rom 4). This argument becomes even clearer when one perceives Paul's use of Isaiah throughout his letter as its theme progresses. progresses.

Space does not permit our quoting all the parallels in full but they will well repay closer study. (Rom 2:24, Is 52:5; Rom 3:15-17, Is 59:7-8; Rom 9:27-9, Is 10:22-3, 1:9; Rom 9:33, Is 8:14, 28:16; Rom 10:11, Is 28:16; Rom 10:15, Is 52:7; Rom 10:16, Is 53:1; Rom 10:20, Is 65:1; Rom 11:7-8, Is 29:10; Rom 11:26-7, Is 59:20-1, 27:9; Rom 11:33-4, Is 40:13; Rom 14:11, Is 45:23; Rom 15:21, Is 52:15.) Taken together they not only show Paul's dependence upon the prophecy for his gospel, they summarise the whole doctrine of soteriology, a history of salvation from God's electing and calling to his purpose being gloriously achieved.

But what is of immediate interest is that it also helps to establish, as a corollary, that the threefold use of the 'servant' in the Old Testament, found with particular clarity in Isaiah, is in Paul's mind when he uses *doulos*. Paul sees Christ, the Apostles, and the Church to be cast in the same mould as Isaiah saw the Messiah, the Prophets and Israel.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus we conclude that our study has detected a fundamental error in the understanding of scholarship regarding the use and meaning of *doulos* in New Testament studies. The traditional Hellenistic setting which the *doulos* is set in has been shown to be inadequate to explain the theological implications which surround its use. The Semitic setting however, proves itself authentic for many of the concepts in which Paul has been found to be apparently lacking clarity.

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

## References

1. Reproduced in H H Kennedy's ST PAUL'S CONCEPT OF THE LAST THINGS, p.48
2. N W Porteous, The Theology of the OT, article in PEAKE'S COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE, p.157. Our claim for the influence of Isaiah on the NT is supported by E J Young who noted that Isaiah is quoted more times in the NT than all the other OT prophets put together. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE OT, p.205.
3. Roland de Vaux, ANCIENT ISRAEL, Vol.1, p.80.
4. C K Barrett, ROMANS.
5. Abbott-Smith gives to *doulos* nothing more than the classic meaning of the word (p.122) as does Little (p.179). Cremer gives a much more theological appraisal of the use of the word. (H Cremer, BIBLICO-THEOLOGICAL LEXICON OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK, pp.215-217).

6. 'Apart from Christianity itself, it is most probable that Palestinian Judaism was the only determinative influence in Paul's life'. (Ellis, PAUL'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, p.38).
7. G Bornkamm, PAUL — see fly leaf review by F F Bruce.
8. For an argument that the record of Paul's vision in Acts 22:17ff was composed on the pattern of Isaiah's temple vision (Isaiah 6:1ff) see O Betz, 'Die Vision des Paulus in Tempel von Jerusalem', in VERBORUM VERITAS, Festschrift für G Stählin, ed. O Böches and K Haacker (Wuppertal, 1970), pp.113ff.
9. Margaret Thrall saw the similarities between Paul's call and that of the Old Testament prophets, and claims it was the realisation that Christ's call had to be seen in the light of Yahweh's call to the prophets that became the cornerstone for Paul's Christology. See M E Thrall, THE ORIGIN OF PAULINE CHRISTOLOGY (in Apostolic History and the Gospel, pp.305-313).
10. 'In the statement that the Grace of God abounded to "the many" (RV) the expression "the many" is probably a deliberate echo of Isaiah 53:11, where the Servant of the Lord justifies "The many" (MT, LXX)'. F F Bruce, ROMANS, p.132.
11. 'Who was delivered for our offences.' This may be a quotation from some primitive confession of faith; the language appears to be based on Isaiah 53. The verb 'deliver' in this sense (*paradidomi*) occurs twice in the LXX version of that chapter: in Isaiah 53:6 'the Lord has delivered him (the Suffering Servant) up for our sins' and in Isaiah 53:12 'because of their sins he (the Servant) was delivered up'. (F F Bruce, ROMANS, p.118.)
12. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the historic setting of the psalm. The early church fathers of the Antioch school saw it as originating in the Maccabean period, a date also accepted by Calvin. Morgan sees the setting as exilic whilst Leupold dates it pre-exilic, written by David after his experience recorded in 2 Samuel 8:13-14, when he was severely beset by the Syrians to the north and the allied Edomites and Ammorites to the south. Leupold rejects the later dating saying that there never was a time when the faith of the nation was as high as in the reign of David, and it is a high concept that is contained in this psalm. (THE PSALMS, pp.344,5.) It is probably safest to agree with Weiser who says, 'our lack of knowledge regarding the details of its historical background does not allow us to fit the exact date of the psalm (PSALMS, p.355).  
The uncertainty of the date of the psalm does not affect our thesis, for Dodd has shown the method of exegesis followed by the early church was not by a strict historical parallel but by expansion, development and application of the original principle. (ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, p.133.) In this case, the psalm speaks of God's faithfulness to his people in the midst of judgment, which is a timeless principle spanning both covenants.
13. G Bornkamm, PAUL, p.165.
14. The dependence of the New Testament writers upon the Old Testament for their interpretation of history is summed up by C H Dodd. 'It must be conceded that we have before us a considerable intellectual feat. The various scriptures are actually interpreted along lines already discernible within the Old Testament Canon itself or pre-Christian Judaism — in many cases, I believe, lines which start from their first historical intention — and these are carried forward to fresh results.  
'They interpret and apply the Old Testament upon the basis of a certain understanding of history, which is substantially that of the prophets themselves. Though not stated explicitly in the New Testament, it is everywhere presupposed. History, upon this view, or at any rate the history of the people of God, is built upon a certain pattern corresponding to God's design for man His creature. It is a pattern, not in the sense of a kind of master-plan imposed upon order of human life in this world by the Creator Himself, a plan which man is not at liberty to alter, but within which his freedom works. It is a pattern, disclosed "in divers parts and divers manners" in the past history of Israel, that the New Testament writers conceive to have been brought into full light in the events of the gospel story, which they interpret accordingly.' (ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, pp.109 and 128.)
15. T H Robinson, PROPHECY IN ANCIENT ISRAEL, p.78.

---

# The Cults: An Update

---

*Eryl Davies*

---

It was in November 1978 in Jonestown, Guyana, when over 900 people obeyed the order of their white leader, the Rev Jim Jones, to drink a mixture of cyanide and Flavoraid. As many as 913 of Jones' followers queued to drink the lethal mixture, 'men and women, old and young, black and white — parents who poisoned their own children — silently, willingly, sipped the poisonous mixture as Jim Jones had told them to while he preached about dying with dignity'.<sup>1</sup> Many of these people believed they had found the 'truth' through Jones and had been born again through his ministry. Some even claimed that their leader was divine. However, the real Jim Jones was a rather unpleasant and cruel human person. Those who succeeded in escaping from his commune described Jones as a 'cruel tyrant who disciplined his flock with terror, armed guards, electric shock treatment, child beating and mock trials'.<sup>2</sup>

This sad incident reminds us again that some cults are potentially dangerous and destructive. The Jonestown tragedy also illustrates one of the distinctive features of the cults, namely, the belief that 'truth' is found exclusively in a leader professing to have special understanding and authority from God. But Jonestown also underlines the pastoral challenge which the world of the cults presents to the Christian Church today. For example, researchers have established that as many as 80% of those involved in the Jonestown incident came from 'Christian' backgrounds, whether Christian homes, churches or schools and this large percentage is also true in relation to a significant number of other cults.

Quite literally, the cult problem is on our doorstep today. Many cult representatives visit our homes or approach us in city shopping precincts and there is evidence that Moonies are now infiltrating evangelical churches in order to gain converts. Some of our church people are vulnerable while others do not know how to respond or how to help these cult members. Sadly, pastors and church officers are all too often badly informed and thus fail to warn and teach their people in this important area.

The purpose of this brief article is to update readers with regard to developments in some of the cults and to indicate some of the theological questions arising from these developments.

## Definition

By now the term 'cult' has virtually displaced that of 'sect' previously used to describe groups like Jehovah's Witnesses, Moonies, Mormons etc. The term 'sect' is regarded as being too restrictive and too closely linked with Christianity. Sociologically, it is important to note that the terms 'sect' and

now 'cult' are used to describe groups or movements of religious protest against organised religion, secular government as well as the dominant culture. For the modern media, the word 'cult' is often a convenient way of referring to the more bizarre groups such as Moonies and Scientologists. The **Shorter Oxford Dictionary** defines the word as 'devotion to a particular person or thing as paid by a body of professed adherents'. Such devotees are usually sincere, zealous and convinced that they have found the 'truth'. The term 'cult' has also been more widely used to include self-improvement groups such as Exegesis and Est but this wide application of the term is confusing. At present, terms like 'movement', 'new religious movements' and 'new religions' are being used increasingly to replace that of 'cult'.<sup>3</sup>

## Appeal

Ronald Enroth, Professor of Sociology at Westmont College, California, suggests several reasons for the phenomenal growth of cults in the United States during the past three decades.<sup>4</sup> He observes that the cults developed during times of significant change and cultural upheaval. They also prosper when there is no single, national issue such as war or important civil-rights problem to capture the imagination and loyalty of people. In an absorbing interdisciplinary study, Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe also draw attention to these social aspects of 'cult explosion'.<sup>5</sup> Professor Enroth underlines, too, some psychological factors such as security and a strong dependency feeling which the cults exploit in meeting basic human needs.

You will be wrong if you assume that young people are the only ones to be attracted to the cults. Already in Britain many middle-aged and older people have joined cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Scientology, etc. In America, for example, the Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University has provided conclusive evidence that the cults are successfully recruiting between the ages of fifty and seventy-plus.<sup>6</sup> Some cults in the United States have 20% of their members over the age of sixty while, in areas like Miami, nearly half the number of cult members are over the age of fifty.

There are reasons, of course, why the cults are focussing attention on older people. Some hand over their large incomes to the group while those with fewer resources surrender social security and pension payments. Sometimes their discontent, loneliness and fears are exploited by cult activists who offer 'instant' answers to personal problems and provide an initial sense of caring for those who feel neglected.

## Classification

The cults are classified in a number of different ways. Professor Bryan Wilson has distinguished them as world-denying (e.g. Children of God, Hare Krishna), world-indifferent (e.g. The Way International) or world-enhancing (e.g. Est, Exegesis, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology etc).<sup>7</sup> A different and more satisfying classification is given by Professor Ronald Enroth.<sup>8</sup> He classifies them as a) Eastern mystical, b) aberrational Christian, c) self-improvement, d) eclectic-syncretistic, e) psychic-occult-astral and f) established groups including Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian

Science, etc. These 'established' cults are in contrast to newer cults like the Family of Love, Scientology, etc. Some prefer to describe Scientology, Hare Krishna, the Unification Church (Moonies) and the Divine Light Mission as 'destructive', rather than new, cults.

## Developments

Before I turn to some theological questions raised by two groups, I want to update readers concerning developments in four cults which are particularly active and influential in our contemporary situation.

During the last seven years, there have been leadership problems within the **Jehovah's Witness** movement. Several top leaders at their Bethel headquarters have been disfellowshipped during the past seven years over major doctrinal differences with official Watchtower teachings, including Franz's nephew, Raymond Franz. In a helpful, revealing book, Raymond Franz has written of his work within the Governing Body of the Watchtower and of the powerful, sometimes dramatic, impact of their decisions on people's lives which led to his own personal crisis of conscience.<sup>9</sup>

At present, there are approximately five million Witnesses worldwide. The Watchtower year books reveal, however, that there are twice as many baptisms as there are active Witnesses which means a high drop-out rate and by today there is a much higher number of ex-JW's than active ones! To meet this situation, there now exists in America an annual National Convention of Ex-Jehovah's Witnesses which provides members with encouragement and support. Some of these become disillusioned while others are converted to Christ and join Bible-teaching churches.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, some have gone into Judaism, or cults like the Mormons, the Worldwide Church of God or one of the JW breakaway groups like the Dawn Bible Students.

As a result of the **Unification Church** (Moonies) losing the longest and most expensive libel case in British legal history in 1981 against the *Daily Mail*, the cult has kept a low profile in Britain. However, there are indications that Moonies are eager to improve their public image and some cult members are joining local churches and working inside them.<sup>11</sup>

Two influential cult leaders died recently. The founder of the **Worldwide Church of God**, Herbert W Armstrong, died at the age of 93 on 16 January 1986. Armstrong was officially described as 'the apostle and pastor general' of the WCG and 'it was under his leadership', they claim, 'that a new era of the Church of God was begun. The church was revitalised and injected with new life and vigour ...' The claim is absurd, of course, but his heretical views, mostly obtained from his first wife, are given considerable publicity. One WCG programme alone, *The World Tomorrow*, is transmitted daily in the United States through over a hundred radio stations and 144 TV stations and transmitted world-wide by a total of 168 radio and 192 TV stations. Via Radio Luxembourg the programme is beamed to Britain and the WCG claims that the programme relayed worldwide has at least one hundred million listeners daily. Many of their free booklets are available in supermarkets throughout

Britain and newspaper shops display them, too, in many city centres. The WCG is now a cult to be reckoned with in our situation.

The founder of **Scientology**, Ron L Hubbard, also died in the same month as Armstrong but nine days later. In the obituary notice, *The Times* concluded: 'Hubbard was the Henry Ford of occultism. He was not, by any standards, a nice man, but was a highly influential figure among the myriad inventors of magical and religious systems who have appeared in modern times.'<sup>12</sup> Scientology is one of the most vicious and dangerous of the cults operating today.<sup>13</sup>

## **Theological Questions**

I want to turn in more detail to consider some theological questions raised by two other groups.

Amongst some Charismatics and house-church leaders, both in America and Europe, the '**Jesus-only**' teaching has gained in popularity since the sixties. For example, in the late sixties in England the South Chard leader of the House Church movement argued that those baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity were not properly baptised. This erroneous teaching gave rise to some ill-feeling amongst the believers as well as division. But the 'Jesus-only' teaching is beginning to trouble members in some of our churches. Before looking at the theology behind this teaching, it will be helpful to outline the historical context in which the teaching emerged.

It began in 1913 at a worldwide Pentecostal meeting in Los Angeles when R E McAlister preached from Acts 2:38 on 'baptism in Jesus' name' in which he claimed that all baptised believers in the apostolic age were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ alone rather than in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There was opposition to McAlister's message but men like Frank Ewart and John Scheppe were won over to his side. Verses like Matthew 17:8, John 10:30, 14:13, Philippians 2:9-11 and Colossians 3:17 were wrongly interpreted by Scheppe and others to support a 'modalist' theory of the Trinity. In contrast, however, to the much earlier heresy of Sabellius, the 'Pentecostal' leaders regarded Jesus, not the Father (as Sabellius had done), as the only one God. For them, Jesus manifested himself in the 'form' or 'office' of Father, Son and Holy Spirit at different times.

Along with evangelist Glenn A Cook, Ewart led this new movement assisted by some prominent leaders of the Assemblies of God like G T Haywood, E N Bell and H A Goss who each played a key role in propagating the new teaching. The General Council of the Assemblies of God strengthened its trinitarian position in 1916 and expelled many of its assemblies and as many as 146 ministers. Those expelled gradually organised themselves into 'oneness' churches of various shades but they held in common certain distinctives such as a 'modal' Trinity, the insistence that baptism by immersion was essential to salvation and that such baptisms should be carried out only in the name of Jesus. They also retained a Pentecostal position concerning the 'gifts' and Spirit-baptism.

Altogether there are over seventeen 'oneness' denominations active today but the largest and most zealous of them in Britain at present is the United Pentecostal Church.<sup>14</sup>

One thing is clear. The 'Jesus-only' teaching — even in relation to baptism — is an expression of non-trinitarian theology. They use texts like Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48 and 19:5. Furthermore, they argue that 'the name' of Matthew 28:19 is the same as 'the name of Jesus Christ' in Acts 2:38; their conclusion is that Jesus is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!

By way of reply, I confine myself to three observations.

First of all, the phrase 'in the name of Jesus Christ' has a primary meaning of baptisms being carried out under the authority and command of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Secondly, the phrase in relation to baptism is used only sparingly in the Acts and then only at strategic moments to mark the extension of the Church amongst the Jews (2:38), the Samaritans (8:16) and the Gentiles (10:48). Thirdly, Calvin rightly insists that the same phrase in Acts 2:38 is not a formula to be used in baptism but rather a declaration that all the efficacy of baptism is found in Christ alone. 'Christ is the work and end whereunto baptism directs us', stresses Calvin, 'wherefore, everyone profits in baptism as he learns to look to Christ ...'<sup>15</sup>

The use of the phrase and other New Testament passages by 'oneness Pentecostals' is then both unbiblical and irresponsible.

Finally, I want to comment on the **Seventh-Day Adventists**.

Some evangelicals will criticise me for regarding them as a cult rather than a Christian Church. I am familiar with the arguments but the history of Adventism and the theological controversies which plagued and still affect the movement warrant us, I believe, in calling it a cult.

At the age of 17, Ellen White claimed to have had a vision on the morning after the date set (22 October 1844) by William Miller for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the vision she saw the heavenly sanctuary in need of cleansing and Christ standing there so she interpreted this as a revelation explaining the true significance of Miller's prophecy. Christ **had** come in 1844 but he came to his heavenly, not earthly sanctuary.

A distinction was later made between receiving forgiveness here and the ultimate, final blotting out of sins from our records in heaven. The claim is that in 1844 the Lord entered the inner sanctuary of heaven to finish his work of atonement for sin. This is called his 'investigative judgement', that is, his examining and revealing the life-records of people to the Father and blotting out the sins that are still supposed to be against believers in heaven.

This 'sanctuary' teaching clearly contradicts the Scripture and detracts from the sufficiency and finality of the Saviour's sacrifice. There are serious implications, too, for the doctrine of justification by faith as we shall see.

Seventh-Day Adventism has had a chequered history. The early years, 1844—1888, were difficult years characterised by a failure to appreciate and

accept justification by faith. 'The almost universal position in this period was', according to Australian researcher G J Paxton, 'that acceptable righteousness before God is found through obeying the law with the aid of the Spirit of God.'<sup>16</sup>

1888 was a watershed in their history. Talks given by E J Waggoner and Mrs White at the General Conference Session of 1888 in Minneapolis helped to re-establish the doctrine of justification by faith to a position of prominence in the movement. They stressed the impossibility of human obedience satisfying the law of God and also undermined the necessity of a mediator who was both God and man to satisfy the law on behalf of sinners. Only through faith, they added, could this righteousness be received.

There was opposition to this new emphasis in the Conference and subsequently some leaders were strongly criticised by Mrs White for their antagonism to the doctrine of justification by faith. The years 1901—1920 witnessed expansion and consolidation of the movement despite a crisis over the teaching and influence of pantheism.

In subsequent years the controversy over the meaning and importance of justification and its relation to sanctification deepened and the decade of the 'seventies was a period of profound crisis with differing emphases and interpretations.

Adventist scholars like Desmond Ford, Geoffrey Paxton and Robert Brinsmead argued strongly for the Reformation principle of justification by faith alone; they insisted that sanctification is not the basis of salvation. Others, however, like Hans K La Rondelle, disagreed. As the debate continued in the late 1970s, an official committee was appointed to study the question. Sadly, this committee issued an ambiguous, compromising statement which did little to clarify the official Adventist position concerning the crucial doctrine of justification by faith. La Rondelle, for example, had rejected the Reformation gospel as the norm for the Adventists' understanding of the apostolic gospel while Fritz Guy affirmed:

'One of the most important elements in our Adventist heritage is the notion of 'present truth' — truth that has come newly alive and has become newly understood and significant because of a new experience, a present situation. What is important, then, theologically and experientially, is not whether our understanding is just like that of the Reformers; what is important is whether our beliefs are TRUE.'<sup>17</sup>

With the establishment of Adventist research centres in the 1960s and 1970s attention also focused on the nature and authority of Ellen White's writings. As a result of this historical research, three points were established. First of all, Ellen White borrowed a lot of her material from other sources; secondly, she was fallible and also conditioned by late nineteenth century American culture.

In September 1980 church leaders disciplined one of its leading theologians, Australian Desmond Ford, removing him from ministerial and teaching posts within the movement. Having gained his doctoral degree in New Testament studies in Manchester under Professor F F Bruce, Ford had been head of the

theology department of the Adventists' Avondale College in New South Wales, Australia, for sixteen years. Ford challenged some of the most cherished Adventist traditions, including the status of Mrs White's writings and the 'Investigative Judgement'. He claims, 'You can't find the investigative judgement in the Bible. You can get it out of Ellen White. The fact is, she got it out of Uriah Smith, an early Adventist writer'.

Prior to his dismissal, Desmond Ford was given a six month leave of absence in order to research the question of the 'sanctuary' doctrine and other related issues. Ford published the findings of his research in the summer of 1980 in a manuscript called **Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgement**.<sup>18</sup> In this lengthy document, Ford denied the traditional Adventist teaching that Christ entered the most Holy Place in 1844 to start upon his work of investigative judgement. Ford then underlined the biblical truth, namely, that Christ has been interceding for his people as High Priest since his ascension. What then, according to Ford, was the significance of 1844? It was the time, he declared, 'when God, in heaven and on earth, raised up a people to whom he entrusted his last, everlasting gospel of righteousness by faith in Christ, for the world.'<sup>19</sup>

The official Adventist response was disappointing. In numerous articles and editorials in the **Adventist Review** it was argued that the traditional sanctuary doctrine was an essential article of faith. Richard Leshner, for example, insisted:

'These landmark doctrines are to be received and held fast, not in formal fashion but in the light of divine guidance given at the beginning of the movement and made our own. Thus we become part and parcel with the movement, and the beliefs that made the original Seventh-Day Adventists make us Seventh-Day Adventists too.'<sup>20</sup>

Ford's manuscript was then studied by the 'Sanctuary Review Committee' where the majority of members decided that the 'Adventist tradition was the norm for interpreting the Bible, rather than the Bible for tradition'.<sup>21</sup> A few weeks later the General Conference recommended that Ford should be disciplined and the Australian Division took the appropriate steps. Almost immediately, however, a new magazine called **Evangelica** was launched to defend and propagate Ford's teaching. Ford's influence on Adventism both in America and Australia has been extensive. One Adventist reported that in the USA 'there is a vast youth movement in the church identifying with the evangelistic gospel (as a result of Ford). There's a renewed excitement about the cross.'<sup>22</sup> Some, like John Toews the Californian pastor, have resigned their churches; Pastor Toews renamed his church the SOUTH BAY GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP. 'We feel', he explains, 'we want to move into the mainstream of Christianity now because we feel that Adventism is very definitely way off to the side.'<sup>23</sup> He predicted that many more pastors would resign.

The issues are important and clearly defined.<sup>24</sup> If Adventism wants to be accepted as a Christian Church rather than a cult, it must make its supreme appeal only to the Bible and embrace the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone which, as Calvin observed, is 'the hinge on which all true religion turns'.

## Challenge

'The new religious movements represent, worldwide, a challenge to the mainline Christian denominations. They are growing apace. Currently, they comprise 2.2% of the world population, some 96 million. They presently outnumber Judaism and by the year 2000 AD will approximate to the numbers of Eastern Orthodoxy.'<sup>25</sup>

We cannot afford to be complacent in our churches.

## References

1. NEWS & VIEWS, p.1, no.5, Dec. 1980, Deo Gloria Outreach
2. Idem.
3. See, e.g., CONCILIAM, 161, NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS, T & T Clark
4. CHRISTIANITY TODAY, p.26, 23 October 1981; also A GUIDE TO CULTS AND NEW RELIGIOUS, pp. 9-24, IVP, 1983
5. UNDERSTANDING CULTS AND NEW RELIGIONS, pp.11f., Eerdmans, 1986
6. WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY BULLETIN, Summer 1982
7. RELIGION IN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE, pp.111-113, Oxford University Press, 1982
8. THE LURE OF THE CULTS, IVP, 1983
9. CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE, Commentary Press, Atlanta, 1983
10. See, e.g., the testimonies of former Witnesses in WE LEFT JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, E C Gruss, Baker
11. Details are given in THE LOCUST YEARS: FOUR YEARS WITH THE MOONIES, Jacqui Williams, Hodder & Stoughton, 1987, £2.50
12. 29 January 1986, p.12
13. A claim made and illustrated, e.g., by Eugene Methvia in the READERS DIGEST, p.141, May 1980
14. Two 'oneness' groups formed this new denomination in 1945. The head-office and publishing house are in St. Louis; their magazine, PENTECOSTAL HERALD, has a wide distribution.
15. CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES, ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, vol.1, p.120, Eerdmans, 1949
16. THE SHAKING OF ADVENTISM, p.55, Zenith Publishers, Delaware, USA, 1977. This is an informative and absorbing study of Adventism.
17. SPECTRUM 9:31
18. Published by Evangelion Press, 1980
19. SPECTRUM 11:36
20. Idem., 13:7
21. ADVENTIST REVIEW, 4 September 1980; cf. MINISTRY 53, October 1980 and SPECTRUM 11; 2-26, November 1980
22. CHRISTIANITY TODAY, 10 October 1980
23. Idem., p.87
24. An excellent study-book on the history and development of Adventism is ADVENTISM IN AMERICA, ed. Gary Land, Eerdmans, 1986
25. John Coleman in CONCILIAM, p.9, 161

# Exegesis

*A few years ago two BEC Study Conferences were devoted to various views of the Baptism of the Spirit. Here a comparison of Matthew 3:1-12 with Malachi 3:1-5 is proposed as one key to a better understanding of this vexed issue. The crucible of suffering is not often mentioned in the present debate but its relevance is clearly demonstrated in this article.*

---

## Exegesis 5: Spirit Baptism and Suffering

---

*Keith Walker*

---

The purpose of this brief article is not to solve a problem, but to air it and the effect is probably to complicate it! The issue of the nature and place of baptism in the Spirit within the **ordo salutis** continues to be a major irritant in evangelical circles. It remains a cause of tension in our BEC constituency. Such is the vehemence of the debate that it is difficult for us to 'come out of our corners' and do anything other than swap well-known punches. It is hard to make progress. It is hard to break new ground. And we make no pretence of attempting that. It is suggested, however, that in exegeting Matthew 3:1-12 (and its parallels), a crucial passage with respect to this vexed issue, some comparison with Malachi 3:1-5 may be necessary and helpful. In the first place, some reasons for that suggestion must be adduced.

### **The Demands of Progressive Revelation**

Whilst it is always true that all relevant parts of the Scripture may and should be brought to bear upon any particular passage in order to elucidate its meaning; in a special way, what has gone before in the progress of revelation may be of particular value. Now, of course, the debate about the meaning of John's expression 'baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire' gains no **direct** help from the OT. The expression is new in unfolding revelation and so it demands interpreting in the light of the way the phrase is used in its immediate context and later in redemptive history.

The debate revolves then around two foci:

1. Is 'baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire' (Matt. 3:11) one activity or two? Is it one thing, typified at Pentecost? Or is it two things; baptism with the Spirit (for salvation) being paralleled in the soteric aspect of Matt. 3:12, and baptism with fire being paralleled in the condemnatory/destructive aspect?
2. The meaning of expressions coupling cognates of *baptizo* and *en pneumati* in Acts—Revelation.

And yet, although John's baptismal language may find no direct precedent in the OT, other questions are valid. Does the flow of thought in Matthew 3 echo any OT passage? Does the Sitz-im-Leben into which John is speaking find any precedent in earlier revelation? What should drive us peculiarly hard to look for such OT illumination of this NT passage is the trans-covenantal nature of John's ministry, and the fact that his contemporaries understood him. Arguably, he stands closer to the OT prophets than to the NT apostles.

We would suggest that Malachi 3:1-5 fits the bill both in respect of Sitz-im-Leben and content as an OT passage which Matthew 3:1-12 echoes. And it does so in a way which eliminates the need for speculative links such as J D G Dunn postulates between Malachi 3:4 and 1QS4:21, and between John and the Qumran sect.<sup>1</sup>

## Sitz-im-Leben

The whole context of the book of Malachi is that of a people who had fallen into a formal, but dead religion. In terms of worship (1:6-14), the teaching of the Law (2:1-9), marriage and divorce (2:10-16) the Post-Exilic age was one of spiritual and moral defection from Yahweh. They wanted a comfortable, convenient religion, a god who does the good pleasure of those who are righteous in their own eyes (2:17). Moreover, they may be an *ad hominem* appeal to some popular boasting of being Abraham's children in 2:10.<sup>2</sup> It is into this context of sham religion that the words of 3:1-5 are uttered.

Similarly, the specific context given in Matthew 3 for John's teaching (though Luke is less specific and Mark and John very general) is that of an audience of men who kept a form of religion without real devotion. The reference to those who boast of their physical descent from Abraham (3:9) points to people resting rather comfortably in their supposed religion. The need for a real rather than pretended repentance is laid before them (3:8).

## Content

Both Malachi and John speak into this situation in a way intended to disturb their ease. Both speak of the Messiah's coming as one of judgement. But before we come to that we can notice two other aspects of the flow of thought common to Malachi 3 and Matthew 3.

1. **John's ministry.** Though Matthew (3:1-3) and the other Synoptists quote Isaiah 40, the passage John himself used to explain his ministry (Jn 1:23), the Synoptics parallel Mal 3:1 in defining the preparatory nature of John's ministry.

2. **The expectation of the people.** Luke 3:15 makes quite plain that those who gathered to John were people who expected the Messiah to come, even though their understanding of that may have been awry. It may well have been that the Pharisees and Sadducees (of Mat 3:7) had seen the significance of John's ministry and were anxious to make a show of repentance before Messiah came. Likewise, the people of Malachi's day would have claimed to be living in hope of the Messiah's advent, hence the ironic subordinate clauses of 3:1, 'you are seeking' and 'whom you desire' (NIV).

**But.** There is, as it were, an implicit ‘but’ in the flow of each argument. In both Malachi’s and John’s preaching the argument proceeds thus: ‘All right, you say you want the Messiah to come. Well, first of all, another messenger will come to prepare the way, John the Baptist. And then Messiah will come. **But** be warned, it will not be comfortable’. ‘Who can endure the day of His coming?’ (Mal 3:2). His purpose in coming is judicial. According to Malachi he will condemn by testifying against those- ‘who do not fear the Lord Almighty’. (A description we presume to be a catch-all for what precedes it in 3:5). And in relation to those he has purposed to save, purification, involving a kind of judgement, separating the dross from that which is valued and destroying the former, will be achieved via the uncomfortable, but necessary experience of the crucible (3:2-4). The reference is to the means of purging in the hard school of life in Christ, overseen by Jesus our Refiner. It is a process by which the dross, worthy of his judgement, is removed.

This same judicial thrust is evident in Mat 3:7-12: ‘Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?’, ‘The axe is already at the root of the trees’, ‘unquenchable fire’, and even the ‘winnowing fork’ image all speak of Christ’s office as Judge.

Yet in both Malachi and Matthew enough is said to make plain that the ultimate purpose of all of this judging, which is condemnatory and purifying, is the creation of a body of true worshippers (Mal 3:3-4), a harvest of good grain (Mat 3:12).

### **Luke 12:49 and 50**

This contention, that the ministry of Christ foreseen in Matthew 3 should be understood in the light of Malachi 3 gains further support from Luke 12:49 and 50. In verse 49, our Lord’s solemn words indicate his own conviction that his ministry has this judicial aspect, and here he too uses the language of ‘fire’. In verse 50 he interposes the thought that he has a baptism to undergo; and surely the choice of language is interesting. It fits our contention perfectly. Our Lord has come to judge, to bring fire, to baptise with fire. The word is not there in verse 49, but the concept is, and prompts the baptismal language of verse 50.<sup>3</sup>

### **Baptism with the Spirit and Suffering**

We would suggest that these links of context and content and these verses in Luke 12 demand that Matthew 3 and the ministry of Christ taught there be understood in the light of Malachi 3 and the ministry of Christ projected there.

If that is accepted, then no matter how we understand baptism ‘with the Holy Spirit and with fire’, as one activity or two, there are two options open to us. Either:

1. The prediction of Christ’s baptising with the Spirit (with or without fire) is quite distinct from the passage’s general thrust of warning to these Pharisees and Sadducees, or
2. Christ’s baptising with the Spirit is allied to his role as Judge, and more particularly and specifically as purifier and refiner of his people.

Against the former option we have to note that neither the immediate context nor earlier revelation can have been of any help to John's hearers in understanding his expression 'baptise ... with the Spirit'. In favour of the latter option is the established link between the idea of baptism and purification.

Now, of course, option ii) need cause no problem to either of the most popular Reformed views of baptism with the Spirit. Whether at the point of regeneration or subsequently, baptism with the Spirit is seen as relating to the process of Christian growth. What this link does demand is that the individual's experience of Spirit-baptism need not be one of immediate pleasure. It might well be at a time of experiencing the 'crucible' that Christ is baptising with the Spirit. To be sure, the intended purpose of that activity includes blessing; but being baptised with the Spirit may not always be accompanied by 'joy unspeakable'. On the other hand, this link seems to suggest an activity more continuous than regeneration.

The tentative conclusion that we draw is that the promise of Christ's baptising with the Spirit was not meant to make the Pharisees and Sadducees feel comfortable, rather the opposite. Whether or not regeneration or subsequent experiences of blessing are rightly called or comprehended within 'baptism with the Spirit', experiences of suffering as Christ seeks to refine us may well be subsumed under **that** heading. We have to ask, are the regeneration-only or the subsequent-blessing/'joy unspeakable' views big enough?

*Rev Keith R Walker MA is pastor of Borrass Park Evangelical Church, Wrexham*

## References

1. BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, James D G Dunn, SCM, pp.10f
2. Some commentators suggest that this reference to Abraham recurs in 2:15. The verse is difficult both to translate and interpret, however, and other ways of understanding it seem to us more likely.
3. Though we have not done so here, it is possible to pursue this whole approach through an exposition of Luke 12:49-53 linked with Matthew 10:32-39.

---

*Though a man has a precious and rare jewel, yet if he know not the value thereof, nor whereof it served, he were neither the better nor richer of a straw. Even so though we read the scripture, and babble of it ever so much, yet if we know not the use of it, and whereof it was given, and what is therein to be sought, it profits us nothing at all. It is not enough, therefore to read and talk of it only, but we must also desire God, day and night, instantly, to open our eyes, and to make us understand the medicine of the scripture, every man to his own sores. Unless we intend to be idle disputers, and brawlers about vain words, ever gnawing upon the bitter bark without, and never attaining unto the sweet pith within; and persecuting one another in defending of wicked imaginations, and phantasies of our own invention.*

William Tyndale

Preface to the translation of the Pentateuch 1520

---

---

# Scripture: the Current Debate

---

A review article of

**Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon**, editors D A Carson and J D Woodbridge  
468 pp IVP £9.95 pbk

---

*Austin Walker*

---

This volume is a companion to **Scripture and Truth** published in 1983. Together they constitute an important contribution to the current debate about Scripture. They should, say the editors, be taken as a whole. This review will concentrate on the second volume.

The preface makes it plain that each of the contributors is writing within the evangelical tradition regarding the authority and infallibility of the Bible. However their concern is not simply to republish the familiar arguments but to defend, examine and rearticulate the evangelical doctrine of Scripture as new questions are raised. The treatment is selective, addressing the questions of the moment yet at the same time trying to work towards a responsible doctrine of Scripture. So for example if you read ch.4 on the problems of harmonisation and hope to find all your problems solved you will be disappointed. It is dealing with issues and with methods and must of necessity be selective.

There are nine different contributions of varying length and readability. Smooth reading is virtually impossible because of the different styles. However the book does not have to be read from cover to cover and can be used as a reference book. These volumes are not popular reading and are intended for leaders (if the IVP advertising blurb is to be followed). I do not wish to turn anyone away from reading them however because they deal with important and relevant issues which thoughtful Christians will have pondered, e.g. How do we know that the biblical canon is only 66 books? Why are there apparently contradictory statements in parallel biblical accounts? Does the Bible contain different kinds of truth? How do we come to believe that the Bible really is the word of God? These questions are not new of course but they have to be wrestled with by each generation of Christians. With this in mind we ought to be grateful that Messrs Carson, Woodbridge and others have blazed a trail for us to follow.

This review article will look at each of the nine contributions, pick out some of the main points and attempt to assess the importance and usefulness of each.

Chapter 1 is by D A Carson. It is entitled **Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture**. Here the reader will find a valuable birds-eye view of the ground.

This chapter should be read before you tackle any section in either volume because it contains the rationale for the whole undertaking. He points out that while evangelicalism is growing it is fragmented and the doctrine of Scripture

is one area where fragmentation is taking place. The crisis of authority in the Western world is correctly identified as an 'epistemological abyss'. He also draws attention to the changing mood within Catholicism as liberalism gains a larger foothold so that no-one is quite sure which parts of Scripture are actually God's truth.

He outlines eight recent developments:

1. Revisionist Historiography
2. Focus on the Phenomena of the Bible
3. Debates over Various Terms
4. Uncritical Attitudes toward Literary and Other Tools
5. Sensitivity to 'Propositions' and 'Literary Genre'
6. The New Hermeneutic and Epistemology
7. Discounting of the Concursive Theory
8. The Diminishing Authority of the Scriptures in the Churches

Most of these are taken up by the contributors to the two volumes. His assessment is in our opinion well-balanced. He is critical for example of those who suggest Hodge and Warfield 'invented' the modern view of inerrancy, of those who have a naive confidence in certain critical tools, of the new hermeneutic that confuses truth and meaning, of the new authoritarianism in charismatic circles and the ways in which the authority of Scripture is sometimes avoided even within professing evangelicalism. On the other hand he criticises evangelicals for knowing too little about the history of doctrine, for tending to use inerrancy to provide short cuts and avoid facing difficulties in interpreting Scripture, for being slow to use literary tools properly and to allow for literary genre in their handling of the Word of God.

The last section is the most important. He says, 'to our shame we have hungered to be masters of the Word much more than we have hungered to be mastered by it'.<sup>1</sup> His plea needs to be consistently heeded. It is a call for repentance and faith in learning and obeying God's Word. As Packer reminded us some years ago, 'It is not enough to fight and win the battle for biblical inerrancy if we are then going to lose the battle for understanding the Bible and so for living under its authority.'<sup>2</sup>

Kevin J Vanhoozer says, 'A thoroughgoing acknowledgement of Scripture's diverse forms better helps us to understand the humanity of Scripture, without surrendering the notion of divine authorship. God used linguistic and literary convention in order to communicate with human beings. The diverse literary forms, far from being a weakness of Scripture, ensure a rich communication and are actually one of Scripture's perfections.'<sup>3</sup> Ch 2 **The Semantics of Biblical Literature** forces us to look at the 'literary pluralism' in the Bible. Inspiration does not mean that there is a blandness about the literary forms and language of God's Word. Vanhoozer points out that 'propositional revelation' has tended to be seen only in intellectual terms failing to realise that God addresses the whole man and not just his mind. (We wonder if the charismatic movement is not, in part, a reaction to this tendency. Or again is this one of the reasons why Western Christianity appeals more to the educated person?) He proposes that we need to appreciate the power and purpose of the

Scripture's diverse language. He adopts a definition of 'propositional revelation' as matters that God has propounded for our consideration, not just assertions but also warnings, commandments, prayers, questions etc.

Though Vanhoozer is hard to read when dealing with Wittgenstein and company his contribution is an important one. It brings us to appreciate the rich variety of God's Word and to guard against an unhealthy intellectualism. Furthermore if we are to answer James Barr's criticism that evangelicals are so preoccupied with the truth that we do not allow Scripture to be what it is then this essay can help us. It will make us more aware of the multi-faceted authority of Scripture **and** the multi-faceted response it requires of us.

Chapters 3 and 4 by Moises Silva and Craig L Bomberg discuss the problems of historical reconstruction in NT criticism and the limits and legitimacy of harmonisation respectively. The material covered by them is very limited in scope but both of them are concerned with facing fearlessly **historical questions and harmonisation problems**. Silva points out that the Scriptures are not complete historical books. This does not mean that they are false however. E.g. the information in Acts 12 about Herod Agrippa is not sufficient for the modern historian but is adequate for the purposes of Acts. However I am not convinced about Silva's approach to the question of reconstructing first-century Pharisaism. It appears to me he may be allowing too much to extra-biblical sources for an accurate picture of Pharisaism thus unwittingly undermining the authority of Christ's assessment.

Blomberg argues that harmonisation is a legitimate exercise and proposes eight types of resolution to explain apparent discrepancies. He applies these to Scripture and to non-biblical material. He selects a number of problem passages. Many readers will be surprised to find that Mat 17:27 is not considered a miracle but overall he provides a necessary corrective to the tendency to make inerrancy a tool to produce contrived, artificial harmonisation. English readers will be interested to note his criticisms of J W Wenham's 'Easter Enigma'.<sup>4</sup> Blomberg is more ready to use some of the newer branches of Gospel study, source, form and redaction criticism to reconcile apparent contradictions. Much more work is needed before one can accurately assess the usefulness and significance of his approach.

Ch 5 is entitled perhaps a little misleadingly 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior' and is by Douglas Moo. It deals with the vexed question of the **NT use of the OT**. The question of 'Sensus Plenior' (a deeper meaning intended by God but not the human author) is considered in only 4 pages. In the earlier volume Silva deals with the textual questions arising from the NT use of the OT. Moo here deals with **the meaning** of the NT. Just why do NT writers either modify or appear to read into the text other meanings? He gives a brief historical review showing how the question is part of a bigger issue, namely the relationship between the two testaments. He rejects the allegorical approach as did Calvin and Luther and proposes a canonical approach. He adds however that there is no one formula which encompasses all uses. By a canonical approach he means that a biblical text can be interpreted in the light of the

whole, i.e. a redemptive historical framework. In this way we can see the validity of an added and deeper meaning as revelation unfolds. He is hesitant about adopting Raymond Brown's 'sensus plenior' approach. He also has some interesting comments about the meaning of fulfilment language, *pleroo* in particular.

John M Frame writes in ch 6 about **The Spirit and the Scriptures**. This is an important essay because it covers a neglected aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. His concern is to examine and clarify the role of the Spirit in our coming to believe that the Scriptures are the authoritative Word of God. He points out that there is no 'uniform' text in the Bible but a richness, fullness and clarity that is the result of the Spirit's work in different human authors. He takes us back to Calvin and his contribution to the understanding of the internal testimony of the Spirit, though he is not uncritical of Calvin.

Frame looks at three areas where orthodoxy is called into question — the sovereignty of the Spirit's witness, the objects of the witness and the rationality of the witness. In the first he shows the uniqueness of the Spirit's testimony, for, he claims, no experience offers a more profound closeness with God. (Surely an area worthy of further reflection in the light of contrary claims.) He is critical of modern theology, especially Barth who merges inspiration and internal testimony. The idea that the Spirit can use an erroneous text is not foreign to Barth but it is foreign to God who binds himself to us in his truthfulness. In considering the second area Frame finds Berkouwer an unreliable guide in his book 'Holy Scripture' because he drives a wedge between the authority and the message of the Bible. Regarding the third area, the rationality of the witness, he discusses the role of rational arguments and the work of the Spirit. This is of course important in apologetics. Frame shows that it is not a case of either/or, but rather the Spirit changes our sinful hearts so that we come to acknowledge what is rationally warranted by the Scriptures.

John D Woodbridge's essay is the **one historical essay** in the volume. Ch 7 is called 'Some Misconceptions of the Impact of the "Enlightenment" on the Doctrine of Scripture'. He carefully examines the revisionist position propounded by Rogers, McKim, Vawter, Marsden and Ramm that the inerrancy doctrine is comparatively new and is the result of Protestant scholastics like Turretin. Some of these writers say that the Westminster Confession does not teach or imply inerrancy. Woodbridge seeks to show that the central tradition of the church has always been inspiration and inerrancy. His essay is helpful because it shows their case is far from proven. His point is important for our churches who are easily brow-beaten because of ignorance of the real facts. The innovators are the moderns who concede too much to higher criticism and misread history.

The essay in ch 8 **The Authority of Scripture in Karl Barth** by Geoffrey Bromiley I found to be the most disappointing contribution. Presumably it was included because of Barth's influence in 20th century theology. From that point of view it does provide a useful summary containing over one hundred quotations from Barth. Bromiley does assess the strengths and weaknesses of

Barth but one is left with the impression that it is all rather academic. However we must surely remember that though Barth wanted to uphold the Bible's authority he was not known for his evangelicalism.

The final essay is the one which seeks to be the most comprehensive. It is the longest and contains the most footnotes (398 in all!). David G Dunbar writes on **The Biblical Canon**. He points out that it is 30 years since an evangelical produced a comprehensive treatment of the historical and theological issues involved. (In that connection I find it a little strange that there is no reference to M G Kline's 'Covenant and Canon'.) Basically Dunbar suggests that the idea of canon arises now that the process of revelation is complete or at least in abeyance for the present.<sup>5</sup> He examines the process by which both the OT and NT were recognised and rejects the notion that it was a church decision (the historical critical approach). Rather Scripture is self-authenticating and thus its authority does not depend on whether it is recognised by God's people or not. The value of the book is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of 80 pages of notes and indices — persons and subjects as well as biblical references.

I have not set out in this review to interact with all that has been said. Rather I have aimed to point out what I consider to be the most significant contributions. We need someone to give us a lead who is not afraid to ask tough questions and give us some answers even if we disagree. Some doubtless will be suspicious — the openness to various forms of biblical criticism may cause some to wonder if this is representative of evangelicalism. Still others may be suspicious because the contributors come from the other side of the pond! At least the first volume contains two English contributions!

Yet we cannot simply reassert the old paths. The contributors are not seeking to be innovators moving away from the central teachings of evangelicalism. Rightly they are critical of exponents of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy but also of evangelicalism where it has been slow to respond or responded inadequately. Better understanding is not gained by turning out old clichés. We would all like to sit back comfortably and not have to grapple with these issues. What is at stake is our integrity as evangelical Christians. We shall be sharpened by debate and interaction realising that our understanding of the truth is not final or complete. This series of essays should help us to see the issues and sharpen our thinking. Above all we want to be able to listen to the living and abiding Word of God, to be better interpreters of it and better Christians as a result.

*Austin R Walker BA, BD is the pastor of Crawley Reformed Baptist Church*

## References

1. p.47
2. p.36, J I Packer, UNDER GOD'S WORD, Lakeland
3. p.79
4. p.394, footnote 124
5. p.301

---

# ERCDOM and ARCIC II: A Brief Survey

---

*Eryl Davies*

---

Do you know what the letters **ERCDOM** refer to? They denote the **Evangelical Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977—1984** and a report of its work, edited by Basil Meeking and John Stott, was published by Paternoster in 1986.

You may be surprised that such a dialogue, particularly on mission, ever took place at all. ERCDOM involved three main conferences, at Venice in 1977, Cambridge in 1982 and Laudevenne in France in 1984. These details of the conferences need to be appreciated:

The Evangelical participants included John Stott, Peter Savage, Martin Goldsmith, David Wells, Harvie Conn and Peter Beyerhaus. They were not official representatives of any church or group but came from a wide spectrum of evangelical life as either theologians or missiologists from different parts of the world.

The RC participants were chosen by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Both Evangelicals and RCS have devoted considerable attention to the subject of evangelism since 1974. For Evangelicals an important milestone was the International Congress on World Evangelization in Switzerland in July 1974 with its now famous 'Lausanne Covenant'. Later the same year the Third General Assembly of the RC Synod of Bishops studied the subject, then Pope Paul VI issued his exhortation, 'Evangelization in the Modern Word' in December 1975.

Dialogue can assume, of course, different forms as well as serving different purposes. ERCDOM for example, was **not** committed to organic unity; it was rather, 'a search for such common ground as might be discovered between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics which harm our witness to the gospel, contradict our Lord's prayer for the unity of his followers, and need if possible to be overcome' (p.10).

The ERCDOM Report is **not** an agreed statement but a record of ideas shared in the three conferences. It is honest and, at times, detailed in indicating areas of disagreement as well as of agreement.

There are seven sections in the Report and these can be summarised briefly.

In *Section 1*, the subject is **Revelation and Authority**, pp.14-26. We are not surprised to learn that the participants deemed the discussion of this subject essential and urgent because of the Reformation 'formal' principle, namely, *Sola Scriptura* and because of its greater relevance to mission. Important areas

of disagreement emerged, including the process of interpreting the Bible and also submission to the Bible.

**The Nature of Mission**, pp.29-35, is the theme of *Section 2*. Here again, long-standing tensions exist between both sides but it was felt that the Lausanne Covenant and Paul VI's exhortation, 'supplied some evidence of growing convergence in our understanding of mission', p.29. Vatican II defined the Church for RCs as 'the sacrament of salvation', the sign and promise of redemption to each and every person. For them, 'mission' includes not only evangelisation but also 'the service of human need and the building up and expression of fellowship in the Church', p.30. In addition to questions such as the basis, authority and initiative of Mission, discussion touched upon socio-political involvement as well as God's work outside the Church. The latter 'is a question of major missiological importance', p.34. Roman Catholics are more optimistic in believing that most people will be saved but the Evangelicals rightly argued that this view 'has no explicit biblical justification', p.35.

*Section 3* concerns **The Gospel of Salvation**, pp.39-52. The word 'gospel' means different things for both sides. 'For Evangelicals it is the message of deliverance from sin, death and condemnation ... for Roman Catholics the gospel centres in the person, message and gracious activity of Christ. His life, death and resurrection are the foundation of the Church, and the Church carries the living gospel to the world. The Church is a real sacrament of the gospel', pp.43-4. The crucial question of the relationship between the gospel and the Church highlights the deep doctrinal divisions which exist between the two sides. For example, 'it is in the context of salvation that Evangelicals have the greatest difficulty with Mariology', p.49.

**Our Response in the Holy Spirit to the Gospel** is the theme of *Section 4*, pp.55-62, and once again basic disagreement emerges here, this time concerning baptismal regeneration, church membership, proselytisation and the sacraments.

*Section 5* deals with **The Church and the Gospel**, pp.65-69, and while these 'belong indissolubly together' yet again there are differences in understanding and definition. Concerning **The Gospel and Culture** in *Section 6*, pp.73-78, it is acknowledged that Evangelicals and RCs 'start from a different background. Evangelicals tend to stress the discontinuity and Roman Catholics the continuity between man unredeemed and man redeemed ... the Lausanne Covenant declares: because man is God's creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he is fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic', pp.73-4.

Surely, with such deep cleavages concerning major doctrines, there can be no co-operation between the two sides. Well, the ERCDOM participants are more hopeful although they acknowledge that 'divisions continue, even in some doctrines of importance', p.82. *Section 7* therefore is entitled **The Possibilities of Common Witness**, pp.81-92, and claims 'there is therefore between us an initial if incomplete unity'. What can be done together? The Report suggests co-operation in Bible translation/publishing, the use of media, community service, social thought and action, dialogue, informal co-operation in small

groups for prayer etc. but avoiding the Mass.

**ARCIC II: Salvation and the Church** is an agreed statement by the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. It may be helpful if we briefly survey the historical background to ARCIC II.

Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey issued a **Common Declaration** in 1966 aimed at 'a restoration of complete communion of faith and sacramental life' between their two churches. One major decision by these two leaders concerned the creation of ARCIC. It has met in three important stages:

- a) the **Preparatory Commission** in 1967-68
- b) **ARCIC I** in 1970-81
- c) **ARCIC II** which first convened in 1983 after the impetus provided by the Pope's visit to Britain in 1982.

Following the Common Declaration of 1966 there was a further Declaration by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan in 1977. At Canterbury in May 1982 Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie signed another Common Declaration aimed at 'the restoration of full communion' and 'the fulfilment of God's will for the visible unity of all his people'. This organic unity is envisaged as involving:

- a) agreement 'on essential matters where doctrine admits no divergence', **THE FINAL REPORT**, p.38;
- b) a mutually recognised ministry;
- c) councils of bishops and 'a universal primate as servant and focus of visible unity in truth and love', *idem* pp.97-98;
- d) a 'communion of life, worship and mission';
- e) gradual integration 'by stages', **ARCIC I**, p.66;
- f) union with other churches as well. The 1982 Common Declaration affirms, 'Our aim is not limited to the union of our two Communion alone, but rather extends to the fulfilment of God's will for the visible unity of all his people'.

The Church of Ireland cautiously welcomed the **FINAL REPORT OF ARCIC I** but with some important reservations. For example, it rejects Papal infallibility and then Mariology as 'lacking sufficient support in Scripture'. Further discussions have continued for over 25 years, too, between the Orthodox and Anglican Churches. The culmination of these discussions was the **Dublin Agreed Statement 1984**, its predecessor being the **Moscow Agreed Statement** of 1976. The Dublin Statement is published by SPCK under the title, **ANGLICAN-ORTHODOX DIALOGUE** and contains 'important agreements on the mystery of the Church, the Trinity, prayer and holiness, worship and tradition' as well as suggesting ways of reconciling long-standing differences.

ARCIC II was published in February 1987 and represents 'the first published work of the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. It represents over three years' study of the doctrine of justification begun in Venice (1983), continued in Durham (1984) and Graymoor, New York State (1985) and now completed at Llandaff, Cardiff ... Justification is considered in the context of the doctrine of salvation as a whole, which in turn involves

discussion of the role of the church in Christ's saving work.'

Membership of the Commission is international; it also includes three lay people, two of whom are women and the Commission has a higher proportion of Anglicans of an evangelical emphasis than did ARCIC I.

The General Synod of the Church of England immediately welcomed ARCIC II in February 1987 and the document has received generally warm approval from the secular and religious press. *The Times* (24 Jan 87) welcomed it, for example, emphasising that the Reformation was 'only a misunderstanding about certain words' and that ARCIC II 'Should be enough to bury the Reformation's principal theological hatchet, once and for all.' A more penetrating and biblical response was made by the Rev Dr David Samuel in the *Church of England Newspaper* (30 Jan 87); 'ARCIC II obscures that message of salvation which is at the heart of the gospel ... the biblical teaching is compromised'. Certainly the definitions provided by ARCIC II of both justification and sanctification are misleading and inadequate. 'If justification is confused with regeneration or sanctification,' wrote John Murray, 'then the door is opened for the perversion of the gospel at its centre. Justification is still the article of the standing or falling church.' (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, p.121).

However, the confusion amongst some evangelical Anglicans and others concerning the orthodoxy and value of ARCIC II continues. The editorial of *Evangel* (Summer 87, p.1) states that ARCIC II 'has already been welcomed by many evangelicals, who have said that, in the crucial area of justification, the Roman Catholics now agree with the rest of us.'

In the same issue of *Evangel*, five views of ARCIC II are published. Tim Bradshaw of Trinity College, Bristol, provides the context for an understanding of ARCIC II but warns that 'Modern Catholic thought, using biblical categories subtly to re-interpret Catholic theology, has proved a googly which, it seems, Anglican evangelicals are unable to deal with' (p.8). An evangelical member of the ARCIC II Commission, the Rev Julian Charley has no hesitation in accepting the Report but, by contrast, the Rev Roger Beckwith argues, 'There was misunderstanding in the Reformation period, as the Commission says; but it was not so much a misunderstanding of each other as a misunderstanding of the New Testament on the part of Trent ... The theory of mutual misunderstanding is of particular importance to Roman Catholics, because it allows them to correct the mistakes of the past, without having to abandon the claim that the Church is infallible' (p.13).

These penetrating observations are confirmed by the Rev Hywel Jones of London who concludes his detailed, well-argued article with the words, 'this Report sounds the death knell for justification by faith as Luther, Calvin and more importantly the Bible teach it' (p.20). Earlier he insists that ARCIC II 'dislodges justification by faith from its prime position, hermeneutically and theologically, and deprives it of its clear and exclusive message to sinners' (p.19). I share his difficulty in being unable to 'understand how evangelical Anglicans can be even generally content with it' (p.15).

# Nettleton and Finney

---

## *John Carrick*

---

If I had to select a decade which is one of the most instructive that we could consider in church history, then I would choose the 1830s. That period saw the rise of the Oxford Movement, with John Henry Newman, Pusey and Keble. Then there was the beginning of the Plymouth Brethren with J N Darby as the founder. But equally interesting, if we turn to the United States of America we find that a very significant controversy developed there in the 1830s. I refer to what is known as the **New Measures** controversy which emerged in 1831 or 1832 and involved two great leaders, Asahel Nettleton and Charles Finney.

### **Charles Finney**

Now Charles Grandison Finney has been called the 'Father of Modern Evangelism' and there can be no doubt that he has had a tremendous influence upon evangelicalism in the United States and also in this land. In many ways his descendants are D L Moody, Billy Sunday, R A Torrey and Dr Billy Graham.

Charles Finney was born in the state of Connecticut in 1792. He was not born into a Christian family nor did he have a Christian upbringing. He was trained to be a lawyer. He had a very sharp, precise and analytical mind. Indeed, his approach to Christian things was distinctly sceptical. There was almost a proverb in the town where he lived that if you could convert Finney then you had a revival on your hands! However, his studies in the law brought him into contact with mention of the law of Moses and in this remarkable way he got hold of a Bible and began to read the law of Moses and to study the whole of the Bible. His fiancée was praying for him and that is how he became a Christian. But it is interesting to note that when he was training as a lawyer he himself says that he was almost as 'ignorant of true religion as a heathen'. He was converted in 1821, when he was 29 years of age. Within two years he abandoned his legal career and began to itinerate as a preaching evangelist.

### **Theology**

On a superficial level he adopted some very strange views. For instance, he held that for someone to drink tea or coffee was a sin. He regarded the wearing of ribbons as sin. Attending parties was a sin. He had a distinctly legalistic approach to many things. He even said that if someone leaves a bookmark in their Bible that simply shows that they are reading it as a perfunctory duty, their heart is not in it. In many ways he was himself a strange man, a man of striking appearance, of great charisma, of poise and assurance.

In matters of theology he distinctly repudiated Calvinism and contended that one of his main aims in life was to wage war on the strongholds of Calvinism in

his day. But he was not really an Arminian either, he was in fact a nineteenth century Pelagian. That is to say, he had a view of fallen man that was highly optimistic, which is the very opposite of the view of biblical writers. The Bible declares men to be sinners in the sight of God, it teaches total depravity, that man is fallen in every area of his life and being. He dismissed the Westminster Confession as being 'contrary to reason', and with it the great Calvinistic doctrines we find there.

Finney was a strong believer in human ability in the realm of spiritual things, in the sight of God. Where the emphasis of the Bible is that men cannot do those things which God requires of them, the view of Charles Finney was that if God commands men to do something, they must be able to do that thing. If I 'ought' to do something, then I 'can' do it. This is the way he argued.

Not only was he a strong believer in human ability he was also a strong believer in human reason, man's rational faculties. These two things often go together. It determined Finney's approach to theology altogether. He would consider a particular doctrine, let us say the imputation of Adam's sin. He would ask himself, does this accord with human reason? Is this acceptable to man's mind, to his intellect? If it is not, then he would dismiss it. He would conclude

that this is not what the Bible teaches. The great Charles Hodge regarded Charles Finney's faith as a philosophy, as the rational principle at work. It is man's intellect governing what he believes instead of humbly accepting the revelation which God has given to us and believing that. What man's mind is able to work out determines what he is able to accept and believe.

He did not hold to man's total depravity, nor that the sin of Adam is imputed or reckoned to the account of the whole human race. Then the atonement as a satisfaction made for sins and the inward, efficacious work of the Holy Spirit regenerating the sinner in a way which the unaided individual cannot, these too were rejected as 'contrary to reason' by Finney.

His view of sin is important. Sin, he said, lies in the actions of men. It does not lie in their constitution, nor in their nature nor their dispositions. That is why we say that he rejected total depravity. Sin does not begin in the heart but in the will. It is altogether a diluted doctrine of sin. And it is not the doctrine of the Bible. His view of sin was to have profound repercussions in terms of his actual practice, as we shall see.

Finney did not believe that children were born into the world with an inherited, depraved and corrupt nature. As far as he was concerned, they were neutral in respect of spiritual things. They had no moral nature until they actually sinned. The emphasis is not upon the heart and the nature but rather upon man's deliberate, wilful actions in the sight of God.

It is to be expected that what he believed about regeneration coheres with his whole system. 'Regeneration', he wrote, 'consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference.' The Bible teaches that men are impotent, dead in their sins, utterly helpless to effect their own spiritual change. But for Finney the sinner can change his spiritual choice without the

efficacious work of the Holy Spirit. A diluted doctrine of sin leads to a false view of regeneration.

So what we have in Finney is a man-centred theology. He saw man as being at the centre of the universe. Man, not God. Now I would contend that the spirit of the age in the 1830s, especially in America, was a significant factor in this situation. There was an emphasis on democratic principles and on man expressing his own will by exercising his vote. The sovereignty of man is an important concept in a democracy and this affected the way in which Finney thought. Men electing to choose God rather than God electing to choose men. This was the way in which men were thinking and Charles Finney was influenced by that climate of thought.

## **Methods**

In the late 1920s Finney began to introduce what became known as the 'New Measures'. The principle of novelty was important to him. 'Without new methods it is impossible that the church should succeed in gaining the attention of the world to the subject of religion.'<sup>2</sup> In other words, if we are going to interest men outside we must introduce novelties and excitement, we must startle them in some way.

First of all, he and his followers would use what was in fact coarse or even abusive language. It may seem astonishing but they were not afraid to denounce in the strongest terms, even by name, their opponents or those who resisted their particular views. They would pray for people by name and give them a 'dressing down' by name in the presence of the living God. There is an interesting, and true story which shows how this backfired somewhat on Finney in later years. He had become the president of Oberlin College and it was his practice to pray in public for each member of the faculty by name and occasionally he resorted to criticism of them in prayer. On this particular occasion he did just that. But after he had prayed a younger member of the faculty asked if he too might pray and Finney granted him permission. So he prayed and mentioned Finney by name and prayed specifically that the Lord would give him a spirit of greater meekness and charity. After this, we find, Finney's prayers for others by name were somewhat shorter. The medicine had its effect!

**By far the most important** of these New Measures was the introduction of what was known as the 'anxious seat'. Basically it was a pew or bench at the front of the church and at the end of his evangelistic preaching he would appeal to sinners to come forward publicly and sit in the anxious seat. They would make this open, public stand. Now I want to emphasise that this had been completely unknown in the Great Awakening of the previous century. You will be well aware that under Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and the Tennents thousands were converted but there was no invitation system, no appeals to come forward. Men, women and young people, they were saved where they were. Hearing the word they were convicted of their sin. They

would go home and go to their closets and in prayer they would find the Saviour. The anxious seat was a novelty.

So why did Finney introduce it? To use his own words, he wanted to 'bring sinners to a stand'. 'Preach to him ... but bring him to the test, call on him to do one thing, to take one step that shall identify him with the people of God. Say to him, there is the anxious seat, if he is not willing to do so small a thing as that, then he is not willing to do anything.'<sup>3</sup> This is the way Finney reasoned. Sinners should be preached to but they should also be constrained publicly to confess the Saviour and openly to acknowledge him there at the front of the church.

### **Decisionism**

The reason why the New Measures controversy is so important for us today is because it is the origin of decisionism. This has become so popular, so much part and parcel of the modern evangelical scene, that we tend to forget that it is only about 150 years old. In decisionism the emphasis is on man's will. Tremendous pressure is put upon him to affect his will rather than seeking a change of his heart. The biblical order is that the word of God must appeal to the mind and then through the mind it must reach the heart and then through the heart it must reach the will. But Finney, and his followers in later generations, tended to by-pass the mind and the heart and to concentrate upon the will, pressurising men to commit themselves publicly by coming forward and sitting in the anxious seat.

When these measures were first introduced the best men in America were strongly critical of them on theological grounds. They saw a double danger in this approach. Those that come to the front are led to believe that they are now 'born again'. And they may be, or they may be deluded in this assumption. Those who **do not** come to the front are led to believe that they have rebelled against God, Finney put it as strongly as that. There is here the danger of a double delusion. Those who come forward and those who do not come forward are both liable to be deluded about their true spiritual condition. In 1832 William Sprague published his 'Lectures on Revival'. At the back of that excellent book there is a series of letters written by some of the most eminent ministers in New England around the years 1831-2.

In many ways it is one of the best features of the book. They are responding to the New Measures and make it very clear that they regarded the anxious seat as a dangerous innovation. They were not contending that the Lord cannot use this. But they did draw attention to its inherent dangers. What is also significant is what Finney himself actually said in later years concerning those that had flocked forward to the anxious seat, 'The great body of them are a disgrace to religion.'<sup>4</sup> This was his own verdict and it was the very charge the critics of these measures had levelled against them in the first place.

It was not only his theological opponents who were disappointed with the apparent fruits of his evangelism. James Boyle was a friend and fellow-labourer of Finney and his criticism is of particular interest. This is what he wrote to Finney, not years afterwards but just three months after he had left,

'I have re-visited many of these fields (where we laboured) and groaned in spirit to see the sad, frigid, casual and contentious state into which the churches had fallen.'<sup>5</sup>

Robert Louis Dabney, one of America's greatest theologians, was highly critical of the system. In later years he called it, 'the grand peril and curse of American Protestantism'.<sup>6</sup> Because it involved a 'criminal recklessness'<sup>7</sup> he called it 'a spurious revivalism'.<sup>8</sup>

## **Revival**

In 1835 Finney published his own '**Lectures on Revival**'. Some 12,000 copies sold within a few months, something quite astonishing. But what Finney had to say was really very dangerous. 'Religion is the work of man.'<sup>9</sup> 'A revival is not a miracle.'<sup>10</sup> 'A revival is the result of the right use of the appropriate means.'<sup>11</sup> Notice what he is expressing here. Provided you use the right methods then you will have a revival. It is a mechanical view of revival and there have been many who have sought to follow Finney's advice. They have used the means and adopted the methods but they have not found that the revival came. 'One of Finney's cardinal errors', said Dr Lloyd-Jones, 'was to confuse an evangelistic campaign and a revival, and to forget that the latter is something that is always given in the sovereignty of God.'<sup>12</sup>

Finney's position is a far cry from that of the great man of God, Jonathan Edwards. He said that revival is 'an outpouring of the Spirit of God' which involves 'remarkable effusions at special seasons of mercy', when God sovereignly intervenes, comes down and blesses his people. It was W G McGloughlin who contrasted Edwards and Finney in these terms: 'One saw God as the centre of the universe, the other saw man. One believed that revivals were "prayed down", the other that they were "worked up".'<sup>13</sup>

## **Asahel Nettleton**

It is Edwards who is our link with Asahel Nettleton. Nettleton was a spiritual grandchild of the towering intellect and spirituality of Jonathan Edwards. He was born in 1783. As a young man he was decent, upright and moral. He had been baptised as a child and had learned the Ten Commandments. He knew his catechism, but he was not converted. He was virtuous but was without God, as many people are. He was destined to become a farmer so far as his parents were concerned and as a young man this was his own intention.

One evening he was out in the fields when he saw the sun setting over the horizon. It reminded him that one day his own life would set and fade into the darkness of another world. This began to awaken him and he experienced a number of such occasions when he was reminded of death and God and eternity. He was converted in 1801 at the age of 18, after having been in the 'Slough of Despond' for many months. He had known the distress of spiritual anxiety and had come through the 'pangs of the new birth'. This experience was to have a profound effect upon his own ministry because it gave him a knowledge of the human heart which was invaluable to him in later years.

Having become a Christian he now began to think about his future. Should he become a farmer? He asked himself, 'What shall I wish I had done thousands and millions of years hence?'<sup>14</sup> Now his eye was upon eternity. He knew he was accountable to God. 'If I might be the means of saving one soul, I should prefer it to all the riches and honours of this world.'<sup>15</sup> His heart was set upon spiritual things. He consecrated himself to the living God and was to become one of the greatest preachers America has ever seen. He decided initially he would devote himself to the cause of foreign missions. At an early age he and a friend made a solemn covenant to avoid 'all entangling alliances', by which they meant marriage, 'and to hold themselves in readiness to go to the heathen whenever God in his providence should prepare the way.'<sup>16</sup> Asahel Nettleton never did marry. He felt it would keep him from serving God as he would like to.

In 1805 Nettleton went to Yale College and stayed four years. At that time the president of the college was Timothy Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards. Dwight published a volume of his theological sermons which went through some forty editions. He was an eminent man even in his own day. When he first went to Yale, ten years before Nettleton arrived, conditions there were deplorable. He found that, 'Wines and liquors were kept in many rooms; intemperance, profanity, gambling and licentiousness were common'.<sup>17</sup> Dwight dealt with the situation by the preaching of the Word of God and some of this theological sermons can still be read today. By this means the situation dramatically improved and was entirely different by the time Nettleton came to Yale.

## **Preaching**

Dwight's opinion of Nettleton was that, 'He will make one of the most useful men this country has ever seen'.<sup>18</sup> And he was proved to be right. Nettleton's theology was Calvinistic to the very core. He believed in the total depravity of man, in the necessity of regeneration, in justification through Christ alone and in the sovereignty of God in salvation. In fact, he believed the things that Finney did not believe.

In 1811 Asahel Nettleton was licensed to preach. He was by now 28. He never settled in one particular place and became an itinerant evangelist. In the first year of his ministry nothing particularly startling occurred. But after that first year, whilst preaching in the church of his life-long friend Bennett Tyler revival began to set in. Wonderful things began to occur and this set the pattern for the ministry which God had for him in the future. Generally speaking, Nettleton restricted himself to New England and to run-down churches which needed building up, what he called the 'waste places'. He would remain in such an area for three or four months. Being unmarried he could easily do this. When he came to a particular place he would analyse the situation and try to see what the need was. He would then prescribe the remedy. Knowing what points needed to be made, he would then minister the Word of God over the period of his stay.

This is how his biographer, John F Thornbury, describes what Nettleton and his preaching must have been like:

‘Slowly and deliberately the preacher steps behind the pulpit. A glow is upon his face as if he, like Moses of old, had been in higher regions talking with his God. He begins to speak in a slow conversational tone, but there is such earnestness and sincerity in his manner that you dare not miss a word. He keeps your eyes glued upon him.

As his message unfolds, he seems to be touched by a fire from the heavenly altar. The theme is noble and vital. It centres about the great realities of God. He talks of the holiness of the Supreme Being, the awful guilt of sinners and the way of salvation through Christ. He pleads with sinners to submit to God with a pathos you’ve never heard before. He speaks to you as though he knew your very thoughts and tells the whole crowd exactly how you feel. The words that pour from the pulpit pierce your heart like a shot from an arrow and stay there, burning inside you. You look around and others are also touched. Some are weeping, others are quietly praying that God will take them up into his arms of love.’<sup>19</sup>

One remarkable feature of his preaching was that it was very searching. It was as if he knew the hearts and minds of men and could read their thoughts. Men felt as if God were speaking to them personally, as if Nettleton were a mind-reader who already knew their sins. There is also in his preaching a great emphasis upon submission. Sinners needed to submit to God and their submission must be immediate and unconditional. There was an urgency about it which lay in the content of the preaching itself. And the Spirit of God used the words of his messages. Here is an example from one of Nettleton’s sermons as he is pleading with sinners:

‘By the mercies of God and by the terrors of His wrath, by the joys of heaven and the pains of hell, by the merits of a Saviour’s blood and by the worth of your immortal souls, I beseech you, lay down the arms of your rebellion, bow and submit to your rightful Sovereign.’<sup>20</sup>

## **Trials**

We turn now to the **three major trials** which Nettleton had to endure during his life. First, in 1818, when he was about 35, there was a serious attack made on his moral integrity. He was openly accused of immorality. The charge was totally untrue, nevertheless it caused him great pain and he wondered how he should handle it. At first a lawsuit was considered but then he and his friends decided against this, feeling the best answer was the purity and consistency of his character. Yet it was a tenacious charge; some ten years later his enemies were still seeking to drag it forward.

Then in 1822, when he was 39, he underwent a serious attack of typhus and almost died. He had been itinerating for some ten years and the Herculean schedule had taken its toll. He was weakened and therefore vulnerable to the attack. He remained bedridden for forty days and faced the prospect of death. But the Lord brought him through and he was raised up for further ministry, although physically he was never the same again. Thornbury says he was a semi-invalid for the remaining twenty-two years of his life.

From 1826 onwards his third trial was the controversy involving the New Measures. Finney and Nettleton were the protagonists. Men looked to Nettleton to defend the cause against these novelties. He maintained that the anxious seat was 'calculated to efface conviction of sin and induce false conversions'.<sup>21</sup> He had little time for what he called 'revivals of modern stamp', in particular those in which Finney was involved. He, like Edwards, believed that a revival was something which only God could give and that he did send at certain times in the history of the Christian church. He held that a revival was a time of crisis, a golden opportunity for sinners to find the Saviour and for the kingdom of God to come with power.

## Ministry

We shall consider now **three aspects** of Nettleton's ministry. First, his methods were not the New Measures. He believed in preaching, counselling and prayer. His preaching was about the character of God, his infinite, eternal holiness, the strictness of his law, the certainty of hell and the necessity for repentance. He believed in doing what is known as a 'law work' for 'by the law is the knowledge of sin'. He desired that men might have an awareness of their sin and be convicted of their sin.

Secondly, the pattern of the Spirit's operations under Nettleton's ministry should be noted, or rather, the pattern which he aimed at with the aid of the Spirit. It was not that he had a stereotyped view of conversion. Nevertheless, he was always looking first for the awakening of the sinner, the arousing of interest and a sense of need, then conviction of sin, of personal sin and rebellion against God. Then following conviction he sought immediate and unconditional submission to God, the peace of God which follows from peace with God. This is what he aimed at and what, by God's grace, he achieved.

Thirdly, the results of Nettleton's labours. It was estimated that some 30,000 people were saved under his ministry, nor were they transient conversions. Dr Francis Wayland commented on the eloquence and effectiveness of his preaching and concluded, 'I suppose no minister of his time was the means of so many conversions'.<sup>22</sup> 'Nettleton', Wayland went on to say, 'would sway an audience as the trees of the forest are moved by a mighty wind'.<sup>23</sup> That wind was nothing other than the power of the Holy Spirit. No wonder he has been regarded as the greatest preacher America had seen since Whitefield.

In later years Nettleton was involved with the Theological Institute of Connecticut. By this time his health was not good and he had to be more careful about his schedule. Yale College was no longer suitable for the production of ministers as it could not be relied upon to train men sound in the faith. When the Institute was set up Nettleton became an occasional instructor of students, having turned down the post of president. Such was his experience of the way the Lord had so wonderfully blessed him that he became regarded there as 'the grand old man of revivalism'. He would often visit the students in their homes and give them pastoral advice. He was greatly beloved and despite his poor health he lived to the age of 61, dying in 1844.

## Lessons from these two men

There is, first, *a vital connection between doctrine and practice*. This pertains in any realm, not least in relation to Christian work. Both these men illustrate this in different ways. Finney's theology was Pelagian. His optimistic view of man's reason and ability meant that it is not in the least surprising that he adopted the New Measures and the anxious seat. The connection reminds us that the real issue behind decisionism is a theological one.

We should notice, secondly, *the danger of rushing people to Christ*. George Whitefield used to speak of 'mushroom converts', which spring up overnight and soon disappear. This undoubtedly happened under Finney's ministry. But although there was an urgency about Nettleton's preaching there was a permanence about what God accomplished through him. The danger is in getting people to make a public stand before they are ready. We must not rush people to Christ before they know the terms of the gospel and are convicted of their sin. We need to bide our time, preaching, praying and waiting on God to give the increase in due season.

Thirdly, we must never forget that *coming to Christ is a spiritual act* not a physical act. This is the mistake of the anxious seat. The act of coming forward is almost understood as being the mark of regeneration. But coming to Christ is inward and private, even mysterious although it may well manifest itself outwardly. Repentance and faith are spiritual experiences.

Nettleton reminds us, fourthly, that *only time will tell whether someone is truly born again*. He was careful and cautious because there is such a thing as a temporary conviction of sin. We must never forget that our Lord, in the parable of the Sower, said that there are some who 'believe for a while'. This is always so but Finney's techniques were almost bound to produce many spurious converts.

We need to re-capture, fifthly, *the concept of the 'pangs of the new birth'*. We do not hear much of this today. We seldom see people in despair over their spiritual state, weeping and prostrated. Rather than extracting a premature commitment from people not yet ready to believe on Christ we ought to be asking why our own ministry is not being marked by the same evidences of conviction as those of former generations.

The ministry of a man like Asahel Nettleton will, sixthly, point clearly to *our own desperate need for genuine revival*. This cannot be worked up, it cannot be organised. We are dependent upon God for revival. Our desperate need is for God to visit us again and to pour out his Spirit in these barren days, to convince men of sin, of righteousness and of judgement to come.

Seventhly and lastly, all this reminds us that *it is not new methods that we should seek after*. It is the old methods, the tried and tested ones of the preaching of God's word and faithful intercession, which we should be employing. As those men of New England put it, it is 'the old foundations'<sup>24</sup> we need to build on, 'the good old paths'<sup>25</sup> we need to tread.

*The Rev John Carrick MA is minister of Cheltenham Evangelical Free Church. This article has been abridged from a lecture first given at Rugby in 1986.*

## References

1. C G Finney, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, 1851, p.411
2. Cited by Paul Cook, FINNEY ON REVIVAL, Puritan Conference Report, 1966, p.10
3. Cited by J F Thornbury, GOD SENT REVIVAL, Evangelical Press, 1977, p.201
4. Cited *ibid.*, p.218
5. Cited by Clive Tyler in THE WAY AHEAD, Carey Publications, 1975, p.65
6. DISCUSSIONS, Vol.3, 1892, pp.563-4
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. FINNEY'S LIFE AND LECTURES, ed. W H Harding, Oliphants, 1943, p.17
10. *Ibid.*, p.20
11. *Ibid.*, p.21
12. CONVERSIONS PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL, IVF, 1959, p.31
13. MODERN REVIVALISM — CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY TO BILLY GRAHAM, NY, 1959, p.11
14. THE LIFE AND LABOUR OF ASAHIEL NETTLETON, Bennett Tyler, Banner of Truth, 1975, p.34
15. *Ibid.*
16. Cited by J F Thornbury, *op.cit.*, p.41
17. Cited *ibid.*, p.36
18. Cited by Bennett Tyler, *op.cit.*, p.41
19. *Op.cit.*, pp.230-1
20. Cited *ibid.*, p.108
21. Cited *ibid.*, p.203
22. Cited *ibid.*, pp.93-4
23. Cited *ibid.*, p.106
24. Letter from Rev Nathan Lord to Dr W B Sprague, Appendix to LECTURES ON REVIVALS, Banner of Truth, 1978, p.114
25. Letter from Rev Henry Davis to Dr Sprague, *ibid.*, p.108

---

*Would that this one Book were in every language, in every land; before the eyes and in the ears and hearts of all men! Scripture without any comment is the sun whence all teachers receive their light.* Luther

*There is scarcely any noble part of knowledge worthy of the mind of man, but from Scripture it may have some direction and light.* Richard Hooker

*I want to know one thing — the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that Book! At any price, give me that book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book.* John Wesley

*I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book upon reason that you can and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a better man.* Abraham Lincoln

---

# Book Reviews

---

## Expository Preaching

*Haddon W Robinson*  
193pp £5.25 IVP

The author of this book makes a strong and convincing case for expository preaching. He gives a definition (page 20), without destroying what he is defining, 'Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.' On the basis of this definition, Robinson develops his thesis that the concept must come from the text, which has to be chosen carefully. It should have an impact on the preacher himself, and one reviewer, at least, will welcome what is said on page 25, 'Distinctions made between "studying the Bible to get a sermon and studying the Bible to feed your own soul" are misleading and false'. The text speaks to the preacher and he becomes captive to the word of God. Ultimately his authority resides in the biblical text, not in himself (page 23). This is an important point, of course, but it should be related to what Motyer says in his helpful 'Forward', 'It is the subjective authority of the call of God exercised in the objective authority of the ministry of the Word'.

Robinson gives helps on how to choose and study a text (stages 1 and 2), how to discover the exegetical idea (stage 3), and how to analyse it (stage 4). The exegetical idea should be submitted to tests in form of questions,

'What does this mean?', 'Is it true?', and 'What difference does it make?' This process should enable the preacher to say briefly (in one sentence!), what the message should be, and enable him to develop the homiletical idea (stage 5). Consequently, it will be possible for a true herald of God to work out the sermon's purpose (stages 6 and 7), have an outline (stage 8), which can be filled in (stage 9). Lastly (stage 10), the author deals with the introduction of a sermon and its conclusion.

After dealing with the ten stages the author has two chapters, one on 'The Dress of Thoughts' and another on 'How To Preach So People Will Listen'. It could be suggested that the Holy Spirit, mentioned in the definition, does not have the prominence he deserves and demands in the last chapter.

Throughout the book there are exercises to work on, with answers at the end. Also included are appendices, selected bibliographies and indexes. It is a great help to have a summary of the development at the beginning of each chapter. It is true that the bibliography is selective, but even then one would expect to see works by such authors as Denis Lane, Jay Adams and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Hundreds of books have been written on preaching, and it is quite a claim to say that this one is 'unique', but it is an excellent work, which can be warmly recommended to all ambassadors for Christ.

*Rev Noel Gibbard MA BD, Cardiff*

---

## Created in God's Image

*Anthony A Hoekema*

*Paternoster/Eerdmans 1986*

*264pp £12.95*

Hoekema is a skilled collator of the views of others who is well able to present, in a lucid fashion, a helpful, practical and reliable evaluation and stimulating syntheses of major dogmatic themes. His most recent work attempts not merely a discussion of the image of God but seeks to offer a comprehensive biblical anthropology. The latter part of the book deals with sin, its origin, spread, nature and restraint. This is helpfully written.

The section on Common Grace is particularly stimulating. Building upon Kuyper and, to some extent, Dooyeweerd, he sets forth a list of positive lessons to be drawn from the doctrine and emphasises that common grace helps account for 'the possibility of civilisation and culture on this earth despite man's fallen condition' (p.200). In a section on The Whole Person he forthrightly rejects trichotomy and dichotomy. Man is a psychosomatic unity. Two particularly useful discussions are those on Freedom and the Self-Image of Man. The latter essay is a powerful rejection of self-esteem and self-love which, nevertheless, emphasises that the Christian believer should have a primarily positive self-image since he is to see himself in the light of God's gracious work of forgiveness and renewal.

But, to the reviewer, the most valuable part of this excellent book is the initial discussion of the Image of God. Hoekema begins by emphasising the need for a Christian answer to perhaps the most urgent question of

the twentieth century, 'What is man?' A Christian anthropology must, he argues, begin with the recognition that man is a created person. As a creature, he is utterly dependent upon God. But there is another side to the paradox: as person he is independent. Thus he is able to make decisions, set goals etc. Man could fall into sin precisely because he was a person and since he is a creature can be saved only by grace. Again, as person, man must believe and has a responsibility in the sanctifying process.

Hoekema accepts the arguments of modern theologians that the image of God is seen in man's dominion and in his being created a social being: male and female. Moreover, he recognises that the unity of man requires us to predicate the image not of some distillation of man but of bodily man. The likeness is both structural and functional. The structural likeness remains after the fall but the functional image is lost and only recaptured in redeemed man both by redemption and as man labours to image Jesus. Indeed, the image is perfectly set forth in Jesus and will be the privilege of the perfected man on the renewed earth. The functions of the image of God in man are three-fold: a human being is to be directed toward God, to his or her fellow man and is to be seen in rulership over nature.

Hoekema emphasises the dynamic character of image bearing in what is a most valuable contribution to the literature on the image of God. It is as satisfying an approach as the present reviewer has come across.

*Rev Stephen Dray MA BD, New Cross, London*

---

## EDITORIAL POLICY

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

### Back Issues Still Available

Issues 2, 4 and 6 (1979-1981) formerly 75p, now 40p

Issues 7, 8, 9 and 10 (1981-1983) formerly £1.25, now 65p

Issues 16, 17 (1986) and 18 (1987) at £1.25

All other issues are out of print.

These prices are POST FREE within the UK.

Overseas orders will be sent Surface Mail. If remitting in currencies other than those drawn in Sterling on a bank with a UK office please add the equivalent of £1 to your total payment to cover exchange costs.

Cheques to be made out to 'BEC'.

---

### Please send orders to:

BEC

113 Victoria Street

ST. ALBANS, AL1 3TJ

UK

---

**ISSN 0144-378X**

*Printed in the UK by Christian Design & Print, Colchester*

---