

# Foundations

**Issue No.24    Spring 1990**

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

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**A Theological Journal  
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Revival and Unity  
Table Fellowship  
Missions in the 80s  
Inter-Faith Dialogue  
No Other Name  
Anglican Evangelicals  
Principles of Worship

# 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.

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# Editorial

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It was encouraging to receive so many expressions of appreciation from readers concerning the last issue of FOUNDATIONS. Several pastors, for example, commented that FOUNDATIONS is the most valuable journal they are receiving at present and they particularly appreciated the mix and brevity of articles in the previous issue. I am happy to report that all copies of Issue 23 were sold by early January. Your continued help in commending the journal to new readers will be a further encouragement to us.

There is plenty to stimulate and challenge readers in this new issue. Alan Gibson contributes an opening article on **Revival and Church Unity** while Robin Dowling provides a fresh and relevant approach to 1 Corinthians 11 in our **Exegesis** piece.

We then have three articles covering aspects of missiology and dialogue. First of all John Wallis reflects on the **Missionary Scene in the 1980's** and then I have written on the intriguing title, **Nineteen-ninety-three!** Thirdly, our major article in this Issue, **No Other Name**, is a theological and a thoroughly biblical answer to the contemporary arguments for inter-religious co-operation. Those who heard Hywel Jones' address on this topic at the 1989 BEC Conference encouraged us to provide it in permanent form as a reference resource and, despite its length, readers will benefit from its message.

The Editor provides a review article on **Dr Runcie and Anglican Evangelicals** and then Neil Richards helpfully looks at distinctive New Testament spirituality in his article on **Worship**. It is a most timely and practical reflection on the current scene.

We trust you will find this issue equally satisfying!

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## Editor's new book!

**TRUTH UNDER ATTACK** is the title of Eryl Davies' new 334 page large paperback, subtitled, *Cults and contemporary religions*.

New religious movements, world-wide, present a very real challenge to Christianity. They are growing apace. Currently they comprise 2.2% of the world population, some 96,000,000, and studies indicate that by the year 2000 they will have as many followers as the Eastern Orthodox Churches. At the same time there is need to help those who are troubled by false teaching to understand what the Bible actually teaches.

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# Revival and the Unity of the Churches

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*Alan Gibson*

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*The theme of the 1990 Carey Ministers' Conference was 'In Search of Revival'. As well as theological and historical papers, this one was concerned with a survey of the contemporary scene in Britain.*

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The link between unity and the outpouring of God's Spirit was expressed by Jewish pilgrims as they sang Psalm 133 on their way to the corporate worship festivals in Jerusalem:

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ... For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.

Both Scripture and Church History will need briefly to be reviewed in order to assess our contemporary situation properly and consider what practical response is appropriate.

## **The Teaching of Scripture**

This must be foundational or we will be in danger of misinterpreting past events and present problems. Both the doctrinal and the biblical-theological perspectives will be useful.

**The Doctrine of the Church** provides three relevant aspects:

**The unity** of the church. All the Biblical metaphors for the universal church reflect this unity, one Flock, one Body, one Temple etc. We must notice, however, that unity is never regarded as an end in itself but as one facet of the holiness of the church. Our Lord's much misunderstood prayer in John 17 seeks the protection and sanctification of his people and their unity as a consequence of that. 'Protect them by the power of your name...so that they may be one' (Jn 17:11). Like all features of holiness, unity is one aspect of the already/not yet tension in which the church exists today, a unity created by the Spirit (Eph 4:3) but to be completed only when the Kingdom is consummated (Eph 4:13).

**The revival** of the church. Revival is an experience of the life and power of God in uncommon measure in the church. The OT terms indicate that it is primarily the 'life' which is renewed rather than its particular functions. The church, however, really exists as a genuine church even when not in a state of revival, as is seen by the use of the same word *ekklesia* to denote the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3 as that used to denote the church at Antioch in Acts 13.

In the church, **revival is related to unity**. The church is to seek Christ for his own sake and for the manifestation of his sanctifying, unifying presence in the life of his church. The duty is ours but the power comes only from him. This is another example of the sovereignty/responsibility antinomy apparent at other points in the application of salvation.

An alternative perspective is provided by accounts of the church's life during the epoch of Biblical revelation. Three aspects are relevant here:

**OT Israel** saw times of lethargy and times of revival. Nehemiah 8 records the celebration of the re-built walls demonstrating that united work and prayer had resulted in spiritual renewal. Their praise issued in unity by sending food to those who had nothing prepared so that they too might share their joy.

The **Messianic promises** include prophecy about the renewal of Israel's spiritual life, including their unity, by using the concept of 'gathering', as in Jeremiah 31:8 and Ezekiel 36:24. One feature of the promised *SHALOM* will be freedom from the discord of division.

The **post-Pentecost NT church** provides the touching detail of Acts 2:44, 'All the believers were together and had everything in common'. Any threats to the unity of the church, such as those rebuked in 1 Corinthians, are seen as a sin against Christ as the Head of the church.

## **The Experience of Church History**

**Unity has sometimes been a pre-cursor to revival.**

A Call to Prayer was issued from the Northampton Association of churches in 1784. It soon spread to include Christians of different denominations in England, Wales and Scotland. Paul Cook's account of 'The Forgotten Revival' says: 'This was the cry God heard when in the 1790's he began again to visit his people'.<sup>1</sup>

**Unity has sometimes been a fruit of revival.**

In 1742 'a spark of grace set the kingdom on a blaze' in Cambuslang. Fawcett records, 'Numbers who had gone into a course of separation and division from their own ministers, and from the communion of the presbyterian church, established by law in Scotland, returned to their own pastors, and to communion with the national church, acknowledging that God was in the midst of her of a truth.'<sup>2</sup>

**Lack of unity has sometimes been a hindrance to revival.**

Sprague has concluded, 'The want of brotherly love operates to prevent a revival of religion, still farther, as it prevents that union of Christian energy, in connection with which God ordinarily dispenses his gracious influences. It prevents a union of counsel...and his people will do little else than defeat each other's purposes.'<sup>3</sup>

**Lack of unity has sometimes been no hindrance to revival.**

In 1959 Dr Lloyd-Jones gave AN HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SURVEY of revival in which he pointed out, 'Whatever the state of the church, God can send revival. As a sheer matter of fact, that is what God did in the eighteenth century. There was the Church under the blight of Deism and Rationalism...and among the Nonconformists there was a deadness resulting from Arianism. In the midst of such conditions God did this amazing and astonishing thing.'<sup>4</sup>

## **Our Contemporary Situation**

**1 Genuine Christians are found in a variety of churches and denominations.**

It is regeneration which brings a sinner into the body of Christ and such a work

of God can, and does take place in sinners who may be in touch with evangelical churches, non-evangelical churches, churches with a sound ministry but an ill-taught congregation, or even in touch with no church at all. Sometimes we give the impression that genuine Christians exist only in our own kind of churches. The Evangelical Alliance often speaks of there being 1 million evangelicals in the UK; but the total church membership of churches in the BEC is around 68,000, ie under 7%. One lasting impression I brought back from the Lausanne Congress in Manila was the reminder that separated evangelical churches like those of the BEC represent only a small fragment of the actual body of Christ. It is that body which commands our attention in respect of unity and revival; the whole of the body — not merely that part of it represented by the denominational constituency to which we belong. We may point to the confused inconsistency of those Christians in comprehensive denominations but it has pleased our sovereign God to grant them new life. Christ died for all of them. Spurgeon's comment on Psalm 133 is relevant here, 'Christian affection knows no limits of parish, nation, sect or age. Is the man a believer in Christ? Then he is in the body and I must yield him an abiding love'. So also is the spirit of Sprague:

It may be asked whether a spirit of brotherly love may not exist between Christians whose views on points not fundamental may differ? I answer, yes undoubtedly; it may and ought to exist among all who trust in a common Saviour. We may exercise this spirit even towards those whom we regard as holding errors, either of faith or practice, provided we can discover in them the faintest outline of the image of Christ. They may adopt opinions in which we cannot harmonize, and measures in which we cannot co-operate, and the consequence of this may be a loss of good influence to the cause of Christ; nevertheless we may still recognize them as Christians, and cordially co-operate with them, wherever our views and theirs may be in harmony. The right spirit among Christians would lead them to make as little of their points of difference, and as much of their common ground, as they can; and where they must separate, to do it with kindness and good will, not with bitterness and railing.<sup>5</sup>

## **2 Many Christians are content where they are.**

In an ideal world every regenerate soul would belong to a gospel church and be motivated by Scripture principles in deciding where and how to relate to other local churches. In reality, most Christians are in churches where they were converted, or where they find a congenial atmosphere. It is not only lack of teaching about the doctrine of the church, it is the whole subjectivist mind-set (which does not make decisions on principles but on feelings) which has afflicted our generation of Christian believers. There are other Christians who take a more principled approach but their principles are not the same as ours. They believe that loyalty to the church in which they were brought up is a way of showing gratitude for what they have received, or that they should remain 'in it to win it' until they are expelled for loyalty to the gospel, or that since they are granted sufficient freedom to preach the gospel they are under no pressure to separate from their denomination. In Britain, most of our brothers and sisters are found in churches linked to groups outside our own constituency and in which we have no realistic influence. There is little sign of a major re-alignment of British churches where a clearer line can

be drawn between those who are born-again and those who are not.

### **3 Spurious unity is being actively promoted.**

The 20th century ecumenical movement has witnessed to the worthy goal of the visible unity of the people of God. Its gross error has been its constant failure to define who the genuine people of God are. Until it is clear whether a person is a Christian, or whether a church is a Christian church, in the biblical understanding of these terms, then all attempts to unite those people and those churches must inevitably be unsatisfactory. Such is the case with the minimal Doctrinal Basis of the BCC which comprises institutional churches in which sacramental or liberal concepts of salvation enjoy the same validity as evangelical views. In many, of course, the unbiblical views now predominate.

September 1990 will see the birth of the new ecumenical bodies in Britain which have emerged from the Inter-Church Process.<sup>6</sup> Replacing the British Council of Churches will be one body each in England, Scotland and Wales together with an overall body covering Britain and Ireland. These will differ from the former organisations in three respects:

- a) There will be stronger emphasis on grass roots involvement, expecting each participating church to confer with others at local and regional as well as at national level before any major decision is made.
- b) The Roman Catholic Church will be in full membership from the outset.
- c) Mission, and co-operating in joint 'evangelism', will be the major catalyst for unity at a time when numerical decline stares most of the churches in the face.

Evangelicals seem set to play a larger part in these bodies than in the BCC. Evangelical Baptists were conspicuous in their support for BU involvement and so far only 13 churches have withdrawn from the Union and 65 churches have publicly dissociated themselves from the Union's commitment to the proposals. This is out of a total of 1,950 churches. Most, but not all, evangelicals in the Church of England seem ready to embrace the new ecumenical bodies. Their commitment to being firstly Anglican and only secondarily evangelical was seen in their enthusiastic welcome to the Archbishop of Canterbury's call to the 1989 Anglican Evangelical Assembly to make ecclesiology their priority. Added to this is the growing acceptance among many that shared experience of charismatic worship is the genuine mark of Christian unity, irrespective of denominational or doctrinal differences.

### **4 Spurious revival is being claimed.**

A glance at the terminology is illuminating. There are still some in Britain who persist in the American use of the word 'revival' to describe an evangelistic campaign organised by men which can be advertised to 'begin here next Sunday'. There are also charismatics who see the re-awakening of interest in the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit as a sign of revival. Claims are made for unusual growth of churches in Nigeria and Korea to which the term 'revival' is applied. There are other charismatic Christians, however, who are ready to recognise that the present level of their effectiveness falls short of the revival for which they still pray. It is also interesting to see the way in which the term 'renewal' is being used. In many Anglican churches 'renewal' means 'charismatic', but distinguishes these churches



from the charismatics who have formed 'restoration fellowships', as the separatist house churches are now being described. There are a number of formerly moribund Anglican churches which have begun to preach the genuine gospel, to hold prayer meetings and to rejoice in seeing evidences of new birth. Younger ministers have taken a more progressive line on liturgy, clerical dress and sung praise. In some cases these men are openly charismatic but not in all cases. When one looks at what these churches were it does not seem inappropriate to use the term 'renewed' for them.

## **5 What constitutes 'unity' is variously understood.**

So much depends on the concept of the church under discussion.

a) Those who see the church as essentially the locally **gathered congregation** will be primarily concerned about the internal relationships of church members with each other. There is so much need for this to be fostered and so many threats to it today that it is understandable that some pastors do not look beyond this sphere.

b) Where the church is viewed in its **institutional** model then there will be an overriding concern for the preserving of outward forms of unity. This can take the form of resisting dissent (or change!) as a threat to 'denominational unity', as with those discouraging evangelical opposition to the BU's joining the Inter-Church Process. The older and more useful a form of church association becomes then the greater is the danger posed by 'rocking the boat', even among us!

c) For some evangelicals the concept of the '**church invisible**' still dominates their policies. They seem indifferent to the denominational labels of their fellows so long as they can co-operate in Christian work. This means they are often content with personal fellowship, seeing a more structured concept of church unity as an unrealisable goal in this life. Denominational diversity is then seen as a positive enrichment of the whole body.

d) The '**para-church**' model is pre-occupied with evangelical activities. For those Christians unity is more pragmatic; working together wherever possible, sometimes saying that as long as evangelicals can set the agenda then we should be ready to accept anyone who is ready to identify with us. It is interesting to see the Evangelical Alliance now attempting to draw back from the role of being 'a major para-church society, following our own agendas.'

e) There are evangelicals who see the church as **both local and universal**. Unity, therefore, must have more than one application. It will be important within local churches, among local churches in a given locality (whether belonging to the same denomination or not), within a national association and even on the international scale. This raises significant questions about the degree of doctrinal unanimity called for at these different levels. It has been pointed out that the 1689 Confession was itself an exercise in Christian unity in providing a focus for Baptist unity and as an indication of doctrinal affinity with the Westminster Divines. Among the questions now facing us is how we can best express our concern for the unity of the whole body of Christ in Britain whilst retaining our conscientious commitment to our own doctrinal standards.

## **An Appropriate Practical Response**

### **1 We must be concerned about promoting Christian unity at every level.**

Obedience honours the Holy Spirit. Some kind of reformation generally precedes revival. Too often the image of the evangelical has been a negative one — we are perceived as being against ecumenism. But we are not. It is *spurious* ecumenism which we are against. We are under obligation to serve the declared purposes of the Head of the church to seek its life and its overall good. We will remember that genuine Christian unity is only one feature of the holiness of our own lives and of the churches we serve. Other dimensions of that holiness will also be encouraged, eg doctrinal purity, humility, patience, sympathy and sensitivity. This we must do in our congregations, in our local neighbourhoods and in our church associations. No doubt there are converted ministers near where we live. Have we done anything to build bridges to them?<sup>8</sup> We should be those initiating projects of common good for the people of God. We ought to spend more time considering what we should be doing which is right than complaining about what others are doing which is wrong. Some projects may be practical, like founding a home for the elderly, others showing civic responsibility, like a CARE core group, others more conventional, like a pastors' fraternal.

### **2 We must be concerned about every evidence of disunity among the people of God.**

All sin grieves the Spirit, sins of omission as well as sins of commission. We are not responsible for the sins of others but we are for our own. Do we spend any of our self-examination time reflecting on this? Do we take trouble to seek to understand those Christians who differ most from us? Are we more likely to believe lurid reports of what Gerald Coates gets up to than if the same things were suggested of Errol Hulse? It is easy to justify the priority of concern for churches similar to our own and to build an empire of our close friends. Even the existence of separate conferences serving distinct communities of evangelicals can cut us off from others. Who has the wisdom, the spiritual authority and the courage to rebuke those who are causing needless divisions among evangelicals?

### **3 We must not allow disunity to hinder our prayers for revival.**

Even the sins of the church cannot hinder God from his sovereign work. Daniel was well aware of the sins of God's people but in chapter 9 he readily identified himself with them and pleaded with God for mercy. No right thinking Christian can be complacent about the state of the church in our nation, nor with the state of evangelical churches in our own constituency. Whilst striving to keep what unity we have we must also be striving to obtain that renewed life and blessing which will bring us all low before a fresh revelation of God's majesty. Someone once likened our churches to little puddles separated by the barren ground around us. When the rain pours down the puddles will be joined by the rising flood. Meanwhile there is something we can be doing. Can it really be true that we hold no responsibility for the confusion and fragmentation which has afflicted evangelical churches in this country, over both the subject of unity and of revival?

### **4 We must encourage everyone genuinely concerned for revival.**

This will be one mark of love for our fellow Christians wherever they are to be

found. Their differences from us on other issues, however important, cannot negate our duty to strengthen their hands in prayer. Can we begin, however, by our private prayers for them? Is it not much easier to relate to someone when we have been pleading with God for their spiritual good? Yes, it is true that we must also encourage them in obedience to Scripture, even if that means pointing out the inconsistency of their church associations. But to have the opportunity to do that we need a better personal relationship than often exists between us. What better way could there be of our gaining the confidence of those from whom we differ in Christ than by sharing our sincere concern for the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit upon their ministry?

#### **5 We must not despair when our efforts seem to bear little fruit.**

Seeking greater Christian unity, improving evangelical relationships across denominational boundaries, fighting false ecumenicity with a positive alternative and yet still calling on God to revive his sick body with glorious life — this is a wearisome task. No wonder so many of us faint by the wayside. No wonder those sincere commitments to prayer get eroded by other priorities. The devil may be speaking the truth when he points out how little we have to show for all our years of faithful endeavour. Our prayers will need to include confession of our own sins but only unbelief imagines that the situation is beyond God. That is the great strength of the Reformed perspective, both on unity and on revival. In 1959 Dr Lloyd-Jones warned those of us who had recently come to see the importance of the Doctrines of Grace from writing off those who had not. His words retain their relevance today:

If you say that God cannot give revival unless first of all we have had a reformation, you are speaking like an Arminian, you are saying that God cannot do this until we ourselves have first done something. That is to put a limit on God... It is to deny the fundamental tenet of the Reformed position.<sup>9</sup>

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- 5 Sprague, op cit pp 81-2
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# Exegesis 10: Fellowship, Division and the Lord's Supper

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*Robin Dowling*

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*Debates about the nature of Christ's presence at the Lord's Table, and who is fit to come, may have caused us to miss the main concern of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 which has to do with fellowship and relationships in the body of Christ.*

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**The problem at Corinth (vv 17-22).** Paul's fundamental concern was with the assemblies of the believers (11:17,18,34 cf 14:26), at which there was to be an 'eating together' (11:20-22) centering in participation in the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper. This was meant to be the focus of the church's unity (10:17). Instead, it had become a forum for 'divisions' (11:18,19,21,22). These are not the same divisions as he refers to in 1:10, but sociological divisions between rich and poor. Although divisions are not a good thing in themselves, they are an inevitable aspect of the end times, separating true believers from false. Those who are truly tested and 'approved' (the word in v 19 is related to the word 'to examine' in v 28) are already manifest, in anticipation of the final judgement.

In 11:20,21, Paul emphasises that although the Corinthians were meeting together in assembly (v 20 could be translated 'when you gather together in assembly'), they did not truly eat the Lord's Supper — the meal that is uniquely his own. V 21 should be translated: 'For as you eat, each of you goes ahead with *his own* supper'.

In the early church, the Lord's Supper was eaten as, or in connection with, an ordinary meal (Acts 2:46; 20:11). Cultic meals were nearly always part of worship in the ancient world (10:16-22) and the abuse Paul is dealing with related to this meal aspect of the Lord's Supper. The meeting-meal was probably hosted by one of the richer Christians. The dining-room in such homes accommodated a few guests, usually from the host's own class and the majority would have eaten in the entry 'courtyard'. It is likely that the better-off Christians had simply transferred their regular social practice to the Lord's Supper. The rich were eating their own sumptuous private meals not sharing their food with the poor. Presumably the 'meal' of the latter consisted basically of the bread/wine for the remembrance of Christ. While the 'haves' over-indulged, the 'have-nots' went away 'hungry'.

In verse 22, Paul shows his indignation by a series of rhetorical questions. The very meaning of the church and the gospel were being undermined! Those who *must* indulge themselves, he says, should do so in their 'houses' (not 'homes', as NIV). That, however, is not the purpose of the Lord's Supper (see 11:23-26) and, in any case, an impossibility for the poor. The behaviour of these well-off Christians showed a contempt for the church as the community of God's people. They were degrading the Christians who had nothing.

As the people of the new age the old distinctions which divide human beings must disappear among us at the Lord's Table where we especially proclaim our unity in Christ. The distinction between poor and rich may not be too apparent in the way we conduct the Lord's Supper in our churches but what about distinctions between male and female? (See Gal 3:28).

**The institution of the Lord's Supper (vv 23-26).** Paul reminds them of the focus of the Lord's Supper on the death-by-crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus through which he had brought into being this last-age fellowship, that is, the church, his body. They were not acting consistently with this and were abusing *him*.

In v 23, Paul uses a form of words related to the transmission of traditional instruction. Here was one tradition they were *not* keeping (cf v 2). The Lord's Supper derives from the Last Supper that Jesus ate with his disciples, apparently a passover meal. Unlike the cultic meals of the mystery religions (with their timeless myths), the supper the Corinthians were to celebrate was rooted in history, even 'the night (the Lord Jesus) was betrayed'. In Jewish homes the meal began with the family-head breaking/distributing the bread with an appropriate prayer of blessing. At the Passover meal, this took place during the meal following the expression of the reasons for this meal, rooted in the history of salvation (cf Ex 13:8). Jesus re-interpreted this bread in terms of his own death (11:24).

The history of the church has been riddled with controversy over the words: 'this is my body, which is for you'. Given the Jewish background of the Last Supper, Jesus could *only* have meant something like, 'this (bread) *signifies* my body'. The full expression, as recorded by Luke-Paul, interprets Jesus' death in light of Isaiah 53 as on behalf of others — even in the place of those who eat at the Table.

The command, 'do this in remembrance of me', could be translated, 'do this for my memorial'. In OT thought, remembrance is a dynamic matter rather than a mere mental activity. It is not so much that the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's death as we think about the cross in taking the 'elements'. Rather, the actual *observation* of the Lord's Supper by the true Israel is a memorial of the salvation Jesus Christ has effected in creating one new community in which the old distinctions have disappeared.

The words 'after supper' (11:25) indicate that at the Last Supper the bread and cup symbolising Christ's death were separated by part of the meal itself. The repetition of the words here implies that this was so in the early church. They evidently did not think of them merely as a religious form. Here was active fellowship! The words of institution here recall the ratification of the old covenant (Ex 24:8) and the prophecy of Jeremiah regarding the replacement of this covenant (Jer 31:31). The corporate concern is not absent for to partake of the symbol of the new covenant was to *be* the covenant community — the new Israel.

The addition 'whenever you drink it' implies that the Lord's Supper was to be a regularly repeated meal (unlike the annual Passover) in honour of the Lord. The use elsewhere of the word translated 'you proclaim' or 'declare' (v 26) suggests not that the meal itself is a proclamation, but that during the meal there is a verbal declaration of Jesus' death. This, as Paul has indicated, takes place in the two

sayings over the bread and cup. These point to Christ's death in the place of others and his confirmation of the new covenant between God and his people by his blood poured out in death. At the same time, the apostle does not view Christ's death as the end event. The Lord's Supper is to be eaten 'until he comes' (cf Mk 14:25). Christ's death has inaugurated the new age (the end-times) not completed it. They were to be reminded at this meal that they, together with all God's people, were the people of the age to come.

Is the Lord's Supper, as observed in our churches, a true memorial of salvation through Christ's death? In this respect, do we see ourselves as part of a new community of his people? Or do we think of the Table only in terms of the meeting of our own needs? All that Paul records in 11:23-26 speaks of a togetherness in participating in the Lord's meal, over against the self-gratifying individualism present at Corinth. Our church life might benefit if we were to take the bread/wine in conjunction with a fellowship meal.

**The remedy (vv 27-34).** What he now writes is designed to correct the specific error of the well-off going ahead with their own private portions to the detriment of the poor by warning them of the consequences of their failure to understand the true nature of the Supper.

Paul (v 27) picks up the language of vv 23-26 concerning eating/drinking and body/blood. His concern is with those who participate in the meal known as the Lord's Supper 'in an unworthy manner'. Unfortunately, the KJV translated this 'unworthily', and this, together with a narrow view of the 'sacrament' has led many Christians to be inward-looking about the Lord's Table. Some have an unhealthy fear of coming because of such factors as 'sin' in their lives.

However, the 'unworthy manner' Paul speaks of has been described in vv 17-22. It is a question of divisions; of abuse of other believers at the Lord's Table; of missing the point of the meal as a proclamation of salvation through Christ's death, a salvation which constituted Christ's new community where there is 'the unity of the Spirit'. None should be excluded because of sinful weakness or failure to be in a suitably spiritual frame. Should we stay away from the fountain because we are thirsty? This being said, to 'profane' the Lord's meal by such abuse of the brothers is extremely serious. It is (literally) to 'be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord'. It is to be liable for that very death that *should* be proclaimed as salvation at the Lord's Table so the Corinthians were to 'examine' themselves before eating (v 28). This, again, is not meant to lead to unhealthy introspection. It is a question of a right attitude to the Lord's Supper, especially right behaviour to those gathered at the Table (v 29). It is set in contrast to the divine examination which is the outcome of unworthy participation (vv 30-32). However, it does militate against casual participation.

Are you staying away from the Lord's Supper because of personal failure? You have no warrant to: it is a greater sin to stay away. On the other hand, is there too casual an approach to 'communion' in our churches? To participate properly is to be prepared to submit to the implications of the gospel that is there proclaimed.

The phrase 'without recognising (or discerning) the body' (a preferable reading to

'the body of the Lord') probably related to the church as the body of Christ. Although the term 'body' has emerged from the references to Christ's physical body given in death, represented by the bread (vv 23, 24 and 27), in the background are Paul's words in 10:17. Furthermore, the whole passage before us is concerned with the non-discerning of the body (the church) evidenced in the 'haves' abuse of the 'have-nots'. The Lord's Supper is not just any meal. With one loaf and a common cup we proclaim that through the death of Christ we are one body in Christ. It is not permissible to preserve the distinctions applicable in the world at this Table. Here, we must 'recognise' as distinct the one body of Christ in which we are all gifts to each other.

The apostle makes a prophetic pronouncement in v 30. There were evidently many current illnesses among the Corinthian Christians and a number of deaths had occurred. Paul sees that, in this case, the whole community has experienced judgement through the actions of some who are creating divisions in the one body of Christ. This insight into the specific situation of the Corinthians is not to be rashly applied in considering the situation of another church. Paul is not saying that sickness among Christians is normally to be viewed as present judgement. However, sins against fellowship are clearly a serious matter! If the Corinthians had been examining themselves in the sense of 'discerning the body' they would not have been experiencing judgement. However, even God's judgement towards believers is full of mercy! It is divine discipline in which a loving God corrects his children precisely so that they will not share the world's condemnation at the final judgement.

By way of direct application, Paul first tells the Corinthians that when they come together to eat they should 'wait for' each other because the well-off Christians were going ahead and eating their privileged portions to the detriment of the poor Christians (vv 21,22). The word translated 'wait for' may in fact have the sense 'receive' or 'welcome'. Secondly, if the wealthy wanted to eat the kind of sumptuous meals they normally ate together they should do this at home (v 34), apart from the Lord's meal. Paul is not forbidding participating in the symbols of Christ's death in connection with a fellowship meal. Rather, he implies that, in community, the well-off should eat what the others do rather than shaming them. (The 'hidden agenda' is that they should share what they have. See Rom 12:13. But his first concern is that the gospel and the unity proclaimed at this meal remain intact.)

Our gathering together at the Lord's Supper is, of course, to be rooted in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. However, we must remember the purpose of the salvation that these achieved and ensure that the Lord's Supper is the focus of the oneness of the new community. We must give proper attention, as we participate and in the way the Supper is conducted, to our relationships with each other. We are to receive and welcome one another as beneficiaries of Christ's death, participating anew in the benefit of that death precisely as we do so.

*Pastor Robin Dowling BSc is minister of Salem Baptist Church, Kew. He acknowledges help from the commentaries of G D Fee and C K Barrett.*

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# Reflections on the Missionary Scene in the 1980's

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*John Wallis*

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At the 1910 Edinburgh conference of missionary leaders, John Mott urged delegates to reach the world with the gospel 'in this our generation.' In 1980 a similar conference was convened. This time the initiative was largely from men like Ralph Winter of the US Centre for World Mission in Pasadena, California, and backed by the Mission Advance Research Centre, a division of World Vision.

The North American missionary scene was filled with references to unreached peoples or hidden peoples, groups still waiting to hear the gospel for the first time who were either distant geographically or remote demographically. There was a fresh call to go either to the outbacks or the ghettos. Overnight, groups like Frontiers led by Greg Livingstone were ablaze with the old pioneer spirit. British evangelical missionary leaders were conspicuous by their absence at this second Edinburgh conference. The North American fervour received a cool reception. There were some arguably good reasons for this, but there was also a measure of confusion about the British camp. Everyone agreed you can neither turn the clock back nor presume to go it alone in missionary endeavour in the 1980's. The purpose of world mission is the raising up of the church and, in most countries of the world, partnership with the national church is more fitting than proliferation of well-meaning, para-church organisations. But the issue bugging Ralph Winter and many others was the unequal distribution of Christian workers which had created a situation where a small minority were truly pioneering with the gospel. It was easy, of course, to justify the deployment of every individual missionary and to make a case for the need in their own situation.

The decade of the 80's has now passed and it is interesting that it concluded with an equally momentous missionary conference in Singapore, the **AD 2000 Consultation**. Once again the computers were in action and the data even more specific, focusing the possibility of completing the task of bringing the gospel to every people group by the end of the century. Once again there was an element of frustration with the supposed triumphalism of the platform and a sense of manipulation. This may have been a feature, but then we are all prone to do the same when given the platform.

The issue of the disparate distribution of workers and resources emerged again. Real sacrifices had to be accepted to change the drift of missionary endeavour. The missionary task was calling for fresh definition. What is the prime task of the missionary? What do we understand by apostleship? When is a missionary society no longer a missionary society? No-one, of course, is supposing that you can dismantle everything and start again. But when many in Africa, Asia and Latin America are just starting as part of a new emerging missions movement, so that



some talk of the third wave of missionary advance with tones of throwing off endemic Western paternalism, all the issues are up for grabs.

Noisily bubbling away in the background throughout the decade was neo-pentecostalism. This world of Christian fervour and expansion had a different vocabulary. The talk was all about renewal, charismata, kingdom, authority, signs and wonders. It spread like wildfire across the continents, as ideas are apt to do, thanks to the ease of communication and travel. An event in New York becomes a movement in Singapore after what seems like only days. This is our experience in the global village. It is no longer possible to live in a vacuum of ideas without catastrophic events overtaking the leadership. Witness the crumbling of communism in Eastern Europe. The neo-pentecostalism was immediately attractive to thousands of people and not all of it thanks to the Holy Spirit. The new phenomena were much discussed, and many Christians concluded that whether they were the 1st Century charismata or not, they were phenomena used by God as channels of blessing. After all, why should we suppose that our creator God should repeat himself? Is he not more likely to provide 20th century charismata for a 20th century church?

During the 1980's the two worlds began to interact both outside and inside the missionary societies. It was not without considerable stress, but there emerged a new theme that will tax mission leaders through the 1990's. It may even prove to be the cutting edge for the final thrust to the year 2000. That theme was **the kingdom of God**. Suddenly the teaching of Jesus rather than the teaching of Paul became the focus. Not that we were back in the old debate about whose teaching was more authentic. But Paul's missionary endeavours were now being viewed through the lenses of Jesus' kingdom teaching. Just how is a missionary meant to pioneer, after all? We thought we knew the answer to that long ago. Surely he was called to preach the gospel and demonstrate the love of God by acts of charity. But now we are surrounded by calls for power evangelism, signs and wonders, bringing in the kingdom with authority. The old George Eldon Ladd emphasis on justice and peace, concern for the poor and oppressed, suddenly marries the John Wimber emphasis on delivering the captives. In a world where poverty and oppression are still the lot of millions, the appeal to be part of a liberation movement is powerful. When convinced evangelicals like Dr Samuel Escobar do not write off Liberation Theology emphases, but rather challenge us to think through our response to the poor, in a brief decade evangelicals are having to decide all over again not only whether the missionary movement is for pioneers alone, but how those pioneers go to work for Jesus. How does the kingdom of God on earth come in? Perhaps there is more to it than we have supposed?

As if that is not enough, suddenly old-time missionaries discover that *missionary* is a dirty word. For one thing, more than 75% of the nations in our world will not hear of granting a missionary a visa. For another, there have been sufficient Western insensitivity and inability to acknowledge both the maturity of the churches overseas and the poverty of the churches in Western Europe, to make the invitations to come over and help us both fewer and more guarded. Add to that the dramatic change in European demography and the desire of many governments to

keep the peace by adopting an increasingly secular stance decrying proselytisation, and the missionary, especially the Christian missionary it seems, is *persona non grata*.

The end result is that missionary societies are less easily identified at the end of the 1980's, dropping from their titles all reference to *missionary* and even *Christian*, and presenting themselves more as service agencies. Workers now are usually professionals with good evangelistic skills up their sleeves. In reality of course no-one is fooled by this strategy, but most governments can live with the face-lift. It has, however, had the desired effect of turning missionary societies full circle, for many such professionals are among the most daring of pioneers in today's evangelistic outreach of the church. There is no denying its fruitfulness as stories from many countries provide eloquent testimony. The stories are too sensitive for print but they are guaranteed to inspire a fresh wave of pioneers going to the unreached and hidden peoples of our world. There is little doubt that the kingdom of God is coming among ethnic groups for years neglected. There is no doubt that in due season that kingdom will break surface with unexpected force to change the scene beyond all recognition.

Writing in 1990 it is easy to be euphoric but as a believer in a Sovereign God and with some knowledge of the persistent missionary endeavours and courageous witness of the church in Eastern Europe, the leaven has surely risen and overnight the prophecies of the Old Testament read more dramatically. Not that the church, of course, by its missionary outreach is seeking a kingdom that can be shaken but one that is unshakable. The 1980's have raised possibilities that are new yet as old as the Scriptures which, if grasped should ensure more extensive growth for the church worldwide in the 1990's. But I have a sneaking suspicion that evangelical Christians will not be mature enough to handle the tensions evident in the debates about pioneering, power-encountering, poor-honouring, and professional-ministering. I hope I am proved wrong, but change is just too stressful for some of us.

*After working with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in Korea, the Rev John A Wallis became the UK Home Director of the mission. In December 1989 he moved to The Hague to become chaplain of the English American Episcopal Church there.*

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The *unreached* are the two billion who may never have heard of Jesus as Saviour, and are not within reach of Christians of their own people. There are some 2,000 peoples or nationalities in which there is not yet a vital, indigenous church movement. We find it helpful to think of them as belonging to smaller *people groups* which perceive themselves as having an affinity with each other (eg a common culture, language, home or occupation)... There are now about 12,000 such unreached people groups within the 2,000 larger peoples, so that the task is not impossible. Yet at present only 7% of all missionaries are engaged in this kind of outreach, while the remaining 93% are working in the already evangelized half of the world. If this imbalance is to be redressed, a strategic redeployment of personnel will be necessary.

*Manila Manifesto, para (11)*

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## Eryl Davies

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The date is right and I have not made a mistake! No, I am not referring to 1992, and the Single European Act of July 1987 which provides that by 31 December, 1992 goods will circulate freely between EEC member countries and custom formalities will disappear. However, I am referring to something quite different yet equally relevant.

### **The significance of 1993**

Four major international inter-faith organisations are combining to observe 1993 as a *Year of Inter-religious Understanding and Co-operation*. Why 1993? Well, it marks the centenary of the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 which is generally regarded as the commencement of the inter-faith movement. The four organisations involved in the planning for 1993 are the International Association of Religious Freedom, The Temple of Understanding, The World Congress of Faiths and the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

Since the 1893 Chicago meetings, many local inter-faith groups and some national bodies for inter-religious co-operation have emerged. The four main organisations involved are now seeking to link inter-faith co-operation worldwide. They are planning a common celebration in India in August 1993 and other events are scheduled for major cities worldwide, including Chicago and Vancouver. Their expectation is that 'all places of worship will arrange special celebrations and that schools and youth organisations will plan educational programmes so that 1993 becomes a real Year of Inter-religious Understanding and Co-operation'.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Inter-Faith Movement**

Let us see how the inter-faith movement has developed, particularly in relation to the World Council of Churches in recent decades, and grasp the implications and challenge of these developments for the 1990's. Evangelicals cannot afford to ignore the theological, pastoral and missiological implications of inter-faith dialogue and co-operation.

Interaction between Christianity and other religions or philosophies is not new as the Early Church grappled with those of the Graeco-Roman world. More recently, there was the famous Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 where the concern for mission was accompanied by an awareness, at least, of both a divided Christendom and world. Later missionary conferences at Jerusalem (1928) and Tamboram (1938) discussed in more detail the relationship of Jesus Christ to other major world religions. Due to the theological influence of men like Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer, the 1938 Conference underlined the significance of the gospel for other religions and cultures. The debate was interrupted by the Second World War but in the wake of a revived nationalism in many countries, various post-colonial developments, the resurgence of world religions and the secularisation of

theological reflection within large sections of Christendom, a renewed interest in inter-religious relationships emerged in the late 1950's onwards. Influential names in this period included P D Devanandan, M M Thomas and D T Wiles.

It was in this context that in 1955 the influential Protestant body the International Missionary Council launched a project-study entitled, *The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men*. From 1961, the IMC was incorporated within the World Council of Churches as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) which met in Mexico City in 1963 to discuss 'The Witness of Christians to Men of Other Faiths'. Here it was affirmed that:

True dialogue with a man of another faith requires a concern both for the gospel and for the other man. Without the first, dialogue becomes a pleasant conversation. Without the second, it becomes irrelevant, unconvincing or arrogant... Dialogue requires a transparent willingness to listen to what the other is saying and to recognise whatever truth be in it... Sincerity is basic.<sup>2</sup>

Significant developments were also taking place at this time in Roman Catholic reflection particularly in relation to Vatican II and its 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions'. Samuel Ryan, for example, mentions 'certain new insights and emphases' which are discernible in the mission-theology implied or expressed in the documents of the Council and subsequent writings:

4...God makes his salvation possible and available in some way to all men everywhere throughout history. 5. Within all nations, cultures and religions there is a secret and saving presence of God... 6. A new respect therefore has sprung up in the heart of the Church for other religions which are accorded recognition before the God who saves...<sup>3</sup>

## A Changed Attitude

The change in attitude has been profound and disturbing. Prior to Vatican II, the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961 referred to 'dialogue as a form of evangelism which is often effective today'. The Uppsala Assembly in 1968 went further in claiming that:

The meeting with men of other faiths or of no faith must lead to dialogue...a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal and humble.<sup>4</sup>

In the meantime, in June 1962 a small number of Hindus and Christians (Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) met near Kottayam in South India to explore the nature of truth. Another bi-lateral meeting was held at Birmingham in January 1968 between Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant representatives and Muslims. Their report declared:

There was a great need for continuing discussion and increasing society's awareness of the relevance of our common assumptions as Muslims and Christians. The supremacy of God, the availability of his revealed guidance, the expectation of an afterlife, the definition of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, the sanctity of family life and all life — such are the issues we must maintain in an increasingly agnostic world. We look forward to further contacts and to working for and praying for a deeper reconciliation of Muslims and Christians in our service to men and to God, in our dialogue with each other and with God.

Several discussions have also taken place between Christians and Jews. Possibly the most famous one was that convened by the International Jewish Committee on Inter-religious Consultations and the WCC in Lugano, Switzerland in October 1970.

Apart from these and other bilateral conversations between RC/Protestant leaders and those of one other faith, there have been numerous meetings in which representatives of different faiths come together. For example, in October 1965 thirty representatives from six major religions in Korea (including Buddhism, Confucianism and Chondoism) met for two days to consider their common tasks and individual contributions to the solving of national problems. A World Conference on Religion and Peace also met in Kyoto, Japan in October 1970 attended by 285 representatives of ten major religions and thirty-six countries. This had been preceded by the WCC Ajaltoun Consultation on 'Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths' in March 1970 when Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims talked about recent experiences and future possibilities of dialogue.

### **WCC Sub-unit on Dialogue**

Throughout the 1970's the WCC actively encouraged dialogue between people of different religions. The Ajaltoun Consultation encouraged the WCC Central Committee in January 1971 to establish its own 'sub-unit' on dialogue; its full title is 'Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies', often referred to as the DFI. Dr Stanley Samartha was the first Director of this unit. Justifiably, charges of 'syncretism', 'compromise' and 'undermining evangelism' were directed against the WCC and its Sub-Unit on Dialogue in Nairobi in 1975. However, the Nairobi Assembly re-inforced its commitment to dialogue but drew attention to urgent theological questions which needed to be answered. What kind of 'community' are Christians committed to seek? What is the theological basis for dialogue with other religions? How do dialogue and mission relate, if at all? It is these and other questions which ecumenists have been answering — unbiblically, I am sad to say — during the past fifteen years. But the 1975 Assembly also made practical recommendations urging churches to promote inter-religious understanding both at national and local levels.

The DFI organised a world-wide Consultation on the theme 'Dialogue in Community' in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 1977. Despite basic differences in theology and methodology, the Consultation published an influential report entitled *Dialogue in Community*. One major emphasis in this report was the idea of **unity of mankind** as the context in which dialogue was to be pursued. In 1977 and 1979, the WCC adopted its own 'Guidelines on Dialogue', a brief but influential document.

In the 1980's the WCC extended their dialogue with those belonging to traditional religions and focused on three regions: North America, Africa and the Pacific. For example, a consultation was convened in Mondolo, Zambia in September 1986 to discuss the issues involved. Other major concerns in the 1980's were helping churches to live in pluralistic societies and also working ecumenically on what Wesley Ariarajah calls 'the rethinking of Christian theology in the light of religious pluralism'.

Meanwhile, meetings between leaders of major world religions increased both in number and significance between 1986 and 1990. A small Jewish-Christian dialogue was held in Nairobi in 1986 while the third Muslim-Christian dialogue in Crete in September 1988 brought together Christians and Muslims from Europe and the Middle East. WCC staff meet regularly with representatives of various international Muslim organisations and also with church-related groups concerned about Muslim-Christian relations. A multilateral dialogue was held in India in November 1988 as well as a pan-Asian Buddhist-Christian dialogue. More elaborate and ambitious plans are scheduled for the early 1990's in order to develop inter-faith dialogue throughout the world and 1993 will be a focal point and stimulus for the whole process of dialogue, co-operation and unity.

## Types of Dialogue

At this point, however, we need to understand the different ways in which the term 'dialogue' is used. Diana L Esk has provided a helpful and competent survey of types of inter-religious dialogue. In **Parliamentary Dialogue** large inter-religious Parliaments or Assemblies are created for a short period of time as a forum for inter-religious discussion. Such meetings are being held more frequently and help to 'make visible and public the work of dialogue'. The first such Parliament was held in Chicago's World Fair in 1893 and is a milestone in the history of inter-religious dialogue. The representatives were mostly Christian and Jewish; the Christians tended to assume the superiority of Christianity over other religions. However, three observations need to be made on this first Parliament.

Firstly, there were a small number of Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims present and their contributions were influential and uncompromising. Secondly, Christian self-criticism emerged during this Parliament. One writer expresses his feelings in this way:

It was felt by many that to claim everything for Christianity and deny any good in other religions is not Christian, and is an impeachment of that divine goodness... Christians...perceived that religion...is after all, the best there is in man, and that God is not confined in his mercy and benefactions...<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, the 1893 Parliament has more recently influenced others to develop the same work. In 1985 in Bath, Somerset, leaders of several organisations met to discuss closer co-operation and plan the 1993 centennial of the Parliament. The World Congress of Faiths is mainly British-based and was founded by Sir Francis Younghusband but is now led by Marcus Braybrooke. An American, Judith Hollister, founded the Temple of Understanding and it has held six Spiritual Summit Conferences since its foundation in 1960. The International Association for Religious Freedom has focused its work primarily on issues of conscience and religious liberty. The most active and best organised of all the inter-religious networks is the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WRCP) which held its first assembly in Kyoto in 1970. The WRCP is a Non-Governmental Organisation of the United Nations with offices in both New York and Geneva and regional chapters in Asia, Africa and Europe.

There is also **Institutional Dialogue** where there are liaisons and relationships

between different religious traditions. The WCC for example has its own dialogue sub-unit and, in addition, there are many inter-religious commissions belonging to individual church denominations as well as national/regional councils of churches.

In addition, **Theological Dialogue** can be distinguished in which systematic theologians/thinkers of all religious traditions write in terms of their deep awareness of a religiously plural world. Such writers include Radhakrishnan (Hinduism), Masao Abe (Buddhism), Sayyed Hossein Nasr (Islam), Pinchas Lapide (Judaism) and John Hick (Christendom). Hitherto, the most active bilateral theological dialogue has been the Christian dialogue with Buddhism. One significant date in the history of theological dialogue is March 1986 when John Hick, now at Claremont Graduate School in California, sponsored a theological conference on pluralism now popularly called the 'Rubicon Conference' since its aim was to explore what it means for Christian theologians to cross the 'Rubicon' from Christian exclusivism to genuine pluralism. Speakers included Rosemary Reuther, Stanley Samartha, Raymond Panikkar, Paul Knitter, Langdon Gilkey, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Alan Race and Gordon Kaufman.

The most popular form of dialogue, however, is **Dialogue in Community or Life**, on the streets, in projects or festivals and among ordinary people. Subjects include mixed-faith marriages, ancestor worship or reverence and social problems.

**Spiritual Dialogue** is where people are concerned primarily with the deepening of spiritual life and it relates somewhat to mysticism. Roman Catholics have taken the lead in this type of dialogue. For example, there is a well-organised Christian-Buddhist monastic exchange programme, while Jesuits and Benedictines have also participated in more personal ways. For example, the Jesuit, Ignatius Hirudayam has generated an Inter-faith Research and Dialogue Centre at his ashram in Madras.

Finally, it is customary to distinguish also the **Inner Dialogue** which takes place with other people and also within ourselves.

## **Pastoral and Theological Challenges**

There is surely a **pastoral** challenge for us. Are we sufficiently aware of developments in this area of dialogue? Do we alert our congregations to these new trends which undermine and deny the unique claims of Christianity? This teaching has permeated our schools and colleges for several years but is our preaching contemporary in its application as well as biblical in its content?

Make no mistake about it, Ecumenism has taken a major new initiative in the past decade or so. No longer is it a mere union of Protestant/RC churches which is now envisaged but an *eventual union of all world religions*. This presents a major pastoral challenge to us especially as plans for inter-religious co-operation at local level are developed and encouraged in the 1990's.

What about the **theological** challenge for ourselves? The choice today is not between experience/social action and theology but between a bad and a good theology or, in other words, between an unbiblical and a biblical theology. One competent theological response to dialogue and pluralism is included in this issue under the title, NO OTHER NAME. It needs to be pondered carefully and

understood by readers. We also need to ask questions of ourselves. How well do we know the Bible? Do we really believe the Bible? Are we clear concerning the unique claims of Christ?

Furthermore, there is need for evangelicals to develop and apply a biblical theology of pluralism. Christopher Lamb, for example, recently claimed 'we are in urgent need of a theology of pluralism' yet some of his own tentative conclusions are questionable.<sup>6</sup>

The challenge is for us to understand (Luke 24:45) continue in (2 Timothy 3:14), contend for (Jude 3) and preach (2 Timothy 4:2) the Word of the Living God in our contemporary situation.

## References

- 1 CURRENT DIALOGUE 17, WCC, p 4
- 2 WITNESS IN SIX CONTINENTS, R K Orchard, 1964, pp 144-147
- 3 CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE WITH OTHER FAITHS, International Review of Missions, Vol 59, 1970, p 415
- 4 THE UPPSALA REPORT, WCC 1968, p 29
- 5 CURRENT DIALOGUE 11, WCC December 1986
- 6 EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY, Vol 14, No 1, Jan 1990, p 78

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*The Holy Spirit is intimately involved with the ministry and work of Christ. It could hardly be otherwise. Matthew, Mark and Luke all speak of the Holy Spirit in connection with the birth, baptism and temptation of our Lord. Even so, it is all too easy to miss the wider implications of this involvement and its significance lies in the unquestionable truth that there was a ministry of the Holy Spirit with, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ all through his life and in every aspect of his saving work.*

*Long before the incarnation, Scripture speaks of a mission of the Spirit which has the closest affinity with the saving work of Christ in the world. So closely identified are they that in Isaiah 48:16 the two-fold commission from the Lord God to the Son and the Spirit inaugurates on single, joint engagement. The sending of the Spirit which is in view is to be linked with, and locked into, the mission of the Son when it occurs. There are definitely two persons spoken of here but only one sending; the two are being sent out with the same aim and to accomplish the one great, divine purpose.*

J Douglas MacMillan, page 6, JESUS — POWER WITHOUT MEASURE; The work of the Spirit in the life of our Lord; Sermons preached at St Vincent Street Free Church, Glasgow, 153 pp, NEW PAPERBACK, Evangelical Press of Wales, £2.95.

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# No Other Name

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Hywel Jones

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*The theme of the BEC Conference at Leicester in 1989 was 'ONLY ONE WAY'. This article is a revision of the address which examined the exegetical basis for evangelical exclusivism and universality by considering Acts 4:12, 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved'.*

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I have come to believe that this is a most important verse of Holy Scripture at this time not only in relation to the church and her task in the world but also for the preservation of Christianity itself.

Acts 4:12 is a statement of the gospel and of course it is part of the Bible. We have here an example of the close connection which exists between the Bible and the gospel. Let me say a word or two about that inter-relationship. The gospel is found in the Bible and it is presented there, infallibly, in all sorts of ways. The Bible, therefore, supports the gospel which in turn leads those who receive it, to the Bible. The one therefore subserves the interests of the other. May that be increasingly so in the closing years of this century — all over the world! There is, however, another side to this connection — a dark one. It is that when either the Bible or the gospel is undermined, the other is bound to be adversely affected. One cannot play down the Bible and play up the gospel.

In this century an attempt has been made to do just that, to play up the gospel while playing down the Bible. I draw your attention to this fact so that we may **locate our subject historically**. It is important to realise that the threat posed to the gospel in the late eighties is the direct consequence of the threat posed to the Bible in the early decades of this century and even before that. The BEC has been involved in this struggle. In the sixties and early seventies the inerrancy of the Bible was on the programme of our annual conferences. This was before the International Council for Biblical Inerrancy came into being (the BEC is not always behind the times!). As an inevitable consequence of the departure from an orthodox doctrine of Holy Scripture, we now find that the gospel is at stake. If we cannot say 'No other book', we will soon be unable to say 'No other name'. May those evangelicals who did not see Christianity threatened in the conflict over Scripture, see that it is now threatened in the conflict over the gospel!

But let us also note *where* our text is found in the Bible. It is in a book which is given over to an account of the expansion of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome — a growth from 120 Jews to thousands of Jews and non-Jews, from something in an upper room to something which turned the world upside down. Acts 4:12 relates to a particular occasion when the gospel was made known. It is therefore an example of how this transformation which affected the then known world took

place. It was primarily and supremely through the preaching of the gospel. In Acts 4:12, therefore, we find something to instruct and inspire us in our multi-racial, multi-religious and pagan world. The truth and spirit of Acts 4:12 are intimately related to our being more effective and relevant in today's world. Acts 4:12 is what the church of today ought to say and how it ought to say it.

It is precisely at this point that a major difficulty has to be encountered and this is the reason why our subject has been chosen. The church today is, by and large, no longer able to say what Peter said, let alone how he said it. This is most serious because Acts 4:12 is an utterance of the apostles, Peter and John, authorised plenipotentiaries of Jesus Christ as far as the making known of truth is concerned. As such, Acts 4:12 — and we may just note in passing that there is no variation in the extant manuscripts of this verse — is of massive significance for the church in every time and culture. It supplies a standard to which all Christian proclamation should conform. Unless Acts 4:12 is acceptable to the church, its proclamation of the Christian message will neither be in truth nor in power.

A study of how Acts 4:12 has been commented on over the last century provides an interesting piece of history. What emerges from such a study is an indication of what has happened in the churches over that period. Taking 1878 as a rough departure point we see in the commentaries of J A Alexander and H A W Meyer that Acts 4:12 presented them with no problems at all. They stated its plain meaning, supported by exegetical comment. In the first decades of this century, Acts 4:12 was passed over without comment by Furneaux, Foakes-Jackson, Rackham and others. I have difficulty in understanding this silence as a case of letting the text speak for itself. In the years following the Second World War, the verse is either argued with or explained away (cf Interpreter's Bible).

From this it can be seen that Acts 4:12 serves as a litmus test of the church's condition, its relative health and vigour, or its decline and weakness. We need to test ourselves by it, or allow it to test us, as well as insisting on testing others by it. Sad to say, it is not only ecumenically aligned commentators who are exposed by it, but even evangelical commentaries leave something to be desired in their treatment of it. In those, too, the scope of reference of Acts 4:12 and the strength of the statement is not brought out as fully as it ought to be.

So the statement in Acts 4:12 which originally was intended to exert pressure on the 'world' seems today to put pressure on the church. Face to face with Acts 4:12 the church can be as uncomfortable as the world is — perhaps even more so. Whenever what was intended to be a means of life, as Acts 4:12 surely was, becomes a means of 'death', sin is the cause. When that applies to the gospel as well as to the law and to the church as well as to the world we are indeed faced with a serious state of affairs and need the intervention of God not only to rehabilitate his truth but also to clothe it with power.

The method which I am going to follow in an attempt to expose this condition will be to analyse Acts 4:12, using its light to reveal the darkness in today's church, the world and perhaps in our own hearts. This will not mean doing violence to the text because, in ever so many ways, **its plain teaching cuts across what passes**

**today for Christianity.** Almost everything about Acts 4:12 is objectionable in the modern church. It is as if the Lord God moved Peter to say it with the twentieth century in view and not the first. Of course he did not. But what God did was to move him to say it with the twentieth century in view *as well as* the first century. In Acts 4:12 God censures and vetos many of the most cherished notions of churches today. He also recalls the church to his truth and encourages her to proclaim it.

## **The Form**

By this we mean the text's literary character. Even on this relatively superficial level, Acts 4:12 has something important to say which amounts to a criticism of modern Christianity. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that it is a statement. It is therefore an assertion, not a question. Peter is not asking for information; he is conveying it.

But more needs to be said. Though Acts 4:12 is an assertion; **its form is negative.** There are not only negative particles in the verse; the whole verse is a negation. Even the clause at the end carries a strong negative inference indicating that salvation is no optional matter. There can be no reasonable doubt that Peter, the apostle, was intending to deny certain things when he said what he did. No one listening to him could have thought otherwise.

Negations are not that plentiful in contemporary theology, whether academically or popularly expressed, nor in ecumenical pronouncements — unless someone who does make negations is being responded to. The only thing which seems to be clearly denied in today's church is that denials can be properly and graciously expressed, that is, that one can speak as Peter did. All kinds of evasions are practised to avoid having to reject anything or say that something is wrong. This is neither a case of being polite nor of being politic. It is a matter of presupposition and prejudice which regards denials and exclusions as being at best unthinking and blinkered, at worst, bigoted, intolerant and obscurantist.

What then is to be said about Peter's negation? I have heard it said that he was carried away by the heat of the moment and spoke with vehemence but not much thought, a thing which he was prone to do. It was assumed in a rather superior manner that on reflection he would have wished to revise his statement. Such psychologising by non-professionals is hazardous enough when the patient is on the couch. But to do so at a distance of 2,000 years takes some doing — and, surely, some believing.

When one looks at the verse in its context, a very different picture emerges. Peter *was* moved — who wouldn't be? But for once, and not for the first time, he was thinking as well as feeling and was feeling what he was thinking. Indeed his thinking was clear and elevated because he was 'filled with the Spirit'. But look at verse 12. It is in two parts. Following the negation is an explanation introduced by 'for'. That means Peter was thinking; he was reasoning. He could explain himself. But that is not all. Look at the connection between verse 12a, the negation, and verse 11. It is in the nature of a deduction. This allegedly thoughtless and sub-Christian negation is not an explosion of mindless passion. It is a deduction from

what preceded it. And what is that? It is a passage in the Old Testament Scriptures, Psalm 118, a word from God himself. The negation is therefore in the nature of a conclusion drawn from divine revelation which can itself be reasonably explained and supported.

Peter was thinking theologically and here is the nub of the issue. Theologians today do not follow the theological method of the apostle. For Peter, there were firm statements made in Scripture from which equally firm conclusions could be drawn 'theo-logically'. The one yielded the other. God's affirmation yield negations of their logical opposites. That is an element in apostolic theology.

But today theology is adrift. It has cut itself loose from the two anchors of revealed, inscripturated truth and biblical theological method and therefore the ship can be driven by any wind, up and down in Adria. Its soundings never reach the bed of truth. Theology is governed by existentialist philosophy, ie Truth is what has become true for you, for me, for the liberal, the radical; the ecumenical as well as the evangelical; the Roman Catholic as well as the Protestant; for the Muslim, the Jew, the Hindu as well as the Christian. Revelation, its interpretation and expression is personalist and not propositional. It is also pluralist. John Hick declared 'Truth is two eyed'. By that he meant a statement and its opposite. Archbishop Runcie has said that truth has a thousand eyes. This means that somehow everything is part of the Truth.

If one cannot make Peter's negation, one is not only disagreeing with apostolic Christianity, but also with the nature of truth. Truth is one and consistent. It is incarnate in Christ and inscripturated in the Bible. While it is rich and many-sided, it is harmonious. Contradictions of it are wrong — unreal and soul destroying notions. **Truth has an opposite.** Not everything is true. Its antithesis is error. Such thinking is scientific; its opposite is non-sense. Divine revelation is not irrational.

During the summer of 1989, the INDEPENDENT newspaper carried comments from a number of invited contributors on the subject of how the major world religions relate to each other. Dr Paul Helm was among those invited. Our brother pointed out that in all the pieces which had been published there was a 'notable absentee'. It was 'any concern for truth'. He wrote:

Pilate's question 'What is truth?' when it was originally asked, was no doubt the question of a cynic who would not wait for an answer. But modern enquiries into the relations between the faiths are in a different case. They do not even ask the question.

He then went on to point out that while an obsessive pursuit of truth marks the natural sciences and the humanities, that is not the case among theologians. We have already stated the reason or the explanation for this. It lies in the nature of current theological method which is linked with an unbiblical theology of revelation.

We must not hesitate about making negations. Pressure is building up among evangelicals to try to avoid doing so. Of course, we are not to become negativistic and hyper-critical. But if we are not prepared to negate as clearly and loudly as we affirm then we are less than biblical. Moreover, our affirmations will become

vulnerable to (re)interpretation by those without and some within the church. Negations have a positive function. They defend truth and demarcate it from error.

## The Focus

We now look at the content of this statement and concentrate on its main theme. **That theme is salvation.** It is referred to twice in the verse, first as a noun and then as a verb. Whatever is said in this verse is related in some way or other to salvation which is its focal point. But what is salvation?

Not all that long ago, when the old 'social gospel' reigned, the use of the term 'salvation' was inevitably associated with fundamentalists. It expressed their shared belief in sin, guilt, death, hell and Satan on the dark side and acceptance with God through the atonement, forgiveness and new life on the bright side. It was evangelical and an evangelical's term. No longer is that the case. Others use the term and do so with a variety of meanings. We shall consider two.

First of all, it is pointed out in several commentaries and by David Edwards in the book *ESSENTIALS*, that Acts 4:12 is set in a healing context and the word 'saved' is a translation of the same Greek word as the word 'healed'. At the end of verse 10 the word plainly means 'well' or 'in good health'. Why then may not the word 'healed' be substituted for the word 'saved' in verse 12? After all, Peter and John are responding to the question of the Sanhedrin stated in verse 7, 'By what name did you do this?' Peter's answer begins in verse 8 and goes on to verse 12. It is claimed that he is talking about healing throughout, physical and by extension psychological.

The Inter-Faith Consultative Group of the Board for Mission and Unity of the Church of England was requested by General Synod in 1981 to produce a report on 'the theological aspects of dialogue'. In that report Acts 4:12 is described as being part of a 'story (which) is about healing and the authority by which this takes place'. The report goes on,

Peter's reply is not intended to deny the existence of other healings but to claim that all healing, all making whole, belong to Jesus. It is going beyond the text to make it a statement about other faiths.

Secondly, this statement about salvation is not only understood by some as referring to healing or wholeness. There is also the concept of social justice/liberty from oppression which has come to the fore since the late sixties. This amounts to freedom from every kind of socio-economic tyranny with all the deprivation which such oppression and concentration of wealth and power inevitably creates. The Third Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, a department of the World Council of Churches, which was held in Bangkok in 1973 was immediately preceded by a world conference called to discuss the subject of 'Salvation Today'. In this conference, salvation was regarded as having four dimensions, economic, social, political and personal. All the time was taken up in discussing the first three. The heavy influence of liberation theologies and anti-western third world theologies is obvious at this point. Is that what Peter meant by salvation?

In reply to this it must be acknowledged that the salvation word group does include

the aspect of healing and wholeness within its range of meaning. But that does not mean that there is nothing to prevent 'salvation' being replaced by 'healing' in our text because the *noun* translated 'salvation' is never used for healing in the New Testament. In addition, Peter's answer to the question of verse 9 is completed in verse 10. Verses 11 and 12 are in the nature of an addition, expounding the significance of the name, seizing an opportunity for evangelistic preaching. Further, verse 11 is talking about something much larger than temporary healing of the body.

The meaning of the figurative expression in verse 11 is stated doctrinally and practically in verse 12. This means that the salvation referred to in verse 12 is what a cornerstone or capstone does for a building. Physical healing is a detail in and an illustration of that larger salvation.

The words in verse 11 are taken from Psalm 118, which is a messianic Psalm. Jesus quotes it with reference to himself. It was one of the psalms sung at Passover time. The building referred to by implication in the statements is a temple — a place where God dwells with his people. The cornerstone begins the building and marks out its character, just as a stone at a corner determines the lines for the walls it joins by its own shape, or, as a copestone, it completes the edifice. The divine messiah brings the 'new' temple into being and brings it to its completion. This stone is divinely chosen and placed. It is given. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ.'

J A Alexander wrote as follows concerning the term translated 'salvation' and his words are well worth heeding: it is 'the standing, not to say, the technical expression for the whole remedial work which the Messiah was to accomplish, and of which his personal name (Jesus) was significant'. That is why the definite article is used in the text ie *the* salvation. As such it is not to be identified totally with the renovation of the spirit. This would be to narrow it down to unacceptable limits. 'The' salvation includes the body. Equally, it would be an unjustifiable restriction to limit it to the church, for this salvation will make a new world ie new heavens and a new earth. But the Scriptures teach that this provided salvation is worked out or bestowed in stages through time, culminating only in eternity. That must be remembered. The Bible teaches that salvation *will* make completely whole but not all at once or all on earth, nor for all beyond death.

**To make salvation include physical healing and psychological wholeness for all and universal social justice in the here and now is therefore a serious and unbiblical distortion.** Healings may and do occur: social harmony in justice may be found, primarily and increasingly in the church and, in measure, in the world during times of revival, but fully only in heaven. It is only when sin is forever banished and people are forever glorified that 'there will be no more...and all the former things will have passed away.' Even so, the entire salvation is secured and promised in association with and in consequence of the bestowal of the initial blessings of the gospel, namely repentance and the remission of sins (Acts 5:31). That can be termed 'the gospel'. Therefore, salvation, smaller and larger; begun and continued here but consummated only in heaven not on earth is what is held out in Acts 4:12. It is found only in Jesus Christ.

## The Features

I have in mind here the description of salvation provided in this verse. We have already seen that it is divine and immense. Verse 11 shows that. It is 'so great salvation'. In addition, this statement presents two further aspects which need to be emphasised today, separately and together. They are exclusiveness and universality.

### Exclusiveness

Acts 4:12 not only makes it clear that this salvation is found in Jesus Christ but that it is found in him *alone*. There is no other saviour beside him and no salvation except in him. This amounts to a declaration of exclusiveness in the matter of salvation. The notion of exclusiveness is not generally acceptable today. It is regarded as the mark of the rabid and bigoted fundamentalist — Shi'ite Muslim and evangelical, as if there were no difference between them. As a result many prefer to use the word 'unique' instead of the term 'exclusive'. We need to understand what this substitution is aimed to achieve. It speaks of a distinctiveness which does not amount to an exclusiveness in any respect though, strictly speaking, the two words are synonymous. Consequently, its use with reference to Jesus Christ becomes coloured by the way in which he is regarded. It becomes possible to speak of a special distinctiveness with regard to him as a special revelation of God which does not put him in a category of his own necessitating the use of the term 'exclusive'. What I mean is that if Jesus of Nazareth is not the Christ of God, then his uniqueness does not amount to that. If one is unable to affirm the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ it is because one's christology is at best weak.

The New Testament as a whole makes clear what Peter does in Acts 4:12, that it is because Jesus bears the name he does, ie is of the kind he is, that **his uniqueness must amount to exclusiveness**. It is because Jesus is the Christ that there is no other saviour and consequently no salvation in any other. The word 'other' in Acts 4:12 means 'of a different kind'. While numerous 'saviours' are acknowledged in the world there are basically only two *kinds*, viz Jesus and all the rest. Because Jesus is the Christ of God, the salvation of God is found in him alone.

Peter was aware of the existence of other religions as was Paul, who referred to the fact that there were many gods and lords who were recognised and worshipped. In saying what he did, Peter therefore knew that Jew and Gentile, with all their sub-groups, with their differing beliefs and rituals were being excluded. But that is exactly what he meant to do. Here again, a contradiction must be noted between apostolic Christianity and much of what passes for Christianity at the present time. Peter was at pains to exclude 'other saviours' and 'other ways of salvation'. Today, strenuous efforts are being made to include them.

There are three main ways which I notice in which this broadening is being attempted. Any one of them by itself would be destructive of Christianity. But they combine to make a three-pronged attack. They are:

- 1 A concentration on **God and not Jesus Christ**.
- 2 A concentration on **the Spirit and not Jesus Christ**.
- 3 A concentration on **Christ and not Jesus**.

It is not my intention to expound these views which are not only anti-Christian but anti-trinitarian. However, I must say a little about each to make clear what is being referred to.

### ***1 A Concentration on God and not Jesus Christ***

What this approach does is to make use of the fact that God or a concept of deity is common to all religions. This is to be maximised. J A T Robinson of HONEST TO GOD notoriety took this view. Probably its leading exponents are Karl Rahner on the Roman Catholic side and John Hick on the Protestant side. In adopting this perspective, the person and work of Jesus Christ are at best diminished and even dispensed with.

For example, David Edwards commenting on John 14:6 says that while it is only Christians who know God as Father, others know the same God by other names. But is this the same God? Can God be personally known if he is not known as Father? Hick rejects that Jesus is divine and focuses instead on the 'God (who) has many names'. God can be Adonai or Allah, Rama or Krishna. For the issue of salvation it does not really matter. Peter Cotterell, an evangelical teacher of missiology, writing on John 14:6 says that 'what this (verse) does say is that insofar as anyone approaches God that approach is made possible by Christ. There is no other way. What it *does not* do is to define the prerequisites of that approach.' That means that it is possible to approach God without ever coming personally to Jesus Christ. Is that evangelical truth?

### ***2 A Concentration on the Spirit and not Jesus Christ***

This is part and parcel of the position which has just been referred to, but as the Spirit is separately mentioned we should isolate this view. Archbishop Runcie has made several statements about God being 'the irreducible mystery' present in all forms of worship; 'a higher and stronger power than that of human beings'. But in his lecture on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the World Congress of Faiths he referred to his belief that 'other faiths than our own are genuine mansions of the Spirit'. (Capital 'S' original.)

The Inter-Faith dialogue speaks of the Spirit uncovering to Christians 'in other faiths and cultures the deepest truths of their own Christian and human being', ie as they engage in dialogue. Salvation is by the Spirit at work in the world apart from Jesus Christ. But is that what Scripture teaches? Will not the Spirit of Truth always lead to Christ?

### ***3 A Concentration on Christ and not Jesus***

In this approach to other religions, use is made of the statement at the beginning of the Gospel of John that the Logos or Christ is the light of men. This is taken to mean that he informs and is present in non-christian religions. As a result people have written about the Unknown Christ, eg in Hinduism. Devout adherents to these other faiths are recognised as 'anonymous Christians' because implicit faith is present in their hearts. In addition to a book entitled GOD HAS MANY NAMES Hick has another volume called WHATEVER PATH MEN CHOOSE IS MINE.



**What can be said by way of response to all this?** What would Peter have said if he had been faced with it? Well, what did he say? Perhaps it is relevant to us today. From Acts 4:12 we see that he referred to one name in which salvation is found. Which name is that? Is it God, or the divine Spirit or the Christ? What is the name of this saviour? Acts 4:10 gives us the answer. It is not 'God'. Nor 'the Spirit'. Nor is it even 'Christ'. It is Jesus Christ of Nazareth — the designation of offensive particularity.

It is the Messiah who was Jesus. And not any Jesus, for that was a common name, but a particular Jesus from Nazareth. Salvation is found in history not philosophy; in fact not mysticism; in a particular individual not a cosmic being, an ineffable deity nor even a High Creator God. Just as there is no Christ apart from Jesus the Christ so there is no God apart from the one revealed in Jesus the Christ. God is only personally and savingly knowable through Jesus Christ.

### **Universality**

To reject the kind of universalism which is favoured by those who adopt a pluralistic view of truth and the saving validity of non-christian religions and to assert the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ as the only saviour does not carry with it any suggestion that Christianity is for some kind of elite. Nor must it ever be thought of as a minority faith. Such conclusions are as forbidden by Scripture as the heresy which we are opposing. No — it is for the world and the world needs it. Peter was affirming this when he used the expressions 'under heaven' and 'among men'. The gospel has a worldwide bearing and scope of reference.

By the expression 'under heaven' Peter was referring to the whole earth. No part of the universe is excluded at this point. 'Among men' is a reference to the inhabitants of the earth, women and children included, considered in their common humanity (*men* lacks the definite article) but also in their number and variety (the noun is plural). David Edwards' restriction of Peter's statement to the Jews who were present fails to treat these universalising expressions at all. Associating 'under heaven' and 'men' and relating them to the matter of salvation means that there is no other saviour in the whole wide world and the people of the whole wide world need that saviour.

What is it that undergirds this universality? We have seen and stated the reasons which support and necessitate the exclusiveness of the Saviour. What are those which support and necessitate the universality of his salvation? They are two in number and are found in the words '*given*' and '*must*'. The first relates to the **single divine provision** and the second to the **common human need**.

The basic fatal weakness of all 'saviours' other than Jesus Christ is that they are only human and therefore sinful. They are therefore unable to deal with the sin which creates the need for salvation. Salvation cannot come therefore from within the human race. Where then can it come from? It cannot come from the devil — he has neither the love nor the righteousness nor the power to provide it. Only God has. But he is the one so grievously sinned against and justly angered. Yet he provides it and by gift! It is given but only in one person, Jesus Christ. That salvation is divine and so it must be sufficient for the whole world. And all the

world needs it. God loves all sinners. God so loved the world. No one can say there is no love for him or her in God and no salvation. Anyone, anywhere, who believes in Jesus Christ, God's son, will not perish but will have everlasting life.

But will everyone, everywhere, who does not believe in him perish? **What about those who cannot believe because they have never, ever heard?** This is a problem for us to reflect on. We have already excluded the notion of salvation outside of Christ for good pagans on the basis of pluralism. That selfsame possibility raises its head from within evangelicalism — albeit on another basis.

Is it true that every human being needs the Saviour God provides, even though he or she is made in God's image and lives in the world which God has made and in which he is active? God does reveal himself in creation and providence, and man, though fallen is still incurably religious. May someone, then, be received by God even though he or she does not believe in Jesus?

There is disagreement among evangelicals on this matter. Some declare that no one can be saved who does not come to believe in Jesus Christ, eg Carl Henry, Dick Dowsett. The unevangelised, ie those who do not hear the gospel must therefore be eternally lost. Others, for example, Sir Norman Anderson, Peter Cotterell, Martin Goldsmith, Jim Packer and John Stott do not make that categorical denial. In some way or other they reckon with the possibility that some who have never heard the gospel *may* be saved. We need to note discriminately the differing grounds on which they do this and the language they use. There are three basic reasons to consider.

- 1 Some 'good pagans' may live up the light which they have been given in creation and providence.
- 2 Some 'good pagans' may cry to God for mercy because of their conscious need through sin and guilt.
- 3 God may quicken some directly by his Spirit.

There is an obvious difference between the first of these reasons and the other two. The first reason is based on an incorrect exegesis of Romans 1 & 2 in two respects. First, it assumes that what God reveals of himself and his will in creation and providence is enough to save and that someone or many could respond to it acceptably. Neither is true. **The gospel is not revealed by general revelation** and whatever light people have. Jews or not, no one lives up to it, no not one. All in Adam are therefore subject to God's just wrath on account of ungodliness and unrighteousness. To teach otherwise is to teach another way of salvation. Peter Cotterell does this and argues that general revelation must be potentially salvific. He says that: 'although there is clear Bible testimony that salvation comes to us exclusively through Christ, that testimony does not also require an overt knowledge of Christ'. Such thinking is anti-evangelical as well as unbiblical and is to be rejected.

Anderson, Goldsmith, Stott and Packer do not regard general revelation as salvific. Their view is that God may well act savingly apart from gospel proclamation but if, or when he does it is by his Spirit, in his grace and on the basis of the death of Christ. Anderson is by far the most optimistic on this point, arguing and

affirming that God will save sinners who cry to him for mercy, even though they have never heard of Jesus Christ. He uses the case of Old Testament believers who were saved apart from the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as examples of what God will do for such 'good pagans'. But is this a fair parallel? Old Testament saints were not entirely without gospel information. By means of the Old Testament's predictions and types they were in receipt of a kind of gospel proclamation though they could not in the nature of things hear the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But that apart, Anderson's view is not anti-evangelical in content as Cotterill's is. It may, however, be or become anti-evangelical *in practice*.

Packer and Stott proceed on general theological grounds, allowing for the immediate work of the Spirit on the human conscience. Both refer to Cornelius as an example that the Spirit can work in this direct way but rightly point out that the Lord brought the message of the gospel to him so that he might be saved. That fact should weaken any enthusiasm about the possibility of someone's being saved without the word. (Goldsmith does not refer to Cornelius.) But, all four declare that if anyone is saved in this way, it is only because of Christ's death. There is no other saviour and no other basis of salvation.

In my view, this position does not militate against the gospel in terms of its content because it does not teach an alternative way of salvation. Salvation is only in Christ, by grace and to all who look to God for mercy. Yet I believe it is not in keeping with what the New Testament teaches about the way of salvation because it does not include the distinct object of saving faith. This object is not just the mercy of God but the person of Jesus Christ and while it is not essential to understand the doctrine of the atonement in order to believe in Jesus Christ, it is necessary to perceive that Jesus Christ is the saviour from sin. I take therefore the view that **everyone needs to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved** and would argue that as being the New Testament position.

If, however, we were to accept that the view presented by Anderson, Goldsmith, Packer and Stott is not anti-evangelical in content, would we be admitting something which had the effect of being anti-evangelical and anti-evangelistic in practice? Here I think we have to distinguish between Anderson, Goldsmith and Stott on the one hand and Packer on the other. The views of the former could well be anti-evangelistic in practice because they are *optimistic* that God may save apart from faith in Christ. Anderson is positive about this while Goldsmith and Stott are agnostic. The fact that all statedly countenance the possibility can send a signal to their camp followers which can weaken evangelism. Packer, by contrast, makes objective statements in a definitive way. He expresses no hope and that, I think, is important. He writes: 'What we cannot safely say is that God ever does save anyone in this way. We simply do not know.'

But this is only a debate about a possibility. Acts 4:12 deals with certainty. It uses the word 'must' not 'may' about this salvation. The fact that God has given a saviour is the proof that he is needed. Just as every sinner has no real option about whether he or she needs to be saved or not, so **the church has no real option about whether it needs to preach the gospel or not to every sinner**. God was not

interested, nor was the Lord Jesus Christ, in a possibility of salvation, not even a theological possibility! Should the church be? God gave Jesus Christ to make salvation sure for any, for all who believe. The church must therefore proclaim that certain and immense salvation to any and to all. To the whole wide world, we must say 'Come, for all things are now ready'. And if they were all to come there would still be enough and to spare — in room and provision.

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In the catalogue of New Titles the publishers write: 'Written with penetrating honesty and insight, this is the first book by a leading British evangelical to recognise God's saving activity among those who live without the Church and without an overt knowledge of the gospel. As such, it holds out a special challenge to traditional Evangelicalism, while also having much to say which Christians of all persuasions will find stimulating and refreshing.'

WHAT ABOUT OTHER FAITHS?, M Goldsmith, Hodder & Stoughton, 1989

Rev Hywel R Jones MA is Principal of the London Theological Seminary

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*It is fundamental to biblical revelation to preserve the distinction between general and special revelation. Where general revelation is seen to be special, common grace is seen to be saving, creation is seen to have within it the seeds of redemption, and the law is thought to be the gospel, there Christian faith will be destroyed. By contrast, where that which is general is obscured, where common grace is denied in order to enhance that which is saving, where the Spirit's work of regeneration is so stressed that his work of creation is forgotten, there what is prerequisite to saving faith will be lost, and much that God is doing in our world will be obscured.*

David F Wells, GOD THE EVANGELIST, p 24

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# Dr Runcie and the Anglican Evangelical Movement

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*Eryl Davies*

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The cover is attractive, the contents disconcerting and the price expensive! I am referring to **THE UNITY WE SEEK** which was published in 1989 by Darton, Longman and Todd at £7.95 (only 161 pages and paperback). The book is a series of addresses delivered by Dr Robert Runcie and compiled/edited by Margaret Pawley. But not all the chapters deal with unity. In fact, it is the first eight addresses only which are grouped together in the first section under the title *Unity*. Only two of these eight addresses actually touch on unity so the book's title is misleading.

Part Two of the book contains 15 addresses of varying length under the title *Service*. The material here is not particularly significant nor stimulating. However, two of the addresses in Part One on Unity merit attention here.

The first and also longest article is **The Nature of Unity We Seek** (pp 3-21). This address was given by Dr Runcie at the 1988 Lambeth Conference. You may remember that the bishops of the Churches in the Anglican Communion gather at Lambeth every ten years at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury to discuss and debate contemporary issues. In his opening address to the 1988 Conference, the Archbishop spoke of unity in three contexts: 1) unity within the Anglican Communion, 2) ecumenical unity among the Churches and 3) the unity of all creation.

What about the unity within the Anglican Communion? The 1988 Lambeth Conference was certainly divided on many key issues and, at times, even the survival of the Anglican Communion itself appeared doubtful. Dr Runcie's advice is neither profound nor biblical but diplomatic and conciliatory. He feels that national/provincial autonomy or 'dispersed authority' is a safeguard. The most profound expression of Anglican unity, according to the Archbishop, is in worship. 'In liturgical worship the Scriptures are proclaimed, the creed is confessed, the sacraments are celebrated, and all is given order through an authorised episcopal ministry' (pp 7-8). Would that the Scriptures were not only read but also preached by all Anglicans and the creeds universally believed! Dr Runcie argues that the creative use of conflict is part of the process of discerning the truth while provincial leadership furthers ecumenical dialogue. But interdependence, not independence, he insists, must be their relationship pattern.

The next section on *Ecumenical Unity Among the Christian Churches* has been more extensively quoted and discussed over the last year or so. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, he responds to ecumenical apathy by stressing the creative ecumenical work done at local level by many Churches. Secondly, he questions the legitimacy of denominational federalism and co-existence. Here, he adds, 'I look forward to a major contribution from Evangelicals because of their unwavering and biblically grounded conviction that there is One Lord and One Faith' (p 13). Thirdly, Dr Runcie regards the historic episcopate as an important instrument of unity and sees for the Pope 'a

new style of Petrine ministry: an ARCIC primacy rather than a papal monarchy' (p 17). This idea arose when Runcie visited Assisi with other leaders of World Religions in October 1986 at the invitation of the Pope. In words which have been used and misused on many occasions since, the Archbishop commented:

Pope John Paul welcomed us, including other Anglican primates present here at this Conference, but then he became, in his own words 'a brother among brothers'.

And at the end we all bundled into the same bus and the Pope had to look for a seat (p 17).

This is what Runcie calls a 'presiding in love' for the sake of the unity of the Churches.

In the final section, The Unity of All Creation, Robert Runcie touches on global unity and the inter-faith dialogue.

What is more interesting to us is his address entitled **The Anglican Evangelical Movement**. The text is fascinating but the implications are disturbing.

In words which are profoundly accurate, the Archbishop declares, 'since *then* evangelicals have changed'. What is the historical reference here? Well, Dr Runcie observes that the rather fixed boundaries between High Church, Modernist and Evangelicals which existed several decades ago 'are no longer fixed'. Sadly, we agree that this is true. How did it happen? The Archbishop explains: 'The National Evangelical Anglican Celebrations have reflected this change as well as causing it. One thousand attended Keele (April 1967), two thousand came to Nottingham (April 1977), the attendance here at Caister may be something nearer three thousand. It was at Keele that an image was changed...' Dr Runcie suggests that Anglican Evangelicals were affected, like others, by the 'heady excitement following the Second Vatican Council (1962-5)'. He describes the Keele Conference as 'a catalyst of change' (p 44) which reaffirmed the authority of Scripture but was also prepared to challenge 'the most cherished evangelical traditions. John Stott's leadership was crucial... Keele in 1967 was the birth of a new evangelical movement within the Church of England...'

According to Dr Runcie, Keele did two things. First, it affirmed Anglican evangelicalism. 'There had been a tendency for evangelicals in the Church of England to see more in common with those who share similar views in other denominations than with their fellow Anglicans. The establishment of the Church of England Evangelical Council in 1960 marked the beginning of a new identity...' (p 45). Secondly, Keele showed 'a new openness to other traditions... The value of ecumenism, liturgical change, social action and sacramental life were central to the statements that followed those three brief days at Keele...'

The Archbishop next proceeds to criticise the 1977 Nottingham Declaration of Intent for 'a notable absence from the document of any strategic ecclesiological thinking' (p 47). He then used the Pauline imagery of the body of Christ to draw attention to a major eucharistic reference (1 Corinthians 10:16-17) and also the need to avoid division. Finally, Dr Runcie suggests four areas in which evangelicals can make a contribution to ecclesiology.

First, the rediscovery of the '*Church as Sacrament*, expressed in the remarkable resurgence of liturgical scholarship and interest' (p 54); here, some members of the Evangelical Alliance have made a contribution which 'has been significant' (p 55).

Second, their belief in the *Church as Signal to the World of the Word of God* and the way which they take the Bible seriously.' Third, recognition of the *Church as a Society*, a fellowship of believers (p 56) and, fourth, the notion of the *Church as Servant*, involving social concern.

The reviewer's comments are hardly necessary. However, Dr Runcie's reference to the significance of Keele 1967 is accurate. Furthermore, his remarks draw attention again to the importance of the period 1960-1967 for an understanding of evangelical relationships in the late sixties, seventies and eighties. This period also helps to explain the negative response by many Anglican evangelicals to Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones' address to the National Assembly of Evangelicals in 1966. His address was misunderstood; even worse, it was misrepresented and rejected for reasons which are questionable. This is a vital period in contemporary Church history in Britain. More research needs to be done.

Have we hitherto failed to appreciate the influence of Vatican II on Anglican evangelicals in the mid and late-sixties? Why was the influence of John Stott so dominant? What were the principles and reasons which turned Anglican evangelicals away from their brethren in other Churches in favour of a comprehensivist and ecumenical alliance with those who denied the gospel? Different attitudes are now emerging towards Keele '67 and our Anglican brethren need our prayers and encouragement as they seek to express a biblical ecclesiology which avoids the compromise of past decades and centuries.

*Dr D Eryl Davies*

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## **Archbishop Robert Runcie and Jewish Evangelism**

The appearance in December 1988 of evangelistic advertisements in the British press from CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL created a heightened awareness by British Jews of other attempts to 'convert' them. At a press conference on 5th January 1989 Jewish leaders said that the Archbishop should 'take appropriate action' against the Church's Ministry Among the Jews and called on him to reconsider his position as the society's patron.

Dr Runcie's spokesman responded by defending the right of Christians to engage in Jewish evangelism. 'Christianity is a missionary religion, whilst Judaism is not', he said. 'The call to make disciples is clear in the New Testament record. The Archbishop, however, does not approve of covert missionary operations but he has not received any firm evidence that the Church's Ministry Among the Jews engages in such covert activity.'

Is such a carefully worded statement full archiepiscopal endorsement for cross-cultural evangelism? The current direction of mainstream Anglican opinion seems to deny this, favouring the open-ended approach of General Synod approved inter-faith dialogue. Perhaps the SPECTATOR'S Michael Trend was not too far wide of the mark when he interpreted the Lambeth statement to mean, 'Christianity and Judaism were, after all, probably different religions: sorry about this — its just one of those things.'

When seeking further elucidation of the Archbishop's views on Jewish evangelism, I was firmly assured by the Lambeth press officer that Dr Runcie's published thought had not progressed beyond the official statement.

*John S Ross, Deputy Director, Christian Witness to Israel*

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# Worship in Spirit and in Truth

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*Neil Richards*

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*'They that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth'* John 4:24

The whole subject of worship is something of a minefield at the present time. Yet that must not be allowed to obscure the glory and preciousness of the subject. For many of us it has been a part of the richness of growing older in the faith to have found increasing joy and refreshment in lifting our eyes from ourselves and this vain world to God and his glory. That has been the experience of Christians through the ages.

## **What is worship?**

In the broadest sense worship is that whole revenue of glory which we owe to God as our Maker and Redeemer. But it is its more restricted sense that concerns us here, that is, our communion with God in praise and adoration; in prayer and meditation; and in the whole range of responses which we owe to God when we approach him in private or in public. Worship is an eminent fruit of our reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ,<sup>1</sup> and a high privilege revealed to us and required of us in the gospel.

Controversy has often surrounded the matter of Christian worship. The form that church worship should take was a matter of great concern for the Reformers and the Puritans, and has continued to be a live issue in the Anglican church even up to the present day. However, the non-conformist churches settled to the simple form of service with hymns and prayer, Scripture reading and sermon; a form which was to remain almost universal amongst them for 300 years. Today, all that has changed, and changed radically. New forms of worship have come in and with this has come a new approach to worship. We live in **an era of change**, to which there have been two opposite and extreme reactions, both of which are dangerous:

- a) A reaction against all that is old and traditional ('Trad is bad') and an assumption that all these changes are the leading of the Holy Spirit. The old wine-skins are breaking and God's people are being 'released' to worship him. Anyone who expresses reservations or misgivings is grieving the Spirit.
- b) The opposite reaction has been suspicion of everything new and a tenacious clinging to all that is old. A fear of change.

Neither of these attitudes is commendable. Those who are the heirs of the Reformers ought to be open to God giving further light from his Word and to the Spirit leading us forward and enabling us to break new ground. Yet both Scripture and history would make us cautious. Our danger is that we jump into the controversy about *forms* of worship without first thinking through our basic *approach*.

## **Principles to Guide Our Approach**

### **1 Only Christians can worship God acceptably**

Our Lord reminds us of this in John 4:22, 'You worship what you do not know; for



salvation is from the Jews.' There can be no true worship without salvation. We must come to God through the Mediator Jesus Christ. His blood alone can cleanse us. Only the regenerate can worship God acceptably. It follows from this that where the gospel is not preached or believed there is no true worship. The outward forms may be there, but if the gospel is not, then there is no acceptable worship. No matter what is done to brighten up the service, it is dead service. Only the Holy Spirit can enable men to worship God acceptably. To put this truth positively, the gospel produces true worshippers as nothing else in the world can. Worship with adoring praise is the first response of a redeemed heart.

## 2 The coming of Christ transformed worship

'Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23). A new era was breaking upon the church. The whole spirit and form of worship was wonderfully enriched and transformed by the coming of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. By these two events the church took a great leap forward and in a moment the whole life and worship of God's people for thousands of years was transcended and beggared. John Owen has two sermons on Ephesians 2:18, 'For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit', in which he shows the greater glory of New Covenant worship. It would be difficult to find anything remotely comparable in the recent spate of books on worship. He speaks of Christ taking worshippers by the hand and leading them into the presence of God, and saying to the Father, 'Behold I and the children which God has given Me' (Heb 2:13).<sup>2</sup> The glory of Christian worship lies here, in the access we have into the immediate presence of God in heaven itself. Old Testament saints had access to God but the ground of that access and its full glory was not revealed to them, they saw it only in type and shadow, nor could that be otherwise until Christ should come and by his death rend the veil.

Only as we appreciate these things shall we be kept from the persistent error of hankering after elements of Old Testament worship. **The New Testament, not the Old, must regulate our worship.** As J C Ryle puts it in an Anglican context, 'To bring into the Christian church holy places, sanctuaries, altars, sacrifices, priests, gorgeous vestments, and the like, is to dig up what has been long buried; and to turn to candles from the light of the noon-day sun.' The present tendency is to go back into the Old Testament and take from it whatever suits us, whether it is dancing or the place of music in worship. Our use of the Old Testament must be controlled by an appreciation of the great changes brought about by the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the New Covenant.

## 3 True worship is in spirit and in truth

'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). I take 'in spirit' here, not as a direct reference to the Holy Spirit, but rather to **the spirituality of worship**; to its inward reality and power. True worship is heart work. The Father looks for the love and devotion of redeemed hearts, and has no pleasure in the mere outward forms of worship. 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise' (Psalm 51:17). God has always required the worship of men's hearts, in every age and

dispensation; but under the Old Covenant there was a strong external element to the worship. It was given by God as a help and a scaffold until the Messiah would come, the Spirit be poured out and the church come of age. Hence under the New Covenant there is a richer spirituality and a greater glory. But the glory and beauty of gospel worship do not lie in external things. Christians themselves are the temple and dwelling place of God, who manifests his presence in them as they seek him by faith and long for him with loving hearts. The idea that robes and rituals, or a worship band and dance group in our services, are enriching to the worship is tragically misguided. 'What poor low thoughts have men of God and his ways who think there lies an acceptable glory and beauty in a little paint and varnish', wrote Owen. Here, I suspect, lies the greatest weakness of the new approach to worship that has swept through the church in the last few decades — failure to appreciate the spiritual nature and glory of Christian worship. Some of the changes that have come are not spiritual, but cultural. The culture of the pop concert has invaded the church's worship. 'The climate of change has made room for much more than new music. Dance, movement, drama, banners and flags, mime, children's orchestras, adult orchestras, worship bands and public praise processions...'<sup>3</sup> Whatever happened to spiritual worship?

'If', as Dr Packer says, 'simplicity is the safeguard of inwardness, then Scripture is the fountain-head of truth.'<sup>4</sup> **Worship is the response of the heart to the God who has revealed himself to us in Christ.** 'In worship we must seek to reflect back to God by our response the knowledge that we have received of him through his revelation.' For this reason the reading and preaching of God's Word is central to Christian worship. We are to listen with awe (for God, not the preacher), with attention and expectancy. Congregations are not passive during the sermon, as is often suggested, but have a spiritual work to do in hearing, digesting and applying the Word. It is a high part of our worship that our hearts are responding to all that God is saying to us — responding in joy or in sorrow, and with all those holy resolves which God's Word and Spirit call forth from our hearts. Any tendency to reduce the place given to the preaching of the Word in worship must be detrimental to worship. But all this does rather beg the question as to *what kind of preaching* is most conducive to worship. Dull, lifeless, unattractive preaching stifles worship; what is needed is lively preaching which is full of faith and conviction and fire, so that congregations are stirred and animated to worship and to adoring praise. I offer no justification for failure here, only contrition and repentance.

#### **4 Christian worship is God-centred**

Our whole desire must be to offer to him acceptable praise and worship, and to have our hearts full of his inexpressible glory and ineffable love. The question which must concern us is not 'What is pleasing to us?', but '*What is pleasing to God?*' Nor must we easily assume that what does please us will please him, lest the Lord should say to us what he said to Israel through the prophet Malachi, ' "Oh that you would shut the Temple doors so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you", says the Lord Almighty' (Malachi 1:10). A spirit of hedonism has crept into our worship in which the chief concern seems to be the pleasure we have in it. True worship is pre-occupied with God. When our worship

becomes dull and dry the remedy is not to brighten it up with a 'worship band' etc, but to repent of our unbelief and dullness of heart and to seek more of God's presence and glory.

## **5 Christian worship is Spirit-empowered**

Spiritual worship can only be performed by the Holy Spirit's gracious help. Paul could say, 'For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God...' (Phil 3:3). Here is a distinguishing characteristic of Christian worship — it is guided and directed and permeated by the Spirit of God. It is surely significant that the exhortation to be 'filled with the Spirit' is followed by instructions concerning worship: 'Speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord' (Eph 5:18-20). The Spirit aids our worship in so many different ways; as the Spirit of Adoption he enables us to approach God as his dear children; as the Spirit of Prayer he helps us to pray; and as the Spirit of Joy he fills our hearts with gladness and praise to our God. His activity is explicitly connected with prayer in Ephesians 6:8: 'Pray in the Spirit' and in Romans 8:26, 'We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express'. The Spirit's intercession is conducted through us and is expressed at times in inarticulate cries. Without the Spirit's aid, prayer is a barren, lifeless affair. But when he is present and at work then the situation is transformed. Prayer becomes a mighty force, accomplishing God's glorious purposes. What is true of our dependence upon him in prayer is true of the whole of our worship. He concentrates our hearts and minds upon God and His glory. He 'takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us' (John 15:26; 16:14). 'The Holy Spirit's distinctive New Covenant role, then, is to fulfil what we may call a flood-lighting ministry... shining upon Christ.'<sup>5</sup> What are we to look to the Spirit to do for us when we gather together, a fellowship of blood-bought sons, to worship God? Not to make much of himself, but to make much of Jesus Christ. To enable us to appreciate more and more the matchless love and glory of our Saviour, so that our hearts are drawn out to him in adoring praise.

## **Principles to Guide our Worship**

We have already made the point that the New Testament is our primary guide, not the Old. For example, no one would wish to deny that on occasions dancing of a certain kind took place in the Old Testament, though such references are few. But when we turn to the New Testament there is no hint that dancing had any place in worship. The dancing we read of in the New Testament is that of Luke 7:32, and of Salome, and in this case the result was the death of John the Baptist. Similarly there is no hint that drama and mime formed any part of the worship of God, either in the Old Testament or the New. Though the Greeks were very fond of drama and would have found it appealing to their cultural tastes, no concession whatever is made to them. But we cannot touch on every modern innovation here, nor is it necessary to do so, if **the regulative authority of the New Testament** is accepted. New Testament worship is Scriptural, spiritual and simple. Its main elements are the reading and preaching of God's Word, prayer, and the singing of God's praise, and the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Precisely *how* these are to be fitted together in our services we are not told, and so we have freedom here

to order our meetings in the light of *general principles* and what seems wise and helpful to us. Such principles would include:

## 1 Edification

When Paul is dealing with the rather chaotic services of the Corinthian church (1 Cor 14) he appeals for two things, edification and order. 'He who speaks in tongues edifies himself, but he who preaches edifies the church' (v 4). That is Paul's great concern, that in all their services and worship 'the church may be edified' (v 5). 'What shall we then say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.' So we must ask ourselves, 'Is our worship producing strong, mature, all-round Christians?' That is a severe test for us all.

## 2 Order

'Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way' (v 40). Order is quite compatible with freedom and even with a measure of informality, but it does imply control and direction.

The church must believe in these twin principles and the pastoral over-sight must apply them. It is not sufficient that a man feels himself divinely prompted to contribute publicly in the services — it must be done in accord with order and edification.

## Congregational Involvement

One of the great changes that took place at the Reformation was the restoration of **congregational worship**. In the pre-Reformation church the worship was conducted at the front of the church around the altar, and members of the congregation were largely spectators. The liberating, restoring power of the Word changed all that. Some of the English Reformers even brought the table down into the body of the church, near to the people. Corporate worship involves **the whole church** during the whole of the service. When one man is praying all the congregation are praying with him, he is leading in prayer. Even if ten men pray in the course of the service, the whole congregation is engaged in prayer on each occasion. When the Word is preached, the whole church is actively involved, as we have seen. Our tradition in worship, however, allows very few to make any public contribution, perhaps just one man. The Charismatic Movement has rightly challenged that, and *it would be a shame if our response consisted only of digging our heels in*.

Perhaps it needs also to be added that true worship involves not only the whole church, but **the whole man**. We are to worship and honour God with every part of our being; with heart and soul and strength; with 'all our ransomed powers'. The mind is engaged, and the understanding — true worship is intellectually satisfying. The emotions are stirred — how can we come before such a Being as our God and not be profoundly affected in our feelings? For many of us our trouble is not too much emotion but too little. We are shallow. We have over-reacted against a wrong emotionalism, and become cold and unmoved. Even our appreciation of beauty is

involved; not of the building or music, of course they should not jar or distract, but of Christ and the gospel. All this worship is expressed through the vehicle of our bodies. We stand, or sit, to sing God's praise; we kneel, or bow our heads, in prayer; with our ears we hear others praise, exhort, encourage and teach; and with our eyes we see the congregation of God's people at praise and God's servant proclaim his Word.

## **Finding words of praise**

What shall we sing? Shall we stay with our traditional hymns or shall we go over to modern worship songs? Is it simply a matter of taste? Of course worship songs are part of a **whole new pattern of worship** that is more relaxed, leisurely and informal; to the accompaniment of a 'worship band' rather than an organ, and under the control of the 'worship leader'. The whole style is more modern and culturally acceptable. What is sung is generally very simple, brief and repetitive — full of expressions of praise and joy. There is no doubt that a large number of Christians have found this refreshing and uplifting. However, without being unduly dismissive, we do need to evaluate these changes. Every movement in the church has tended to produce its own songs of praise. The 18th century revival is perhaps the best example, think of the hymns of Watts and Wesley, and William Williams in Wales. In the 19th century the Moody and Sankey era produced 'Sacred Songs and Solos'. Something of the character of each movement, its strengths and weaknesses, is reflected in its praise. So it is with the Charismatic Movement — its theological weakness; its neglect of self-examination and godly sorrow over sin, and its subsequently superficial view of Christian joy; and positively its openness and childlike confidence towards God, these are all reflected in its songs of praise.

But how should we formulate our praise? **Is there guidance in Scripture?** Even if we agree that under the New Covenant we are not bound to sing *only* the Psalms in God's praise and that the coming of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit call for a new song of praise, yet still the Psalms may provide a **pattern for our praise**. Several features are significant for us:

- 1 In the Psalms God is worshipped for all the wondrous facets of his being and character and all his works and ways. He is praised as the God of Creation, Providence and Redemption. Our praise must reflect that wideness.
- 2 The Psalms cover the whole range of the believer's experience. In Psalm 51 he is deeply penitent; in Psalm 43 he is weary and downcast; in Psalm 23 he is trusting even in the face of death; in Psalm 32 he is humbled and pardoned; and so we could go on. These riches of experience need to be reflected in our praise.
- 3 There is within each Psalm a development of thought. Very often we are able to see how the Psalmist moves from defeat and despair to faith and triumph. This progression is satisfying and often emotionally powerful. We are carried along. We are uplifted. Our best hymns and songs have always possessed these features.
- 4 The Psalms are theologically rich. The great Old Testament themes and truths are there. The nature and character of God are set forth; the doctrine of man and of sin; God's covenant purposes towards his people; his redeeming mercy and grace; the Messianic hope and the judgement to come. The Psalms teach,

but do the modern worship songs?

- 5 There is repetition in the Psalms but it is never tedious or wearying. There is a place for repetition in our hymns, but it takes skill to introduce it wisely and helpfully.
- 6 Some of the Psalms are themselves still highly suitable and appropriate to Christian praise, so let us by all means sing them. It seems a pity that the present interest in singing verses of Scripture in song form has not extended to singing several verses of a Psalm in metrical form.

One response to all this may be to say that if we set such standards for ourselves few Christians will be able to write hymns and songs. Precisely so. The Lord gives *gifts* to his children, and whereas most of us can write doggerel, few of us can compose fine hymns — or even helpful short songs. We have a heritage of rich hymns which we ought to value and use, and to which some men in our days are able to contribute. Does that mean there is no place for modern worship songs? No, it does not. The best of them have a place and make a valuable contribution. It can be helpful, at times, to sing a short, simple, but well written, song of joyous praise to our God and Saviour. Indeed, the church has always recognised that — think of the great doxologies, brief but wonderfully rich and powerful.

In conclusion I return to **the greater glory of worship under the New Covenant**. One of the most disturbing things about current literature on Charismatic worship is its Old Testament orientation. Great occasions of celebration and praise, such as when David brought the Ark up to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15) are viewed as giving a pattern for our worship today. So just as David appointed singers and musicians to lead the worship, so we are urged to appoint worship leaders, orchestras and singers, and train and rehearse them for our services. But that use of the Old Testament must be challenged. Certainly these passages rebuke our dullness of heart and lack of a spirit of joyous praise, but they do not provide the *form* of Christian worship. The richness and glory of New Covenant worship lies in its spirituality — in the Spirit's presence and our access to God through Christ.

We are none of us where we ought to be in this matter of worship. But the way forward lies in a revival of faith and love, and a new sense of God's presence amongst us.

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- 5 *KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT*, J I Packer, p 65

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## **Professor G N M Collins**

Sadness and gratitude were strangely mingled at the news of the homecall of the Revd Dr George N M Collins, Edinburgh, on the 20th October 1989. There was sadness because his going seems to spell the end of an era. There was gratitude because his lifetime of work in the service of Christ has been rounded out in such full measure of years and grace.

Born in London in 1901, George Norman MacLeod Collins was brought up from the age of eight by his maternal grandmother in the Highland village of Elphin in Sutherlandshire. This placed him in the ambit of a godly home and a uniquely discerning circle of spiritually exercised believers who always related the importance of sound doctrine to practical Christianity and godly living.

He was ordained to his first pastorate in the Free Gaelic Congregation, Greenock, in 1928 and his sixty-one years of ministry were to prove as exceptional in their influence as their length. It was in the pulpit of Free St Columba's, Edinburgh — made famous by the redoubtable Thomas Guthrie — that from 1938 his reputation was secured as a gifted, lucid, preacher and from it he exercised an expository biblical ministry for twenty-five years. His influence as a minister was enhanced beyond the frontiers of his own denomination through his work as Editor of the Church's magazines, the INSTRUCTOR from 1937 to 1958, and the MONTHLY RECORD, from 1958 to 1973.

From 1963 until 1983 Dr Collins served with distinction as Professor of Church History at the Free Church College. His appreciation of his subject prompted him to write for the youth of today and his best known book, *THE HERITAGE OF OUR FATHERS* (1976) is particularly valuable in its discerning account of the events which produced the present Free Church of Scotland. His knowledge of 17th century Scotland was probably unrivalled in the present day and so historians of note in Britain and from overseas frequently sought his counsel and advice.

He gave valuable service to many worthy causes outside his own denomination. Not least of these was his part in the beginnings of the British Evangelical Council. He and one of his fellow Free Church ministers, the Revd Murdoch MacRae, met with three representatives of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches and instituted the Council in 1952. Dr Collins was to serve the Executive of the BEC for many years, retaining an interest in its work until the end. His long-standing friendship with Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones — whom he frequently brought to Scotland — meant that the pulpit of Westminster Chapel was one from which he preached at regular intervals.

Having become a father figure on the British church scene he will be missed by many. It is our prayer that God would now touch many of Britain's sons with the same constraining love that motivated our brother and that all of us who came under his influence might emulate the simplicity and humility which adorned his profession and commended his faith.

*Professor J D MacMillan*

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