

Foundations

Issue No.25 Autumn 1990

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



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General Secretary: Rev Alan Gibson BD, 113 Victoria Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3TJ Tel: 0727 55655

Foundations

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Ecumenical Challenge

Facing the Issues

The Preacher's Language

Islamic Politics

Vatican II

Evangelical Co-operation

What is an Evangelical?

foundations

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

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

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

Associate Editors Rev R C Christie MA BD MTh
Rev S Dray MA BD
Rev N Richards
Rev H R Jones MA
Rev J D MacMillan MA

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Editorial

Welcome to another issue of FOUNDATIONS! September 1st 1990 marked a new stage in Britain for ecumenical relationships with the establishment of re-vamped ecumenical bodies in England, Scotland and Wales. Our first article by Peter Milsom, **Holding out a Hand in the Light** is a challenge to Christians concerning the new Council of Churches for Britain. Graham Harrison then provides an article on **Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones** and urges us all to read the second volume of his biography.

Gaining the Ear of our People is a stimulating article by Clifford Bailey providing some reflections from the prophet Hosea on a preacher's choice of language. Fouzi Ayoub writes on the subject of **An Islamic Political Party?**; here are some important principles and implications to consider. To mark the anniversary of the ending of **Vatican II** some 25 years ago, I have written an article describing the Council and its implications for us. Some practical suggestions are made concerning **Co-operation Between Evangelical Churches** in the well-researched article by Paul Cook.

Ecumenical Literature draws attention to some of the key books published by the World Council of Churches. Our **Book Review** section is extended in order to draw attention to two major books, **BIBLICAL HIGHER CRITICISM** and then **EVANGELICAL AFFIRMATIONS**. A booklet, **CALLING OR COMPROMISE?**, covers the teaching of multi-faith RE in our schools; the issues are important and this booklet will help pastors to advise those who are troubled about recent developments in RE.

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Holding Out a Hand in the Light!

Peter Milsom

The new Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland prompts the BEC Executive Chairman to consider the challenge this represents to genuine Christians.

On 1st September 1990 the Inter-Church Process came to fruition with the establishment of new ecumenical bodies in England, Scotland and Wales. Some denominations and some local churches have decided not to seek membership of the new bodies. However, the major step forward for advocates of the ecumenical movement is that, for the first time, the Roman Catholic Church will be in full membership. These new bodies have agreed to 'hold hands together' but the details of the relationship have still to be worked out.

The BEC has taken a clear stand against unscriptural ecumenicity and sought to promote a true evangelical unity at church level. Yet we also have a sincere desire to remain in personal fellowship with all who are truly Christ's, whatever their present ecumenical views. Whilst feeling compelled to communicate our convictions to our fellow-Christians who do not at present agree with us, we wish to do so in love. This is not least because we know from personal experience the cost and heart-searching of applying Scriptural principles to ecumenical issues and because it is our deep conviction that reformation according to God's Word seems so often to be the biblical prerequisite for a visitation of the Holy Spirit in revival which is our greatest need today.

The emergence of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland raises important questions for Christians, both within churches involved in the new bodies and those outside. Why have some true Christians chosen to belong to an ecumenical body embracing the Roman Catholic Church which denies the gospel? Why is there not more meaningful contact and fellowship between Christians within, for example, the Church of England, Baptist Union or Presbyterian Church of Scotland and those in BEC churches? How can we present more persuasively our conviction that the nature of the gospel is determinative for church relations? How can we address together the increasing number of issues which are dividing Christians and churches in our evangelical constituency?

Why have Christians agreed to join the new ecumenical bodies?

The answer may seem simple — they are guilty of inexcusable compromise and have betrayed the gospel. But, for some, their action may have been governed by principle. They believe in the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and view schism very seriously, a truth that some evangelicals need to take more seriously. They have a sincere desire to win others in their denomination, even as Paul longed passionately for the conversion of his fellow Jews. We do not agree with the

conclusions they have arrived at, but we should hesitate before impugning the conscientiousness of their actions. It would be good to hear from Christians involved in the new ecumenical bodies the reasons why they have remained within.

For nearly 25 years there has been little dialogue between Christians within the denominations and those outside. Sitting together under the Word of God and the process of 'iron sharpening iron' moulds and shapes our convictions. **Isolation and extreme independency can blur and distort our spiritual vision.** I remember the formative influence of evangelical conferences I attended whilst still serving a denominational pastorate. I was conscious of being welcomed by those who had already seceded and my mind was stimulated by biblical principles and their application to my church situation. Without that fellowship I might not have seen some issues clearly.

This is not to imply that insights into truth belong exclusively to those outside the ecumenical movement. Our evangelical church life has been impoverished by the loss of wider fellowship. To say this does not call into question the rightness of past actions, but acknowledges that there have been losses as well as gains. The fact that Dr Lloyd-Jones' 'call' in 1966 led to the division of evangelicals was a matter of regret, no doubt, for him, since his burden was that if we allow our denominational differences to keep us apart we are guilty of the sin of schism.

How are we perceived by other Christians?

It can be a painful thing to face up to the image we have with others. Many of our fondly-held notions can be destroyed. Is there something attractive about the BEC and evangelical churches to Christians in the denominations? Have we communicated clearly the fact that we regard them as brethren? Do we appear approachable and encouraging or severe and self-righteous? Are we Christlike in our dealings with our fellow believers whom we consider to be mistaken?

This is of great importance for those who have not experienced the kind of fellowship which existed prior to 1966. The division that occurred then was between those who knew each other, and this made some mutual understanding possible. Since that time there has been less contact between Christians within the ecumenically involved denominations and those in the BEC.

How will we face the challenge of a new generation?

The spiritual condition of some of the denominations who have joined the new ecumenical bodies is nothing short of tragic. The new bodies will not change that and are no doubt seen by some as a useful diversion from the spiritual crisis. Many congregations are small and elderly, and the number of ministers has dwindled. In short, there is no new generation arising. This can be demoralizing for Christians in such churches, both ministers and church members, and they can become very discouraged. They will also be under increasing pressure to become involved in local ecumenical activities with those who deny the gospel.

We thank God that he has raised a new generation in our own midst, though we have no cause for complacency and long to see greater blessing on our churches. But have we faced the challenge of the generation now with us which 'knew not

1966'? We have been called to face the 1990's and to apply the same principles to a new situation. We must have an eye on the present and the future, as well as the past. The fact that difficulties were not resolved in the past does not mean they will never be resolved in the future. The first generation Reformers had long and passionate debates over the Lord's Supper and failed to resolve their differences. When the second generation Reformers came Luther acknowledged that Calvin's teaching might well have helped them resolve the earlier differences more amicably. We dare not assume that the last word has been spoken on church relationships.

There is a tendency for some of us to assume that any further attempts to improve relationships between Christians inside and outside the ecumenical bodies is futile. This 'give up' mentality is not biblical or spiritual, but temperamental and sociologically conditioned. We live in a 'throw-away' society. Not only are things thrown away, but so are personal relationships, with tragic consequences. This is seen in relationships within churches and between churches. Often little attempt is made to bring reconciliation, assuming that 'nothing can be done'. Such an attitude cannot be justified biblically. The new generation may be forgiven for being puzzled that this issue should be regarded as so intractable.

What are the Scriptural injunctions?

We must face the challenge of our Lord's prayer in John 17:20-23 fairly and squarely. In 1964 the late Professor John Murray speaking at the Leicester Conference said:

'While spurious unity is to be condemned, the lack of unity among churches of Christ which profess the faith in its purity is a patent violation of the unity of the body of Christ, and of that unity which the prayer of our Lord requires us to promote. We cannot escape from the implications for us by resorting to the notion of the invisible church. The body of Christ is not an invisible entity, and the prayer of Jesus was directed to the end that the world might believe. The unity prayed for was one that would bear witness to the world, and therefore belonged to the realm of the observable. The implications for visible confession and witness are unavoidable.

It is to be admitted that the fragmentation and lack of co-ordination and solidarity which we find within strictly evangelical and Reformed Churches create a difficult situation, and how this disunity is to be remedied 'in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace' is a task not easily accomplished. But what needs to be indicted, and indicted with vehemence, is the complacency so widespread, and the failure to be aware that this is an evil, dishonouring to Christ, destructive to the edification defined by the apostle as 'the increase of the body into building up of itself in love' (Eph 4:16), and prejudicial to the evangelistic outreach to the world. If we are once convinced of this evil, the evil of schism in the body of Christ, the evil of disruption in the communion of saints, then we have made great progress. We shall then be constrained to preach the evil, to bring conviction to the hearts of others also, to implore God's grace and wisdom in remedying the evil, and to devise ways and means of healing these ruptures, to the promotion of united witness to the faith of Jesus and the whole counsel of God.' (*Works*, Vol 2, p 335)

We need to address this challenge urgently. Whilst we are thankful for that measure of fellowship which we do know, we cannot but be conscious that there is much that still remains to be done. We must exemplify 'the most excellent way'.

There is a relationship between the doctrine of the Church and our sanctification. As Christians we work out our salvation in the rough and tumble of the life of the local church. There are differences of temperament and personality. Sometimes there are strong disagreements, but we seek to work out our Christian calling and service together and are the richer for it. Church life requires 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'. In this way we become, in the words of Wong Ming-Dao, 'a stone made smooth'. The same is true of interchurch relationships. If we avoid the challenge and frustration of working them out with our fellow Christians we lose the sanctifying benefit of them, and there is a lack of development and maturity in our Christian character.

There are things we can learn from ecumenism. **We should be more willing to talk with Christians who are different from us and with whom we may disagree.** We should gladly acknowledge them as fellow believers and be willing to sit together under God's Word. It is a humbling experience for our beliefs and practices to be exposed to scrutiny by fellow believers.

We believe that we and all true Christians are 'in the light'. We have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ and the truth. We are 'in Christ' and one with Him and all who belong to Him. All we do must be consistent with these spiritual realities. Are we willing to 'hold hands together' with those who are also 'in the light', but who differ from us in some ways? Holding hands is a very preliminary and tentative stage of relationship. **Holding out a hand is even more preliminary. Are we prepared to do even this** to those who, though in our view mistaken, are, by God's grace, living and walking in the same light as we are? Our Lord's words teach us that the future of the Church and the gospel is intimately bound up with our response to this question!

Rev Peter Milsom BD ACII is Pastor of Deeside Evangelical Church, Clwyd

Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland

Although the UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES have not yet joined CCBI, the BEC leaflet, **The Price of Ecumenism's New Package**, stated that they had 'agreed to join'. Here is the statement they issued on July 5 1989:

'Having regard to both the historic place that the Unitarian movement occupies within Christianity in this country and our association with the British Council of Churches and its predecessors since early this century, the General Assembly welcomes the initiative "Churches Together in Pilgrimage" and wishes to associate itself with it and to work in the spirit of the proposed new organisation. The Council of the General Assembly has agreed that the General Assembly, being a body which on principle has no credal statements in its tradition, would wish to apply for the 'alternative' form of full membership when the new ecumenical body is set up.'

Facing the Issues

Graham Harrison

From this significant book, D MARTYN LLOYD-JONES: THE FIGHT OF FAITH 1939—1981, by Iain H Murray (Banner of Truth, 831 pp, £15.95), our reviewer concentrates on a controversial feature which remains crucial for the BEC.

This volume is a fascinating story well told and a labour of love. Murray has a deft biographical touch that coupled with his limpid, easy-to-read style ensures the attention and probably involves the emotions of most readers.

It covers the period from the settlement of Dr Lloyd-Jones at Westminster just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War to his death in 1981. If Francis Bacon was right when he said 'Church History thoroughly read and observed is of great virtue in making a wise divine' then present day pundits of the ecclesiastical scene would do well to peruse what Murray has written. Indeed, I would venture the opinion that you do not really have much hope of assessing the contemporary situation without informing yourself of the story of these years.

One of the virtues of the book is the way in which the opportunity is seized of putting the record straight and in the process dispelling some of the myths that have been accumulating around the Doctor's memory. — myths that have effectively poisoned the memory of the man in the minds of some.

In doing this Murray forces us to face issues that, despite the efforts of some to persuade us that they are no longer relevant, are very much part of the current scene. Rather than range over the whole spectrum of men and events that the book covers it will be better in this brief review to concentrate on one issue that has occasioned more controversy than anything else that the Doctor said or did and that is still of crucial importance for the welfare of the church. It should also figure prominently on the practical agenda of the BEC.

I refer to the 'call' that he gave at the specially convened National Assembly of Evangelicals in October 1966 for our oneness in Christ to be demonstrated at the church level. All that Lloyd-Jones did was — at the request of the Commission on Church Unity — to state in public the views that he had expressed to them in private during previous months. Far from abusing the occasion and in the process splitting Evangelicalism, he showed God-given restraint when the chairman did just that in his concluding remarks. What the Doctor did, and Murray provides the conclusive evidence for this, was simply to bring into the open the divisions within the constituency regarding ecumenism and the toleration of false teaching involved in all that. In principle he had been saying the same thing over the years, not least in his address and booklet MAINTAINING THE EVANGELICAL FAITH TODAY. He was making a call for the gospel to determine our ecclesiology.

As Murray clearly shows, he was not summoning men there and then to leave their denominations. Neither then nor subsequently did he put a time limit on that call. He made full allowance for pastoral considerations that would vary from situation to situation. Nor was he singling out the Anglicans for special treatment and in the process working off his Welsh Nonconformist hang-ups. Rather he was calling upon men of any denominational connection to recognize the sin of schism that effectively sundered them from one another, church-wise, while binding them in many cases to the most unholy ecumenical alliances. The author clearly is unhappy, and says so, that Lloyd-Jones came up with no blueprint to guide the formation of this loose fellowship of churches which he envisaged. Murray's Presbyterian predilections cause him some problems at this point. But this was surely one of those secondary areas that, given goodwill and a recognition that primaries are more important than secondaries, need not have proved insurmountable.

The issues are still with us — only more so! Is it right to regard as Christians those who deny the faith? Is it right to remain indefinitely in denominational fellowship with such? **Is it right to engage in an ecumenism that regards evangelicalism as merely one option amongst many equally valid, or maybe superior, ones?** In the light of subsequent events there was surely something prophetic about the insight which enabled Lloyd-Jones to place such issues before an unwilling constituency then. In fact if the situation was serious in 1966 it could be argued that it is nothing short of calamitous now. If there were confusion then it is surely confusion worse confounded today.

Which, perhaps, brings us to the present day relevance of this story. Is it all about '... old, unhappy, far-off things; And battles long ago'? Does the manifest failure then to heed the Doctor's call preclude the possibility of its being reissued and implemented in the future? At this point the message of the book is of very great relevance to the BEC. As Murray points out there was something almost unreal about the atmosphere of euphoria that marked some of those early meetings of the re-invigorated BEC. Soon the realities of division surfaced and the call to pursue evangelical unity slid down the practical agenda. It ought not have been so. Regrettably it might have been the case that **the denominational groupings which then totally comprised the BEC were so entrenched in their positions that any call to a wider and deeper church fellowship and evangelical unity was viewed with inherent suspicion as constituting a challenge to their very distinct existences.** Whereas Lloyd-Jones, small though he was in stature, was a man large in vision, he was surrounded in the evangelicalism of that time by lesser men. Their limited vision could not rise to his when it came to the determination to work out in practice what the Doctor had summoned them to in principle. The challenge of this volume should be to stir us up once more to face facts and issues that ought to have been confronted fearlessly then and that have only intensified in their importance in the intervening years. Until we do so evangelicalism properly so called may well be a lost cause.

Rev Graham Harrison is minister of Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Newport

Gaining the Ear of Our People

Clifford Bailey

The prophet Hosea provides the model for this challenge about the kind of language we use in our preaching today.

The preacher is neither a lecturer nor a theologian, but a herald. Since the message *demand*s attention, the messenger must *command* attention by his presentation of it. In New Testament terms, if 'faith comes by hearing', then people must be made to hear; not shouted at, bullied, cajoled or entertained, but gripped, by the *vehicle* of preaching, so as to give attention to the *content* of what is preached.

So much for the theory!

Why, then, is sound preaching often dull preaching? Why do we fail to gain the attention not just of any unbelievers present, not just of those 'awkward' teenagers, but sometimes even of the 'dear saints of God'? The problem is not, of course, with the message, for 'God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe' (1 Cor 1:21); so perhaps it lies with the thoughtlessness of the preacher who has simply not taken enough time to consider the best medium through which to convey his message.

In saying this, warning bells immediately begin to sound, for preachers should never become pulpiteers or professionals (in the worst sense of the word) who use every emotional artifice, secular gimmick or even gratuitous 'humour' in order to gain attention. But if we may not borrow from the impressive but empty oratory of a Demosthenes, or from the slick presentation of a Saatchi and Saatchi, we may still have much to learn from a Hosea!

Hosea — heat, light and power!

The prophet Hosea speaks to every generation as a wonderful combination of 'heat' and 'light' in his message directed at the 'covenant complacency' of Israel. While the grounds for their complacency were very different from that of western man in the twentieth century, the fact of their complacency (and the resulting hardness of heart) was the same — as was the shaky foundation on which that complacency was built. If Hosea's words fell upon his generation like a sledgehammer, at least he was aiming to crack more than a nut! And if he could be so vivid, almost violent at times in his choice of language, how can we justify the 'cold fish' approach?

Vivid, of course, is an understatement for much of Hosea's language. His words demand attention even when doing no more than describing an actual situation (or making a prediction), without recourse to simile, metaphor, extended illustration, historical allusion, or those wonderful purple passages where metaphors are so mixed as to make the purist despair, but his hearers sit bolt upright! Notice, for

example, the vividness of such 'ordinary' descriptive passages at 9:1-4, where the diverse themes of unfaithfulness, famine, captivity and unacceptable sacrifices are held together by repetition of the twin ideas 'food' and 'wine'! Read through 8:1-6, and 'listen' to the noise: first the trumpet, then the eagle, then the cry of Israel to God, and finally the anguished shout (v 5) from God to Israel. Now read the same passage again, and follow the thread of irony through the verses. Then turn back to chapter 7 (verses 13-16), another statement of Israel's sin and certain condemnation, and ask yourself, 'What do I know of such vividness in my 'ordinary' preaching?'

Well, it's like this ... or at least I think it is!

Perhaps the simplest of all devices that goes beyond bare statement is *the simile* — and which of us has never been attracted by its use? In fastening upon a simile, the brain is more than usually engaged, not merely in listening, but by being forced to make a comparison between two levels of truth, the one reinforcing the other. Hosea makes continual use of this device: he successively describes Israel as being 'like a stubborn heifer' (4:16); 'like a dove, easily deceived and senseless (7:11); 'like a faulty bow' (7:16); their flirting with Assyria is 'like a wild donkey wandering alone' (8:9); and though Israel's love was 'like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears' (6:4), God still viewed Israel as 'like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your fathers, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree' (9:10).

Similes are also used for the certain fate of Israel, as well as for its present state: consider the wonderful series of word pictures in 13:3: 'they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears' (note the poetic justice of the way that their state in 6:4 and their fate in 13:3 are pictured in identical similes), and 'like chaff swirling from a threshing floor, like smoke escaping through a window'. Later in chapter 13 (verse 13), Hosea's most vivid simile occurs, speaking of Israel's fate in the following graphic comparison: 'pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when the time arrives, he does not come to the opening of the womb'.

What better means can Hosea use to convey the wrath of God, and by contrast the tender mercy of God? The former will come 'like a flood of water' (5:10); 'like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah' (5:12); and two verses later again 'like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah'. In 6:5 God's judgements are 'like lightning', and in the heaped-up similes of 13:7 God is successively described as 'like a lion'... 'like a legend'... 'like a bear robbed of her cubs', and (again) 'like a lion!'.

What a contrast all this makes with the similes used to depict God's tender mercy, as in 6:3 'as surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth'. And in his concluding promise (14:5-7), God says, 'I will be *like the dew* to Israel; he will blossom *like a lily*. *Like a cedar of Lebanon* he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendour will be *like an olive tree*, his fragrance *like a cedar of Lebanon*. Men will again dwell in his shade. He will flourish *like the corn*. He will blossom *like a vine*, and his fame will be *like the wine from Lebanon*.'

What can a preacher learn from Hosea's use of simile? Firstly, that (in its place) it is most helpful for stimulating that wonderful, yet often under-employed part of the mind — the imagination! Anything which lodges in the mind not merely as a statement of fact but with an attendant mental picture to reinforce it cannot but be a wonderful aid to memory: and providing the memory becomes a stimulus to *obedience* (as in the case of Jesus' own simile of the wise man who built on rock), then life transforming lessons may be learned.

However, an obvious word of caution is in place here, namely that the simile must be readily understood, so as to *enhance* truth, not detract from it, or worse still to create more confusion than the light it was meant to bring. Hosea's similes were down-to-earth examples of every-day phenomena from common meteorological conditions, local customs, animal behaviour or the world of nature. If a simile has to be explained, it is worse than useless. That is why it is vital to learn *principles* from Hosea, but dangerous to copy his *examples*. An Englishman faced with biblical similes needs a good commentary, or good first-hand knowledge of eastern-Mediterranean countries, fully to appreciate the significance of moving boundary stones, wandering wild donkeys, wine from Lebanon, the devastation caused by wild animals, and the reviving presence of early-morning dew in a parched land. It takes quite a 'double-think' for anyone constantly subjected to the vagaries of British weather to regard the sun as an enemy and the rain as a friend!

Similes are excellent, but they must be topical, relevant, instantly understandable and graphic pictures with no hint of double meaning or controversy. Unless these conditions are met, they will detract from the very truth they were intended to enhance.

And here's a lesson from a minor incident in the Peloponnesian War!

As with simile, so in his use of *historical or topical allusions*, Hosea has much to teach us. Once again the best examples are the ones which make their point of comparison even before the preacher begins to do so. Nothing gives a congregation more of a thrill than to be ahead of a preacher, or at least level with him, at such times! Of course when reading Hosea, we need a commentary to extract all the lovely irony from his substitution of 'Beth Aven' for Bethel (4:15 and 5:8); to see the tragedy of the way that Mizpah and Tabor (places with historic associations of the meeting of God and man) had become places where snares and nets were spread. While we do not understand the topical references to Gilead and Shechem (6:8-9) as well as to Beth Arbel (10:14), the significance would surely not have escaped Hosea's listeners. The same is true of the way Hosea digs into well known history to make his hearers shudder at the mention of Gibeah (10:9) with all its connotations of brutality and perversion; and in the historical allusions of chapter 12 and 13:4-6, Hosea takes his hearers back and reminds them of the true character of their ancestor Jacob, and the wonder of their redemption from Egypt.

So may a preacher use newspaper headlines? May he recount significant moments in history? Yes, of course: but surely not the trivial or obscure. **The best historical allusions, or topical examples, are so well known that they awaken clear**

memories in the listeners' minds; and then all the preacher needs to do is to amplify the truth that has already taken root at the mere mention of the event. Simple, but wonderfully effective.

Lowest form of wit, or most convincing tool of evangelism?

No less effective, as Hosea demonstrates, is the preacher's use of *irony*, which is particularly well-suited to the theme of judgment. This can be one of the most difficult things for a preacher to speak about, and yet because it is such a vital theme, a consideration of the use of irony, pathos and poetic justice (which Hosea obviously found so suited to the prevailing gloom of his message) is not without application today. To think that altars for sin had become altars for sinning (8:11); to think that the laws of God for his people were regarded by Israel as 'something alien' (8:12). How tragic that the special revelation that should have marked Israel out from the nations had been thought to apply to every nation *but them!*

Equally devastating in its simplicity is 10:1 — 'Israel was a spreading vine; he brought forth fruit *for himself*'. Or consider the pathos of 11:1-4, which needs reading several times to grasp the tragedy of the situation: here was God's beloved son, called out of Egypt yet now refusing to heed God's call; here was the nation on which God had lavished so much 'fatherly care' giving thanks and paying homage to the Baals! Hence the grim irony is reinforced in the sentence that follows: though God had lifted the yoke of Egypt from their necks, 'will they not return to Egypt, and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent?'

Other examples of such 'poetic justice', which is really God's retributive judgment at work, are seen as people reaping what they sow: 'they make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a ploughed field' (10:4). What better way of saying that the legal profession flourishes most in a society of corrupt morals? Even more ironic is 10:6-7. Has Israel made *wooden* idols? Very well then, says Hosea: 'Samaria and its king will *float* away like a *twig* on the surface of the waters'.

At this point we need to stop and ask how far a preacher is justified in using language to arouse the emotions of his hearers. This, of course, is a delicate subject, for while the preacher must never become an actor or a showman, he must recognise that **God has made us as people with emotions, and there will be times when our hearers should be moved to pity, fear, tenderness, love or indignation.** If tragic irony turns to the callous indifference of sarcasm, the preacher has gone too far — he must never lose his love for the very people whose sins he is exposing. If true pathos becomes empty emotionalism, then the spirit of man is trying to do the convicting work of the Spirit of God. If instances of 'poetic justice' call forth the unfeeling response — 'it served them right!' — then the preacher is abusing the pulpit.

To laugh, or not to laugh?

May the preacher make people laugh? Well, *leap for joy*, yes: it is hard to see how the glorious promises of chapter 14 would not have had a similar effect on the godly remnant of Israel; *make us smile*, yes: at the stupidity of human nature trying to get by without God, as when Israel turned to a 'stick of wood' (4:12) to solve its

problems; but *make us laugh* — not simply for the sake of it, no. There may be times when what the preacher says is genuinely funny — and God has given us laughter. But that is a far cry from the preacher telling a ‘religious joke’ in order to establish credibility with his hearers. If Hosea teaches us anything, it is surely that **the plight of man and the judgment of God are such serious subjects that there is no room for contrived laughter**. Furthermore, it is vital that the preacher’s *own emotions* are fully engaged in the act of preaching: he cannot remain aloof and then expect to see fear, godly sorrow, holy love or righteous indignation produced in his hearers.

Let me pause to illustrate my point!

Perhaps the most common device used by preachers to gain attention and communicate truth is the *illustration*, that most effective (and yet most dangerous) tool. Here too Hosea has something to say to us as we examine some of his ‘purple passages’, as for example 7:3-8. Such a passage almost defies analysis: a factual statement about the sins of Israel’s leaders links the burning of adultery with the simile of an oven, which is then elaborated by the mention of the baker; there follows another factual statement about the inflaming effect of wine on Israel’s rulers, and the mention of the heat of wine leads Hosea back to the oven simile, once again extended to develop the idea of smouldering passion; then verse 8 brings us down to earth with real bathos — the result of all this ‘heated activity’ is that ‘Ephraim is a flat cake not turned over’ — truly a ‘half-baked’ mixture with the surrounding nations!

Equally difficult to analyse, let alone to imitate, is the adultery picture in chapter 2, which springs (as most evangelical commentators see it) directly from Hosea’s own experience. It is difficult to tell where the analogy of Gomer’s adultery gives way to Israel’s spiritual unfaithfulness, but the chapter is no less effective for the gradual shift from analogy to factual statement. Indeed, there may be a lesson for preachers here. **How many of us, particularly when talking to youngsters or ‘semi-captive’ adults at ‘special services’ have found ourselves able to grip our hearers only so long as our illustration lasts, and then lose them as we ‘bumpily change gear’ to the application?** An automatic gearbox may on occasions be better than a manual one with a fierce clutch!

Another example of the apparently chaotic, yet wonderfully effective mixture of metaphor, mixed metaphor, simile and factual statement, with illustration and application inextricably intertwined, occurs in 8:7-10, where what can only be described as ‘word association’ holds together an otherwise diverse train of thought. The daring statement, ‘they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind’ suggests the word ‘stalk’ (presumably left behind after the process of reaping); this in turn suggests the idea of ‘grain swallowed up by the enemy’; the word ‘swallowed’ reminds Hosea that ‘Israel is swallowed up’, and the thought that she is among the nations leads to the picture of the ‘wild donkey wandering alone’; the connection of thought leads to a new picture of Ephraim ‘selling herself to lovers’, and the picture of Israel sold among the nations leads to the bold statement: ‘they will begin to waste away under the oppression of the mighty King’. With this statement the argument has come full circle, for this is the fulfilment of the whirlwind being

reaped: but what a glorious series of pictures have been planted in the imagination in the process!

An equally effective extended illustration held together once again by word association is to be found in 10:11-13, where Israel is 'a trained heifer that loves to thresh'; but though Israel wants the *easy* job (in agricultural terms), she must do the *hard* one: 'I will *drive* Ephraim, Judah must *plough*, and Jacob must *break up the ground*'. This last picture ushers in the thought of 'righteousness sowed, unfailing love *reaped*', and God graciously bestowing 'showers of righteousness'; and then Hosea abruptly turns to the harsh reality: Israel's seed has been 'wickedness', and her crop 'evil' and 'deception', from which devastation will result, as spelled out in verses 14-15. Once again Hosea's word pictures, impossible to imitate, have left an indelible impression, while at the same time returning his hearers to the reality of the situation.

Now, where was I... ?

This surely is the biggest problem of the extended illustration, if not handled with care: it may be *so* extended that it threatens to engulf and obscure the truth it was meant to serve. Illustrations can, as we know to our cost, be *too* good. It is all too easy for a congregation to be left thinking, 'Great illustration this morning — but what exactly was he trying to teach?' By all means let the preacher be 'carried away' beyond the original scope of his illustration, if God's Spirit so prompts him. But that must never be an excuse of the preacher to say (or at least imply): 'Now, where was I? Ah yes, back to the point I was trying to make'.

And, finally...!

Two points of concluding application for preachers remain. Firstly, Hosea 'knew himself', and was true to himself, as he preached and wrote. The same must be true for us if our message is not to be seen as merely contrived or borrowed. For all the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the biblical writers remained distinctively themselves; therefore I must learn from Hosea, but not ape him: **I must be fully myself when most taken up by God. Any other style will be simply artificial.**

Secondly, Hosea knew the condition of his hearers. While we must never pander to our congregations, **we must know where they are, and tailor our message (both in content and language) accordingly.** In Hosea's case, a desperate situation demanded desperate measures; more often for us, we shall need to sympathise when our people feel hurt, rebuke where they are slack, encourage to greater service those who are faithful, or 'gently lead those that are with young'. But are there no self-satisfied, complacent, religious people in our congregations? No people who know the jargon of the faith yet remain impervious to its truth? So if God ever calls us to use Hosea's 'shock-tactics', as well as learning in a more direct way from the principles by which he wrote and spoke, we may be sure that he will bless our ministry, and his word will not return to him void.

Clifford Bailey MA is the pastor of Sutton Bonington Baptist Church, Loughborough.

An Islamic Political Party?

Fouzi Ayoub

Proposals to form a separate political party for Moslems in Britain have alarmed many people. Such a move would affect the Labour Party which currently enjoys support from Islamic groups. If Moslem voters take an independent approach it is said that the seats of Mr Roy Hattersley, the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and member for Sparkbrook, Birmingham and Mr Jack Straw, spokesman on Education and member for Blackburn would both be vulnerable.

From a Christian perspective, the dangers are acute. Islam is making determined inroads into British community life, including schools and local government. Their presence here is legitimate but the nature of their religious commitment is bound to erode the Christian heritage of the community. Because of our views concerning the dignity of man, we cannot deny to Moslems and others the right to citizenship and social political equity. An Islamic political party, however, would create an imbalance that, given time, would rob our land of religious freedom.

The common ethical and social norms of the community should be represented by all political parties. Liberties are to be protected and standards upheld impartially but this should not permit sectarian dominance. It is true that we are nominally a *Christian* country but newcomers argue that this is an unrealistic concept in what has become a pluralist society. There are many ordinary citizens who still value the *Protestant Ethic* which has given structure to our community life. Great difficulties arise, however, in appealing to Christian principles for our practice when the vast majority have, in reality, forsaken the faith of our fathers. Those principles provided the foundations on which our society was built and are gifts of stability to be treasured. To permit the founding of an Islamic party because we believe Moslems should be free to do so could ultimately lead to a different form of social order here, one in which that very freedom is restricted.

Part of our heritage is the inalienable right of a man to seek a relationship with God according to his understanding and conscience, even when others disagree with his convictions. This is one of the great *Atlantic Freedoms* and safeguards individuals from being persecuted. The cost of preserving the freedom for a Baptist Church to remain in a community is liberty for the Roman Catholic Church and also the Islamic Mosque to remain. This does not give us the right to impose our views on others by compulsion but it does mean that we can expect our basic freedoms to be defended by those appointed to political office. If there was an Islamic party these freedoms would be under substantial threat. It is alleged that the *Salman Rushdie affair* has spearheaded this proposal, although the pursuit of Islamic political power has long been cherished. Many Christians sympathise with Moslem concern over the book *THE SATANIC VERSES*, not out of sympathy with Islam itself but because the moral outlook of the story is questionable and they count it

a disgrace for the convictions of any group to be treated with such contempt.

The matter of our British blasphemy law is a further issue. An extension of the law to include Moslem beliefs would give some the opportunity to turn these laws viciously upon the Christian faith. **Basic freedom is found nowhere in the Islamic world.** Go to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt or the Gulf States and try to evangelise and you will be arrested on the streets. If an Arab becomes a Christian he is branded a criminal and often imprisoned. Christian believers are harassed in matters of employment and personal liberty just because of their faith; church services, where they exist amongst ex-Moslems, are held in secret. There is some profession of religious tolerance in Moslem lands but this amounts only to permission for Europeans to have their churches whilst Arabs are strictly excluded.

An Islamic party would be expected to give directives that their candidate should receive the vote of every Moslem; if the votes returned did not tally then a witch hunt, with reprisals, might well ensue. It is quite likely that Moslems will find allies in other ethnic groups in Britain. Provided religious issues can temporarily be pushed into the background, the grievances of others from overseas might be championed. The proposed party would seek support from the non-European communities in the land, irrespective of religious conviction.

It is the avowed intention of Islam to proselytise Britain. Strategic advances have already been made politically, socially and commercially. Indeed, it has been publicly stated that the proposed political party will be funded by foreign Islamic leaders. The Islamic fingers are in place for the strangle-hold on *Christian* Britain. To the Moslem, Jesus is a figure to be respected. This often leads naive Christians to think that some kind of unity with Islam is possible. In Moslem eyes, however, Jesus is not the Christ, nor is he Saviour. Jesus is merely the final prophet in the succession leading to the advent of Mohammed. He is not the Son of God, neither did he die on the cross (another was substituted, probably Judas). There is no common ground between Islam and the Christian gospel. There may be ethical similarities, or some common ideals, there may be certain Scriptures which both revere but in the essential consideration of absolute allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ, there is such contradiction that all grounds for unity are removed.

By definition every Moslem is committed to the *Jihad* or Holy War. This is a 'cold' war in the West but, given political power, the Moslem would be required by his religion to kill those who ascribe 'partners' to God (ie the doctrine of the Trinity) and to exact tribute from Jews and Christians unless they submit.

It would be unthinkable for Islam to gain political power in a nation and then to use that power impartially. To Islam, the pursuit of governmental authority is a religious quest and the key to proselytising Britain. As Christians we need to safeguard the foundational principles of our society. We should insist on the impartial administration of civil liberties and the preservation of those basic religious freedoms which current events show already to be at risk.

Rev Fouzi N Ayoub is Director of the Arabic Evangelical Centre, Wolverhampton.

Vatican II: 25th Anniversary

Eryl Davies

1990 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Vatican Council II which officially ended in December 1965. It has been described as the most important event in the history of the Roman Catholic Church since the Protestant Reformation. Certainly its influence on Christendom generally, and Roman Catholicism in particular, has been extensive and far reaching. Pope John Paul II describes it as:

‘...that great event which took place in the life of the Church; the Second Vatican Council’, (Encyclical Epistle, June, 1985).

Gustavo Gutierrez claims that:

‘The Second Vatican Council is undoubtedly the most important event in the history of the Catholic Church for several centuries’ (The Reception of Vatican II, p 171)

while, earlier, Pope John XXIII insisted that the Council was:

‘a leap forward toward an understanding of doctrine and a formation of consciences...’ (idem).

Another Roman Catholic theologian writes that ‘The Council represents a point of no return’ (idem p 24). At this point, it may be helpful to ask a number of questions concerning Vatican II.

When was Vatican II held?

It was opened by Pope John XXIII on the 11th of October, 1962. There were four main sessions; one session of several weeks duration was held each year from 1962—1965. A considerable amount of preparatory work was also done by ten Preparatory Commissions and two Secretariats and there were many specialist advisers and theologians.

Who called the Council?

Two earlier Popes had thought of the idea of convening a Council. In 1923, Pius XI asked to see the files on Vatican I with the idea of following it up with another Council but he later dropped the idea. Later, in February 1948, the Pope’s advisers set out five reasons why Pope Pius XII should convene a Council. Partly because of the difficulty in getting all the bishops together and lodging them in Rome, the Pope hesitated and instead set up five secret commissions to make preparatory studies.

The strict, conservative Pope Pius XII was followed by Pope John XXIII who became Pope in 1958 at the age of 77. Some of the Cardinals regarded John as a ‘stop-gap’ or ‘transitional’ Pope. Although in office for only 4½ years (he died on 3rd June, 1963), Pope John decided to call the Council in January, 1959. Vatican officials opposed John’s decision unsuccessfully and many felt that he was now a dangerous innovator.

What is a Council in Roman Catholicism?

It is a meeting of all the Roman Catholic Bishops. Archbishops and Cardinals throughout the world. There have been many ecumenical Councils in the history of Christendom. For example, eight were held in the Early Church period and the Early Middle Ages including Nicea (325 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD). Another ten Councils were held between 1123—1512 but these were largely Roman Catholic because of divisions with the Eastern Churches. In the modern period, three Councils were held: Trent (1545—1563), Vatican I (1869—1870) and Vatican II (1962—1963) but these again were exclusively Roman Catholic Councils.

Why call a Council?

Historically, Councils were convened for two major reasons:

1. First of all, to enable the worldwide Church to discuss and define doctrine. For example, Nicea confirmed the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit while Chalcedon affirmed and formulated the divine and human natures of Christ in the unity of his divine Person. Trent rejected the doctrines of the Protestant reformers and, sadly, agreed that the Bible and Tradition were equally authoritative sources of truth, with the Church as its sole interpreter. Trent also confirmed the mediaeval view of the seven sacraments and re-affirmed the doctrine of the Mass. Vatican I confirmed papal infallibility and the Immaculate Conception (promulgated by the Pope in 1854).
2. Secondly, Councils were convened to resolve schism. The Council of Constance (1414—1418) met in the context of a schism which had occurred in 1378 and at one time there had been three rival Popes! The Council of Trent (1545—1563) dealt with the divisions created by the Reformation.

However, Pope John XXIII felt strongly that his Council should be 'pastoral', not primarily concerned with doctrines or schism but with the new needs of the Church and the world, together with the importance of interacting with secular, religious and contemporary thought. This radically different reason for calling Vatican II was not popular among the conservatives.

How was the Council structured?

2,540 bishops attended Vatican II whereas only 737 attended Vatican I. Vatican II was also the first Council at which non-Roman Catholic observers were present; in addition, Roman Catholic theological 'experts' were present and/or consulted. The latter were important because:

1. Pope John XXIII established ten Preparatory Commissions so these 'experts' contributed, advised and influenced these Commissions. As many as 190 theologians were nominated by the Pope as official Council 'experts'.
2. There were four main sessions of Vatican II, one session per year lasting for several weeks from 1962—1965. However, there was a lot of fringe activity by these 'experts', influencing the bishops by means of personal contact, lectures, writings, etc. These experts like Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, Gregory Baum and Edward Schillebeeckx flocked to Rome to listen to the Council debates and give their own views. It is said that during the Council, Rome was one big theological 'think-in' or, at least, a 'listen-in'.

3. Most of the Bishops/Cardinals in the Council were in touch with these 'experts'. There is a sense in which the Bishops went to school again in order to understand the new theological ideas and theological jargon; it was an intensive teach-in with great ferment of thought.

One man who was especially influential in Vatican II was **Karl Rahner**. Pope John XXIII included Rahner in the preparatory work but the 'big boys' in Rome prevented Rahner from joining any of the important preparatory commissions. He was, however, allowed to be a consultant and the Archbishop of Venice chose him as his personal theologian at the Council. Rahner was often shocked and disappointed at the draft copies of the Commissions/Council which the Archbishop gave him to read for they were too conservative. In February 1963, Rahner was named as one of seven theological experts for the text on **THE CHURCH** and he worked hard to exclude traditional, reactionary influences.

What did the Council discuss and decide?

The Council covered more subjects than any other previous Council; these subjects can be mostly subsumed under doctrinal, pastoral or relational and are to be found in the 16 main documents which emerged from the Council.

Concerning **LITURGY**, the vernacular was authorised as well as greater participation by the laity. The **EASTERN CHURCHES** were now recognised as enjoying equal rights and authority with the Latin churches. Rahner's influence was considerable on the subject of the **DIACONATE**; such people are not priests but dedicated 'in the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel, and of works of charity'. By 1984, the Roman Catholic Church had 10,500 deacons. Other subjects included the **RELIGIOUS LIFE OF NUNS/MONKS**; **TRAINING OF PRIESTS**; **RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**; **MINISTRY AND LIFE OF PRIESTS**; **PIETY** (fasting regulations relaxed, etc). Three other subjects dealt with are foundational and need to be mentioned in a little more detail. The subject of **Divine Revelation** was published under the title **DEI VERBUM** (18th November 1965) and it is the most important statement on this subject ever issued by the Roman Church. There was opposition to this statement even before the Council. For example, Cardinal Lienart denied that there were two sources of revelation. He insisted that the Bible, the Word of God, was the unique source of revelation and he urged the bishops to think like those Protestants 'who have such a love and veneration for the Word of God...' Because of the support for this position in Council, the Pope intervened and established a special commission to revise it with the help of some radical theologians!

What can one say about the **DEI VERBUM**? Although Catholics are encouraged to read the Bible, the document is strongly existentialist in character and allows for a critical approach to the Bible. Just as serious is the inseparable relationship which is assumed between Scripture and Tradition. While *both* are from God and can be identified as 'the Word of God', Tradition is a more comprehensive term and is always placed *before* the Bible in this statement. Furthermore, it is still the magisterium of the Roman Church which *alone* has the grace and right to interpret the Word of God authentically so that the Church still stands supreme over the

Word! Vatican II and more recent developments have taken the Roman Church further away from inerrancy and the supreme authority of the Bible.

ECUMENISM was another major subject dealt with in Vatican II. The opening statement in this document states:

‘The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council’.

It is well-known that the Council adopted a new attitude towards Protestants, regarding them as ‘separated brethren’ rather than as heretics. The Council commended all kinds of ecumenical endeavours and insisted that:

‘sacred theology...must be taught with due regard for the ecumenical point of view...’

Priests, for example, should be trained in an ecumenical, not polemical, theology. **Certainly Vatican II gave considerable encouragement and impetus to the Protestant drive for visible Church unity.**

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS was another key subject discussed by the Council. In a major document published on the 28th of October 1965, the Council indicated clearly its own position here:

‘The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflects a ray of that truth which enlightens all men... The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims...’ (pp 738-9):

The most important statement, however, on this subject is found in LUMEN GENTIUM, the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church:

‘Those who...do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart...may achieve eternal salvation. Nor shall divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God...’ (pp 367-8).

The influence of Karl Rahner and others here is dominant and achieved a major change on the part of the Council in its interpretation of the traditional dogma, ‘no salvation outside the Church’. Post-Vatican II theologians have developed in various ways the thesis that other religions are pre-Christian rather than non-Christian. **Pluralism is now a dominant influence within Christendom and society and poses a major challenge to biblical faith.**

How was the Council received?

Perhaps it is still too early to assess the work and influence of the Council in an exhaustive and definitive way. Is it appropriate, however, to attempt an assessment of the reception of this Vatican Council within the Roman Church? My answer is a positive one, especially after reading and enjoying **THE RECEPTION OF VATICAN II**, published by Burns & Oates, 1988 and edited by Giuseppe Alberigo (£20, pb, pp 363).

The book impresses me in several ways. First it is a competent and thorough account of the ways in which Vatican II and its sixteen documents have been

received by the Roman Church since 1965. The seventeen contributors are acknowledged specialists in areas of Roman Catholic theology and they write authoritatively on their respective subjects. Second, the range of subjects covered in the book also impresses me. Subjects range from the background and context of Vatican II to its more central themes as well as themes as yet insufficiently received by the Roman Church. One intriguing subject is entitled, **REJECTIONS OF THE COUNCIL: 1966—1984**. Another additional yet useful subject which is well-handled is **THE RECEPTION OF VATICAN II AT THE EXTRA-ORDINARY SYNOD OF 1985**; this is written by Avery Dulles. Third, I value the extensive bibliography and footnotes which each contributor provides; it is going to take me some time to read up some of the more important references!

Without going into much detail, I want to draw attention briefly to some of the chapters. Guiseppe Alberigo's opening chapter assesses the history of the Postconciliar Period. He insists that the phenomenon of Vatican II includes not only Vatican I (1869—1870) but to some extent even the Council of Trent (1544—1563). However, Alberigo maintains we are now coming to the end of only a first phase in post-Vatican II history. Already, Vatican II has assumed immense historical importance. 'The Council', he adds, 'represents a point of no return' or, better, in the words of John XXIII, 'a leap forward toward an understanding of doctrine and a formation of consciences, both of which are completely faithful to...authentic doctrine' (p 24). He then warns that 'an inability on the part of the Church to recognize this key moment in its one life would be a symptom of tragic sterility and blindness'.

Herman Pottmeyer's chapter is entitled, *A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II: Twenty Years of Interpretation of the Council* (pp 27-43). He feels that Vatican II can best be described as a Transitional Council and, as such, presents a challenge to its interpreters. In his view, there are two major phases in the process of reception/interpretation. The first phase is one of excitement in which Vatican II was seen as a new beginning. The second phase was one of disillusionment or realism as the weight of tradition and the inertia of the Church slowed down the whole process. A new phase is now due but what will it be?

Two chapters which fascinated me, partly because of my interest in Liberation Theology, were *The Changing Social Contexts of Post Conciliar Catholicism and Latin America in the Medellin and Puebla Conferences*. The latter by Segundo Galilea made compelling reading and threw further light on the situation of the Churches in Latin America during the Council. For example, Latin America was not prepared for Vatican II yet several factors contributed subsequently to the good reception given to the Council, including the establishment in 1955 of CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Council) and increased awareness of injustice. The Medellin Conference of 1968 was a meeting point for the social transformation of Latin America and the ecclesial transformation wrought by the Council. It was at Medellin, of course, that the word and theme '*liberation*' appears for the first time in an official document of the Church. The Puebla Conference in 1979 was really a continuation of Medellin and 'became a vehicle for the reception of the Council, especially in certain areas of countries where neither Vatican II nor Medellin had

sufficiently penetrated' (p 69). Incidentally, Gustavo Gutierrez contributes an important essay on the 'reception' of Vatican II in Latin America in relation to the theme of 'the poor' (pp 171-193).

For those interested in contemporary theology and ecumenism, this book may serve as a useful text-book and springboard for further study. Vatican II initiated important changes representing a 'New Catholicism' and a 'Church Changed'. Despite its acceptance of the Reformers' principles of the vernacular in worship and the importance of the Bible, however, **Vatican II has sadly not heralded a return to biblical theology**. As Donald Carson comments:

'...the points that divide us are minor. We do not agree with Roman Catholics about the locus of revelation, the definition of the Church, the means of grace, the source of contemporary ecclesiastical authority...etc. The theological chasm between us remains wide...' (p 379, **EVANGELICAL AFFIRMATIONS**, Zondervan, 1990).

NOTES

1. Hans Küng underlines some changes for Christendom since Vatican II:
 - a) the Roman Catholic share of the guilt for the schism of the sixteenth century
 - b) other Christian communities are recognised as churches
 - c) an ecumenical attitude is required from the whole church
 - d) co-operation with other Christians is to be promoted in every way.
2. Page references apply to the official Council documents: Vatican Council II, volume I, ed Austin Flannery, Costello Publishing, 1984.

Dr Eryl Davies MA BD is Senior Tutor of the Evangelical Theological College of Wales.

Articles Planned For The Next Series

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Co-operation Between Evangelical Churches

Paul Cook

This is one of the most urgent issues confronting *independent* evangelical churches today. Are we going to maintain a position of isolation or seek to conserve denominational traditions or, positively grasp the opportunity of promoting a wider expression of evangelical unity? Let us look at the relevant biblical principles.

First, we must distinguish between primary and secondary issues and doctrines. If we fail to make this distinction there will be no end to the possible divisions and subdivisions in which we shall be involved; we will find ourselves walking down the path of exclusivism. All truth is important, but not all truth is equally important; some is of the *esse*, essential nature, of the gospel and of the Church, and some is not. The writer to the Hebrews recognised this distinction in Heb 6:1-2, 'Therefore leaving the principles (ie *first* principles implied) of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.' (cf Mt 23:23). It is vital that we recognise primary and essential truth, that which is foundational to the Christian life and to the Church, and distinguish it from the secondary truths. The authority of Scripture and the deity of Christ are primary truths; but whether we believe in paedobaptism or believers' baptism is secondary, as are such issues as differences over elders and millennialism.

A primary gospel truth is one without which the gospel would cease to be the gospel — and one would have to say, '*anathema*'; a primary church truth is one without which the church would cease to be the church, and one would have to say, '*ICHABOD*'. Those are the principles to be applied — the biblical principles of distinction. There will be a measure of raggedness at the edges, but there is a practicality about them.

Second, we must recognise that schism between gospel churches is a terrible sin and evangelical unity is a biblical obligation. The brother who thinks he is defending and preserving the faith by refusing to have fellowship with a believer who rejects the doctrine of limited atonement, but who is otherwise evangelical, must come to terms with the fact that he is also under obligation to defend and preserve the doctrine of the unity of the church, and that if he finds himself in a position where he cannot do the one without failing to do the other then he must seek the greater good. This is something which never seems to cross the minds of some Christians. But the urgent question facing us is how do we secure this unity in practice? What ought to be the practical outworkings of such a unity? At present the law of the jungle appears to prevail between evangelical churches in most areas of our land.

Nevertheless, the desire to secure a firmer control within and over the life of the churches, such as is obtained within human organisations, by some system of authority or power structure is not in accord with New Testament precedents. It leads to *'heavy-shepherding'*, both in Reformed and Charismatic circles, and to a rigid denominationalism which stifles true spiritual life. We must recognise that the character of the New Testament churches was voluntaristic; and also that order, submission, and mutual recognition and respect depend upon grace and not nature. Where there is little spiritual grace there will be discord and division — and I believe God intends that! He intends it because in that way we are brought to see that the proper functioning of the church and the unity of the church depend just as much upon grace as does salvation itself. The real problem today, where there is so much division and anarchy, is that God's people are acting carnally, and our churches are not humbling themselves before God as is appropriate and necessary to spiritual vitality and the promotion of unity.

In view of these preliminary observations we must address ourselves to the question, **What degree of mutual recognition and co-operation ought we to seek between evangelical churches?** — in humble dependence upon God, and divine grace, and guided by the light of Scripture.

A ministers' fraternal is one obvious expression. Ministers are shepherds under the great Chief Shepherd and mutual recognition and co-operation acknowledges that fact. Ministers attend not just as private individuals but as ministers of our churches, therefore the fraternal ought to be an essential appointment for ministers. Our attendance should not be conditional on Monday 'blues', or affected by a reserved personality. We are under a biblical obligation as ministers to confer together in the interests of our churches and of Christ's kingdom, the boundaries of which extend beyond our local responsibility and individual churches. We ought to be concerned about each others' churches because they all belong to the Master we serve. We need one another's insights and understanding and we should learn wisdom by sharing our experiences together. Isolationism can never be right. It makes a man morbid, despondent and jaundiced. Mutual recognition between ourselves is essential before there can be a similar recognition and co-operation between the churches. Our churches will rise no higher than we do.

But beyond this forum of evangelical unity **there is need for the officers of independent evangelical churches to confer together** on matters of mutual concern. The sort of co-operation which will best promote evangelical unity is not so much the organising of united preaching meetings; but what is required for the benefit of all the churches is consultation on matters which impinge upon all the churches and require deliberation between the churches. Within this realm are developments within the life of the nation which affect the interests and liberties of all the churches and their members; matters of church discipline where members of one church may seek refuge in another church to evade necessary discipline; the emergence of heresies which threaten the life of all the churches; serious disagreements between individual churches where the collective mind of other churches may help to resolve matters (cf Acts 15:2); issues of common concern to all the churches where consultation may help church officers to arrive at wiser

decisions in reference to their own churches, eg re the proliferation of different translations of the Scriptures; the problems associated with the conversion of people out of a secularist society and their introduction within the life of the churches; modern moral problems, such as divorce, abortion, etc; shared insights into the problems of evangelism etc. All these are areas where mutual consultation could be of value without in any way impinging upon the autonomy of the local church.

Such joint meetings of church officers on a regular basis, say twice yearly, could do nothing but strengthen the bonds between evangelical churches, and give rise to mutual trust and respect for one another's churches and church disciplines. That evangelical churches should compete with each other for members, and be prepared to provide a safe haven from dissidents from other churches is a disgrace. Such behaviour eventually has a boomerang effect upon all the churches, undermining internal discipline and destroying a sense of mutual responsibility between members of the church of Christ. Regular conferences of church officers would help to prevent such loveless disregard for other limbs of Christ's body.

The classic biblical precedent for such *Conferences and Synods of church officers* is the conference at Jerusalem in Acts 15. To describe what took place in Jerusalem as a 'council', with its overtones of authoritarianism, is anachronistic and reads far too much into Acts 15. The gathering was essentially a consultation (v 2) and the result or conclusions of the conference were more in the nature of exhortations (v 32). Not even the apostles ever assumed the note of legislative authority with respect to the life of the churches. Their authority resided in the revealed Word of God and the Holy Spirit by whom they exhorted the churches to be subject to God's revealed Word. They had no formal power to oblige the churches to conform to God's Word. If such were the case the apostle Paul would have had no problem with the Corinthian church.

Regular synods and conferences, therefore, should not be regarded as a threat to the independence of the local church, nor as an incipient form of denominationalism. Such synods need not detract from the spiritual autonomy of the local church in which, as Professor John Murray so aptly expressed it, 'whenever believers are gathered together in accordance with Christ's institution and in his name, there is the church of God, and to that church of God belong all the functions, prerogatives, and promises which God has accorded to the church... The localized assembly is the body of which Christ is the head'.¹ And, therefore, there can never be beyond the local church, where Christ the head is present, any superior or greater authority to which the local church is obliged to be subject. You have in that quotation from John Murray, if ever you wanted one, an admission from a presbyterian of the central principle of congregational church government — that the local church is wholly competent to act without the necessity of outside oversight because where it meets Jesus Christ is in the midst, and there is no higher authority in the life of the church than its sovereign Lord. The spiritual autonomy of the local church is not an expression of isolationism, therefore, but of the Lordship of Christ over his churches. In practice, there is very little difference between benevolent Presbyterian and classical Congregationalism as practised by

the early Baptist and Independent churches.

The spiritual autonomy of the local church in subjection to its sovereign Lord does not exclude, as some have mistakenly imagined, **inter-church synods**. Classical congregationalism has recognized the biblical justification and need of such synods. *The Articles of Church Order of The Savoy Declaration* of 1658 recommends 'occasional synods or Councils' of 'Messengers' from the churches for the purpose of inter-church deliberation 'In cases of Difficulties or Differences either in point of Doctrine or in Administrations...to consider and give their advice in, or about the matter of difference, to be reported to all the churches concerned', whilst explicitly excluding any thought of 'Jurisdiction over the churches themselves' or any imposition of 'their determinations on the Churches and Officers'.² Likewise *The Baptist Confession of Faith* of 1689 states that churches ought to hold communion among themselves 'for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification' and recommends occasional church synods using very similar words to those employed in *The Savoy Declaration*.³

The modern isolationism of some independent evangelical churches has never been sanctioned by historic Independency, but is a by-product of the influence of Trade Unionism upon Baptist and Congregational churches of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and a misguided introduction of what has been called 'democracy' into the life of the churches. John Cotton, whose influence upon the thinking of the early Baptist and Independent churches was considerable, preferred the term 'Congregationalism' to that of 'Independency'. In his treatise, *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 1648, he has helpful sections advocating 'lawful synods (gathered and proceeding according to the pattern of Acts 15)... to decide controversies from the Word, and to appoint a course for the preventing and healing of offences...'⁴ Their function is advisory and not judicial. The moral power of a synod is to counsel churches in need of admonition, to pronounce in an issue involving scandal, to act when all churches are corrupt in some way, or to withdraw communion from a church which becomes irregular in life or doctrine.

Both Thomas Goodwin⁵ and John Owen⁶ write at some length upon the necessity of inter-church co-operation. They give lists of what Goodwin calls 'duties which one church owes another'. In his *Short Catechism* Owen asks, 'Q 52. Wherein consists the duty of any church of Christ towards other churches?' In response he lists six duties:

- (1) In walking circumspectly, so as to give no offence. (1 Cor 10:32)
- (2) In prayer for their peace and prosperity. (Ps 122:6; 1 Tim 2:1; Eph 6:18)
- (3) In communicating supplies to their wants according to their ability. (2 Cor 8:4,6; Acts 11:29,30; Rom 15:26f)
- (4) In receiving with love and readiness the members of them into fellowship. (Rom 16:1,2; 3 Jn 8)
- (5) In desiring and making use of their counsel and advice in such cases of doubt and difficulty, as may arise among them. (Acts 15:2)
- (6) In joining with them to express their communion in the same doctrine of faith. (1 Tim 3:15)

Goodwin lists four of these six duties and adds another two of his own, viz:
 'There is that brotherly communion between churches, that whom one church denies communion with, having cast him out by a just censure, all the rest of the churches do reject him also' and
 'We acknowledge that there are *res communes*, things in common, that concern many churches alike in a brotherly way.' This could include 'the setting up ministers over particular churches'. But this does not amount to the power of ordination or the like — '... it is but giving the right hand of fellowship'.⁷

Under 'things in common' to the churches we can think of the need of ministerial training and the even greater need of some form of ministerial recognition, and the regularising of the activities of self-appointed local preachers who act in the main without the slightest submission or reference to the authority of the churches. There is need to facilitate the placing and removal of ministers from one church to another. The present situation is causing great suffering both to men in the ministry and to the churches.

These are all matters which need an airing at church officers conferences. In the absence of mutual recognition and co-operation between evangelical churches matters tend to fall into the hands of individuals and extra-church-organizations who seek to impose upon the churches their own self-will. No man is an island, no church is an island. But the best interests of the churches are not served when churches and ministers act as if they were islands. We belong to an uncommon community, and we need to act in close fellowship together to further the interests of this community within our nation and in the world.

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- 2 Sections XXVI or XXVII of the Articles of Church Order in THE SAVOY DECLARATION OF FAITH AND ORDER 1658, Ed A G Mathews, IP, 1959, pp 126-127
- 3 BAPTIST CONFESSION, Ch 26 Sections 14 & 15
- 4 John Cotton on THE CHURCHES OF NEW ENGLAND, Ed Larzer Ziff, Harvard Univ Press, 1968, p 332
- 5 Treatise on The Constitution, Right Order and Government of the Churches of Christ, WORKS Vol XI, James Nichol, 1865
- 6 Short Catechism, WORKS, Vol XIX, Thomas Russell Edition, 1826, pp 565 and The True Nature of a Gospel Church, WORKS, Vol XX
- 7 WORKS Vol XI, Nichol, pp 266-270

Rev Paul E G Cook BD is minister of Kingston Reformed Church, Hull

Ecumenical Literature

Eryl Davies

There is such a wide range of literature available now from the World Council of Churches that some guidance is necessary in pinpointing the more useful books/magazines either for introductory or specialist reading. I estimate there are currently 70 books/booklets dealing with the history and present activities of the WCC, these publications being mostly published, or distributed, by the WCC. In addition, they have published 25 books on Inter-Faith dialogue, 24 books and 18 research booklets on Mission and Evangelism as well as 8 books in the WCC Mission Series. Furthermore, there are now about 50 books on the related subjects of Sharing, Service (especially to the poor) and Development, 20 books on Church and Society, 15 books on Churches in International Affairs then 16 books dealing with Racism. While this is not an exhaustive list of the number of their publications nor of subjects covered yet it indicates the priority which the WCC has given to publishing in recent years and also the abundance of material which is now available. By contrast, the amount of evangelical literature in these areas is small and the quality variable. Before mentioning specific books for further reading, I want to refer to some WCC journals/magazines.

Magazines

High on my list of priorities for subscriptions is the WCC monthly magazine *ONE WORLD* which is attractively produced and comprehensive in its coverage of ecumenical developments and theology. Here is a really newsy magazine with details and ideas we can constantly refer to and consider in our churches. No 132 (Jan-Feb 1988) was invaluable in surveying the first 40 years of the WCC, that is, 1948—1988. For more detailed study, *THE ECUMENICAL REVIEW*, published quarterly, is stimulating. Again, Vol 40, No 3-4 (July-October 1988) is a commemorative issue and is worth obtaining.

To monitor inter-religious dialogue, the quarterly journal *DISCERNMENT* is available but I prefer the monthly *CURRENT DIALOGUE* for its in-depth coverage of major issues and consultations. For missiology, the *INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSION* is indispensable. This is a 168-page quarterly, previously published by the International Missionary Council, but now published by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC.

Historical Books

I am delighted that the WCC has republished the standard *HISTORY OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT* in two volumes; vol 1, 1517—1948, pb, p 838, edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill; vol 2, 1948—1968, pb, pp 571, edited by Harold E Fay. These two books have been out of print for many years and only

available through libraries. Here is an authoritative and 'official' history of the Ecumenical Movement.

A more popular history of the WCC is authored by W A Visser't Hooft and entitled, **THE GENESIS AND FORMATION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES** (pb, pp 146, 1982). The book is especially significant because the author was personally involved in the formation and development of the WCC from as early as 1933; he was appointed as the first General Secretary of the WCC and served in this capacity until 1966. This book fills a major gap and contributes new, important information which was not included in an essay he earlier wrote for the official historical account of the WCC. (*The Genesis of the WCC, A HISTORY OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT* Vol 1, cp *Memoirs*, ch 12, 1973, SCM.) In the Preface, the author writes:

This book seeks to describe the process which led to the formation of the WCC in 1948. That process began with proposals made in Constantinople in 1919, and in Uppsala in the same year; it was completed with the attempt to define the nature of the World Council in 1950 (p vii).

Other useful books in the historical section include official reports, for example, of WCC Assemblies such as **GATHERED FOR LIFE: 1975—1983**, Report of the Central Committee to the Sixth Assembly. Another source book, **SIX HUNDRED CONSULTATIONS (1948—1982)** is a mine of information, providing details of the dates and venues of consultations/conferences together with themes and division of subjects as well as details of publication of the material in either books or journals, etc. This is further supplemented by **MAJOR STUDIES AND THEMES IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT SINCE 1948**. This latter work is divided into two parts; major studies undertaken by various World Council units and sub-units, then themes of numerous ecumenical assemblies, conferences and consultations. The book is not exhaustive in its coverage as it deliberately excludes WCC single consultations held since 1948 and the whole programmes of WCC sub-units dealing with specific subjects or concerns over a prolonged period of time. Nevertheless, this is an abbreviated guide and useful reference service which will facilitate further studies.

I cannot leave the historical section without referring to **HOPE IN THE DESERT: THE CHURCHES' UNITED-RESPONSE TO HUMAN NEED, 1944—1988**, edited by Kenneth Slack (1986, pb, pp 143). This interesting story belongs to the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refuge and World Service (CICARWS) and which expresses the practical concern of WCC members for a needy world. 'CICARWS', writes Emilio Castro in the Foreword, 'needs to be a forum for theological debates which will examine ways of expressing our belonging to Jesus Christ and our fellowship with mankind...its role cannot be reduced to that of being a mere instrument for effective action. It must generate ideas, and provide for reciprocal inspiration and mutual correction' (pp ix-x). Not only is this book a challenge to us to care practically for the needy peoples of the world; it is a serious challenge to evangelicals to think theologically and biblically on the crucial relationship between the gospel and social concern.

Theology Books

In this section, three books can be singled out for their usefulness in introducing readers to the central theological issues on the contemporary ecumenical agenda. One such book is Philip Potter's *LIFE IN ALL ITS FULNESS*, while Visser't Hooft writes in depth on the vexed question of *THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN AN AGE OF EMANCIPATION*. A more popular book is *CALLED TO BE ONE IN CHRIST* (ed M Kinnama & T F Best) which was Faith and Order Paper 127. This book deals with the challenge of united/uniting Churches today and case studies from around the world.

Projects

Another interesting area of study and information is that relating to local ecumenical projects. *LOCAL CHURCH UNITY*, for example, provides guidelines for local ecumenical projects and sponsoring bodies and *LOCAL ECUMENISM* illustrates how Church unity is seen and practised by congregations. *LOCAL ECUMENICAL PROJECTS* is more basic and represents the sixth report to the Churches by the Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England. The same committee has published an extensive *REGISTER OF LOCAL ECUMENICAL PROJECTS*, *ECUMENICAL OFFICERS* and *SPONSORING BODIES* which is a handy reference tool.

Evangelical Books

The WCC has provided us with an abundance of books on ecumenism; in comparison, evangelical books on the subject are at a premium. Perhaps here I can welcome the publication of Hywel Jones' detailed evaluation of ecumenical documents on Church unity under the title, *GOSPEL AND CHURCH*. The book is published by the Evangelical Press of Wales and costs £8.95 (pb, pp 176). In his Introduction, Professor Douglas MacMillan observes that 'no other book of this type has been produced by the evangelical world. This is the only serious, scholarly...work which we have to help us evaluate the issues it confronts... It breaks new ground...' (p 9). Buy a copy and study it carefully!

*We have tried to show the ecumenism of the WCC is not in keeping with the gospel. It is not based on an infallible Scripture, but allows for an open canon and for the development of tradition in and by the church. This undermines authority. In addition, it does not confess that Christ's work on the cross is so acceptable to the Father that any notion of its being repeated or re-presented denies the atonement. It refuses to say that faith without works is the **only** way by which Christ and His salvation may be received by the ungodly, but asserts instead that it **may** be so received. To do that is to deny the heart of the good news and to deprive the sinner of any assurance of eternal life.*

H R Jones, *GOSPEL AND CHURCH*, p 155

Biblical Higher Criticism

An extended review of BIBLICAL HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE DEFENSE OF INFALLIBILISM IN 19TH CENTURY BRITAIN, by Nigel M de S Cameron, which is Vol 33 of Texts and Studies in Religion, published by the Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston/Queenston, 1987. It is available from Rutherford House, Edinburgh, at £29.

This book is part of the author's doctoral dissertation at New College, Edinburgh in which he provides a reasonably detailed historical account of the rise of critical theories in Britain which 'gradually overwhelmed the Conservative consensus in Britain' (p 1). Over the past 100 years or more, Protestant theology has endeavoured to respond in various ways to the conclusions and methodology of this criticism. Nigel Cameron's primary interest here lies:

'in the cleavage which first won over British scholarship to Criticism, and in the cleavage that divided the early Critics from their Conservative colleagues' (p 2). From the ESSAYS AND REVIEWS (1860) debate until the late 1880s, British Old Testament scholars were at first divided until the Critics 'effectively over-ran' (p 3) the Conservatives — a title incidentally which included in this early period Evangelicals, Tractarians and traditionalists.

The Prologue (pp 7-17) concentrates on Spinoza (1632—77) whose discussion of Scripture and methodology was one of the precursors of nineteenth-century Criticism. Chapter 2 describes the '**nineteenth-century ferment**' (pp 18-74). William Van Mildert's Bampton lectures for 1814 are 'largely expressive of the British theological consensus at the opening of the nineteenth-century' (p 28). He was a competent scholar who used his linguistic and historical skills in Old Testament study yet with a reverence befitting the study of the sacred Word of God.

While Criticism had won the day on the Continent by 1860, the victory was delayed in Britain for various reasons. Cultural isolation, a dislike of German thought and, chiefly, the New Testament Studies of the Cambridge School (Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort) 'succeeded in insulating British thought almost completely from the influence of the radical scholarship which dominated the Continental debate' (p 40). The Cambridge School used a critical methodology yet came to relatively conservative conclusions. Sadly, however, its:

'combination of the Critical method and conservative conclusions was in the long term all to the benefit of Criticism. Criticism was made to appear respectable and benign, as not tending to overthrow the fundamentals of Christian belief, but as working rather to establish them on a footing which none could deny. This in turn gave Old Testament Critics an increasing credibility in the minds of pious but open-minded thinkers...' (idem).

Harbingers of Old Testament Criticism included S T Coleridge, Thomas Arnold and R D Hampden (Bampton lecturer in 1832). The influence of the new historiography was also significant. It is, however, the ESSAYS AND REVIEWS volume of 1860 which is generally regarded 'as firing the opening salvo in the final

assault upon the traditional conception of Scripture' (p 57).

Jowett's essay in this volume dealt with the interpretation of Scripture and its influence and implications were profound. Protests, legal action and major replies by people like Burgon, Wilberforce, Thomson and Ellicott followed. But the tide turned in favour of the Critics. T & T Clark's Foreign Theological Library publishing was aimed at supporting the Conservative position yet in fact it:

'helped to spread criticism, both because many readers made their first acquaintance with it in these repudiations of it, and...because of the evident weakness of some, at least, of their arguments...' (pp 65-66).

There was also the influence of the *ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA* with the critical contributions, for example, of William Robertson Smith. In addition, new appointments to colleges included Critics like Archibald Duff (1877, Airedale Congregational College) and S R Driver (1882, Chair of Hebrew at Oxford) who helped to consolidate then to promote the Critical advance. By 1901, George Adam Smith could write: 'Modern criticism has won its war against the traditional theories' (p 75).

In chapter 3, Cameron describes some important **characteristics of the critical method of interpretation** in this period (pp 75-114). Basic characteristics of the historical critical method included the claim of 'disinterested study' and the argument that Holy Scripture was 'like any other book'. The 'assured results' of Criticism are referred to briefly (pp 86-91) before looking at the implications of Criticism. These implications for theology were immense, as also for preaching. Attempts were made by Critics like Cheyne and Adam Smith to apply critical principles to the devotional and homiletical use of the Bible. This third chapter closes with a preliminary examination of the controversy between Critics and Conservatives as the Critics themselves represented it.

I was particularly interested in chapter 4 which outlines the **Conservative response** to the critical thought of the later nineteenth-century:

'...they saw their task', the author affirms, 'as not simply the preservation of a particular view of the Bible...more even than that was at issue, because the Bible lay at the heart of Christianity' (p 116).

Their lines of defence as Conservatives were various. They insisted on the right to differ from the Critics whilst maintaining their own scholarly integrity. E H Dewart is representative of many Conservative scholars when he maintains:

'The critical contest is not, as is often assumed, between "scholars"...and unlearned "traditionalists" who blindly cling to the beliefs of the past...; but between scholars who have adopted the evolutionary theory of the origin of the Old Testament, and equally learned biblical scholars who refuse to accept...this "Higher Criticism".'

Conservatives attacked, too, the mystique of 'philology' and the 'all scholars agree' approach of the Critics. They also insisted that in defending the supernatural origin and nature of the Bible that they were:

'defending the prime, established fact of Christian theology against theories whose origins and whose great exponents were deeply involved with "rationalism" and anti-Christian bids' (p 122).

Bishop Ryle was one who cautioned:

'Let us not give up the great principle of plenary verbal inspiration because of apparent difficulties... We may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own' (idem).

In their assault on Criticism, the Conservatives stressed the inappropriate nature of the Critical starting-point as well as the devastating implications of Critical conclusions for the Bible and Christianity. The Conservatives also exposed the Critics own presuppositions, such as an anti-supernatural bias. The point of departure, however, was inspiration:

'If, for the Critics, the most evident fact about the Bible was that it was a book to be studied like any other, for the Conservatives it was that it "presents such striking differences from any book that the world has ever seen"...it was inspired; and for that reason, from the Conservative standpoint, "the authorship of the Bible, and the mode of its production, constitute the great religious question of our day"' (pp 135-6).

Chapter 5 (pp 157-178) is entitled 'Christus Comprobator'; **the appeal to Christ**. In the debate about the Old Testament, most Conservatives appealed to Christ's attitude towards the Old Testament as determinative and infallible. Their basic arguments were: Jesus Christ is infallible in his teaching, he expressed his belief in the traditional ascriptions of authorship of the Old Testament books as well as in the historicity of the Old Testament narratives. In these areas, at least, therefore, the Critical theories were mistaken. But the Critics tried to weaken this powerful argument by claiming our Lord 'accommodated' himself to his hearers; furthermore, they used the now famous 'kenosis' theory. Their conclusion was that Jesus' knowledge was limited and that his knowledge on critical questions was natural, not spiritual. Conservatives rightly insisted that the Critics' use of 'kenosis' was incorrect and opportunist. Unfortunately, as Cameron indicates:

'The failure of the Critics to answer, or indeed feel the weight of, these arguments, and the disappearance of the Christus Comprobator argument from the general theological scene, testify to its dependence on a consensus with respect to the New Testament which was already breaking up' (p 178).

Chapter 6 (pp 179-203) provides a survey of **biblical commentaries** with an exposure of some assumptions about the Bible itself which underlie both Conservative and Critical commentaries of the period.

For myself, chapter 7 was both absorbing and frightening as Nigel Cameron concentrates on an '**evangelical critic**'. William Robertson Smith, who 'as the most creative and significant Critical scholar' in nineteenth-century Britain claimed to adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith as embraced by his Free Church of Scotland. Smith's career, legal action taken by the Free Church against Smith and his 'modern' views as well as Smith's responses are all carefully detailed in this chapter. Robertson Smith's view of Scripture is contrasted clearly with that of his illustrious teacher, James Bannerman. Sadly, Smith felt there was no alternative to Criticism and that the traditional orthodox view of Scripture was inadequate. Using such arguments as the freedom of scholarship, criticism arising from the text of

Scripture itself, the distinction between theological and literary questions, the disjunction between the personal and the propositional in revelation and faith, etc., Smith moved significantly away from the orthodox position. In words which are remarkably relevant to our contemporary situation, Cameron concludes:

'What is clear is that Robertson Smith succeeded in maintaining the "infallibility" of Scripture only by attenuating its sense to such a degree as to empty it of the distinctive meaning with which the theological tradition in which he stood has customarily associated it...' (p 262).

The Conclusion: An Anatomy of Controversy (pp 263-289) provides a brief analysis of the fundamental positions taken up by Critics and Conservatives with regard to Scripture. The major difference, of course, was methodological. **'They were divided in their starting-point and their method of approach to Biblical Study...'** (p 273). In several parts of the books, the author demonstrates that:

'the victorious Critics had failed adequately to consider the nature of the method they were putting in the stead of the traditional and the implications with which it was laden. The resurgence in the mid-twentieth century of the lineal descendants of Burgon, Mansel, Ellicott...raises once again the question' (p 288) of methodology.

This book is well-researched but technical and makes many demands on the reader. Two appendices on Interpreting Genesis in the light of Science and Thomas Kuhn and The Structure of Scientific Révolutions as well as an extensive bibliography add to the value of the book. Unfortunately, it is expensive! However, the book is relevant and useful for we are contending for the principles of our forefathers and here are important lessons and warnings for us all.

Eryl Davies

Historically, the Church has accepted its biblical mandate to defend the apostolic truth structures of Scripture (Acts 20:27-31). Yet now, even from within there are voices present that cast shadows of relativism and pluralism across doctrinal affirmations.

The Church was intended to disassociate itself from anyone not holding to key apostolic affirmations which protect the purity of its teaching. In particular, any dilution of the gospel due to legal or sacramental necessities (Gal 1, Phil 3) or any distortion of the truth about Christ Himself was to be eliminated (3 John). The major departures today have been in these two arenas.

Joseph M Stowell III, p 392 EVANGELICAL AFFIRMATIONS

What It Means To Be An Evangelical

An extended review of EVANGELICAL AFFIRMATIONS, edited by Kenneth S Kantzer and Carl F H Henry, Zondervan, 1990, pb, pp 535, and distributed in the UK by McCall Barbour, 28 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1ES, at about £10.

In May 1989, The National Association of Evangelicals in the USA and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School co-sponsored a consultation on Evangelical Affirmations to which over 650 evangelical scholars, pastors and lay leaders were invited. They naturally represented a broad range of churchmanship and viewpoint but within the main stream of evangelical Christianity. 'The purpose of this working consultation of theologically concerned leaders', we are told in the Preface, 'was to unite evangelicals in their commitment to the great biblical truths of our faith by calling the church to vigorous evangelism and discipleship, responsible social action, and sacrificial service to a needy world' (p 13).

The consultation focused on the important issues confronting evangelicals at the close of the twentieth century. This book therefore includes ten major addresses on key subjects (Who are the Evangelicals?; Salvation; New Challenges to the Gospel; Word and World; Biblical Authority and the Quandary of Modernity; Personal Ethics; Social Ethics; Black Evangelical Theology; Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church; Modern Science; Religious Liberty) with responses given at the consultation. Also included are the Evangelical Affirmations (pp 17-38) on key doctrines agreed upon by the participants but after considerable discussion and redrafting. **This is intended 'to be a confession of what it means to be an evangelical'** (p 14).

In his Foreword (pp 17-23), Carl Henry points out the various and conflicting nuances of the term 'evangelical' in the twentieth century. Charles Colson's Keynote Address (pp 41-66) surprised and encouraged me by its forthright insistence on the historical and revelatory nature of true Christianity. In this absorbing and immensely readable chapter, he repeatedly underlines the need for sound biblical theology:

'The challenge for us today', he adds, 'is to hold fast to the truth, to know and believe there is a God who lives, who has spoken, and who reigns... We need to take our stand on doctrine and hold fast to that truth as a beacon of light and truth in a world that is in disarray' (p 57).

In order to restrict the review to a reasonable length, I intend to concentrate on just three of the more significant addresses and responses but I do so in the hope that you will be persuaded to read the whole book!

'**Who are the Evangelicals?**' is the subject handled by Carl Henry (pp 69-94). He laments that:

'Expository preaching and doctrinal teaching have been at low ebb in a generation that has pitched evangelism at an experiential high... For all that, the

theologically conservative churches (in the United States) continue to grow' yet confusion persists over precisely what 'being an evangelical' means. Henry takes us back to basics by reminding us that the term 'evangelical' has its roots deep in the bedrock of the Greek New Testament: *evangelion* meaning 'good tidings' or gospel. Quoting 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. Henry writes: 'in less than twenty-two Greek words the apostle Paul epitomizes this incomparable good news'. Remarkably, more than a fourth of that total word-count he devotes to the fact that Scripture vouchsafes this good news; twice, in fact, he declares the evangel to be 'according to the Scriptures'. The good news is scripturally-identified, scripturally-based, scripturally validated; inspired Scripture is its verifying principle...' (p 77). His final statement is:

'Evangelicals are a people of the Bible and of the risen Redeemer; historically speaking, consistent evangelicals have never been cognitively constrained either to demean the Saviour or to demean the Book in order to be wholly faithful to one or both' (p 94).

In his response to Carl Henry, Nathan Hatch details three pressing challenges that face American evangelicals on the eve of the 21st century: the reality of rampant pluralism, a need to recover a higher view of the Church and the need to nurture first-order Christian scholarship. Hatch does not think, however, that the evangelicals are prepared to face the challenge.

Jim Packer contributes a helpful and pointed chapter on **Evangelicals and the Way of Salvation**: New Challenges to the Gospel (pp 107-131). At the outset, Packer warns: 'Truths that seem to me vital are threatened, and to reaffirm them effectively I shall have to hit out — not only at non-evangelicals, but at some of my evangelical brothers too' (p 108). Packer deals with four 'strong tendencies at work today' that press Evangelicals to revise their biblical doctrine of salvation (p 113).

The first tendency is that '**salvation is less URGENT than Evangelicals have thought**' and raises the issue of universalism and the destiny of those who never heard the Gospel. Dr Packer pinpoints several motivations towards universalism which operate today (pp 115-116) before providing a solid, biblical response to the universalist thesis (pp 118-122). Answering Sir Norman Anderson's position that God may have regenerated a person in another religion thus 'enabling him, in his twilight...to throw himself on God's mercy', Packer gives a positive 'yes', yet insists:

'...we have no warrant from Scripture to expect that God will act thus in any single case where the Gospel is not yet known. To cherish this hope, therefore, is not to diminish in the slightest our urgent and never-ending missionary obligation, any more than it is to embrace universalism as a basis for personal and communal living. Living by the Bible means assuming that no one will be saved apart from faith in Christ, and acting accordingly' (p 123).

The second tendency suggests that the question of '**salvation is less AGONIZING than we thought**' because after judgement day the unsaved will not exist' (p 124). The four basic arguments for Conditionalism are briefly but effectively answered before his concluding paragraph:

‘What troubles me most here...is the assumption of superior sensitivity by the Conditionalists. Their assumption appears in the adjectives (awful, dreadful, terrible, etc) that they apply to the concept of eternal punishment as if to suggest that holders of the historic view have never thought about the meaning of what they have been saying’ (p 126).

He then replies to John Stott’s belief that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.

‘Respectfully, I disagree, for the biblical arguments (as used by Conditionalists) are to my mind flimsy special pleading and the feelings that make people want conditionalism to be true seem to me to reflect, not superior spiritual sensitivity, but secular sentimentalism which assumes that in heaven our feelings about others will be at present, and our joy in the manifesting of God’s justice will be no greater than it is now. It is certainly agonizing now to live with the thought of people going to an eternal hell, but it is not right to reduce the agony by evading the facts; and in heaven, we may be sure, the agony will be a thing of the past’ (idem).

The third and fourth tendencies concern the central tenet of the Reformation: namely, that **‘Justification by faith is a less CENTRAL doctrine than evangelicals have thought.** It is contended that for Paul, its chief expositor, justification was only significant for anti-Jewish polemic, and the heart of his Gospel was elsewhere! The fourth revision claims that **‘faith is a less SUBSTANTIAL reality than evangelicals thought’** (p 113). Packer’s argument is polemical. He offers five reasons why Paul’s doctrine of justification was not mere anti-Jewish polemic, concluding:

‘It would be ruinously enfeebling for us to be allured away at any stage from a central emphasis on justification by faith’ (p 129).

He also responds to the fourth revision, namely, that saving faith is an assent to the truth about the atonement, and a formalized receiving of Jesus as Saviour without the need for repentance or discipleship (see John MacArthur, **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS**, Zondervan). His answer is three-fold:

- i. ‘Faith must be defined, just as it must be exercised, in terms of its object. But the Christ who is the object of saving faith is the Christ of the New Testament, who is prophet and king no less than he is priest...’ (p 130).
- ii. ‘There is an evident confusion here between faith as a psychological act (ie something you do) and faith as a meritorious work... There is no need to restrict faith to passive reliance without active devotion in order to keep works-righteousness and legalism out of the picture!
- iii. ‘The pastoral effect of this teaching, if taken seriously, can only be to produce what the Puritans called “gospel hypocrites”...I know what I am talking about, for I was such a gospel hypocrite for two years in my teens before God mercifully made me aware of my unconverted state. If I seem harshly critical when I categorize this proposed redefinition of faith as a barren intellectual formalism, you remember that I was once myself burned by teaching of this type, and a burned child dreads the fire’ (p 131).

The response to James Packer by John Ankerberg and John Weldon is favourable and supportive. They declare: 'We have found that the doctrine of justification by faith has been replaced and the doctrine of eternal punishment vehemently rejected...the situation is sufficiently critical that blunt words are needed in addressing the church' (p 139). **Seven affirmations which 'summarize what we are convinced needs to be said'** then follow:

- i. 'Jesus Christ is the principal figure responsible for the doctrine of eternal punishment. The denial of eternal punishment is tantamount to a denial of the deity of our Lord and Saviour'.
- ii. 'Rejection of hell is a denial of biblical authority which opens the door to additional revisionist and syncretistic tendencies in other areas'.
- iii. 'The problem is not a scriptural issue but an emotional issue, contaminated by secularist and humanistic thinking' (p 140).
- iv. 'To reject eternal punishment and accept other ways of salvation is to affirm that the cross was unnecessary'.
- v. 'To affirm universalism is a denial of the church's mission to preach the gospel and warn men to escape God's wrath and eternal punishment'.
- vi. 'The doctrine of eternal punishment is the watershed between evangelical and non-evangelical thought'. One reason for this is its interrelation with many other doctrines. So 'when friends, such as John Stott, P E Hughes, Clark Pinnock, John Wenham, Basil Atkinson, etc... reject the traditional view of eternal punishment, the church suffers serious or even fatal erosion in its doctrinal foundation' (p 141).
- vii. 'Universalism logically repudiates the doctrine of justification by faith'.

In their conclusion, Ankerberg and Weldon insist:

'the truth of hell is that eternal punishment is a vital doctrine — It cannot, it must not, be ignored or abandoned — We must have the courage to preach it from the pulpits, in Bible schools and seminaries, and to a lost world...' (p 147).

The third chapter/subject I want to refer to is **Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church** and this is handled by Donald Carson (pp 347-385). He rightly indicates that within evangelicalism there is an enormous diversity of opinion regarding the nature, work, government and unity of the church. His aim in this chapter, therefore, is the more modest one of addressing:

'from a theological perspective those features of evangelical ecclesiology that ought to govern our self-understanding and therefore our relations with others' (p 348).

Dr Carson addresses, first of all, the problem of **EVANGELICAL SELF-IDENTITY** and probes two facets of the problem:

(1) Who is an 'evangelical'?

The term 'evangelical' functions predominantly in North America to refer to Christians who are faithful to both a *material* principle (ie the gospel as understood in evangelical Protestantism) and a *formal* principle (ie the truth, authority and finality of the Bible). In this sense, 'evangelicalism' is tightly tied to the 'evangel' (p 349). But who defines what this gospel-content really is? Carson here points out three factors that bedevil recent attempts to define evangelicalism:

(a) as recently as 1975 evangelicals and fundamentalists were both committed to an inerrancy view of the Bible but this is no longer the case. A growing number of evangelicals affirm the 'infallibility' of Scripture but refuse to acknowledge the Bible's reliability on the various subjects it speaks on.

(b) The label 'evangelical' is applied to confessional Lutherans, Presbyterians, Pentecostals and others such as Fundamentalists who do not think of themselves in this category.

(c) For many evangelicals the expression is almost synonymous with 'true christian' (p 353).

'The combination of these pressures', claims Dr Carson, 'forces us to think of evangelicalism as a movement determined by its centre, not its boundary. So understood..., contemporary evangelicalism, consistent and otherwise, embraces a wide range of people; but not all their theological opinions' (p 354).

(2) What is 'the church'?

The second facet of the problem is ascertaining the depth and diversity of evangelical ecclesiology. Two answers, he suggests, are possible. Evangelicals have been slow to 'articulate profound statements on the church' and this 'springs partly from the fact that its driving impetus lies elsewhere, and partly from the theological suspicion that those who devote too much attention to the church are in danger of diverting attention from Christ Himself' (p 356). But the second answer is that evangelicals 'have produced too many ecclesiologies, or ecclesiological studies, ranging from the barely competent to the fairly sophisticated' (p 357). Examples include old-style dispensationalism, covenant theology, evangelical Lutherans, reformed theology, Wesleyans (who 'have tied their ecclesiology to the holiness movement'), the 'believer's church' tradition springing from Anabaptist roots and contemporary Pentecostals who are now raising their ecclesiological voices. These differences are considerable so that a cynic may think there is no such thing as a distinctive evangelical ecclesiology. Carson thinks the cynic is wrong and suggests several theses indicating the 'shared ecclesiological perspectives' of most Evangelicals. They are:

- i. The church is the community of the new covenant (pp 359-361)
- ii. The church is the community empowered by the Holy Spirit (pp 362-3)
- iii. The church is an 'eschatological community' (pp 363-4)
- iv. The church is the 'gathered' people of God (pp 364-7)
- v. The church is a worshipping community (pp 367-9)
- vi. The church is the product of God's gracious self-disclosure in revelation and redemption (pp 369-370)
- vii. The church is characterized by mission (pp 370-1).

In the final and major section of his paper, Donald Carson offers several **EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ECUMENISM**.

(1) By definition, the church is made up of regenerate believers (pp 371-4).

(2) It follows that church discipline must be practised (pp 374-6).

(3) From an evangelical perspective, it is not strictly *necessary* to list the sacraments/ordinances as one of the defining marks of the Church, even though the overwhelming majority of us are happy to do so (p 376).

- (4) A Christian who detaches himself or herself from the church, or a 'parachurch' group that is largely independent of the church, is self-contradictory (pp 376-8).
- (5) Evangelicalism's views of Scripture and of the church make sustained co-operation with classic liberalism or with traditional Roman Catholicism extremely problematic (pp 378-381).

While co-belligerency on some points such as abortion, social justice or environmental stewardship may be practical, Carson warns that 'sustained co-operation remains difficult and dangerous' (p 378). He adds:

'We do not agree with Roman Catholics about the locus of revelation, the definition of the church, the means of grace, the source of contemporary ecclesiastical authority, the significance of Mary, the finality of Christ's cross-work, and more. Though we recognise the immense diversity of contemporary Catholicism, we do not find that official pronouncements since Vatican II have bridged the chasm that remains' (p 379).

Carson is equally firm in his brief comments concerning 'liberalism'. After referring to David Edwards and John Stott in their book *ESSENTIALS*, Dr Carson maintains: 'the differences of opinion regarding the authority of Scripture, the uniqueness of Christ, the nature of salvation and therefore the nature of the church are as wide as ever: indeed, the gap yawns wider' (pp 379-80).

In his concluding reflections, Dr Carson claims that 'in many parts of American society, ecumenism has become a dead issue...because it has been outflanked 'by Pluralism... What need of ecumenism if all 'issues' are mere variations of a universal movement toward God? **The view most widely despised in many reaches of American society is the one that says it is right and that others are wrong.** And no view matters much anyway, except the one that worships Pluralism itself' (p 381).

'This is the time', therefore, 'for evangelicalism to understand itself, to resist fragmentation, to return to basics, and to think through its mission in the light of the changeless evangel and the changing patterns of unbelief all around us', (idem).

There is so much more which could be quoted and commented upon but I hope that I have now provided you with adequate samples of the book's content. For the reviewer, the overwhelming impression was the relevance and helpfulness of the various chapters. Together with the questions posed for study at the end of each chapter and the useful bibliographies/footnotes supplied by each writer, this book will serve as an excellent study guide for us to appraise once again the meaning and implications of the term 'evangelical'.

Eryl Davies

Multi-Faith Religious Education

Chris Hess

CALLING OR COMPROMISE? is a 16-page booklet published by the Association of Christian Teachers (2 Romeland Hill, St Albans, AL3 4ET), price £1, plus 30p postage.

Amongst the problems that can face a Christian teacher of Religious Education in a state school are those of being misunderstood by fellow-believers in his own church and of being accused of compromising the gospel because he is teaching religions other than Biblical Christianity. Neither of these problems need exist, but they often do. They may well arise from different perceptions of the rôle of the RE teacher, who sees himself as a professional educator whose primary task is to teach according to the Agreed Syllabus, as determined by his employer, the Local Education Authority. Church members may well see the teacher as an evangelist who should do nothing but teach the Scriptures and explain the gospel. They cannot understand the Christian teacher who is involved with multi-faith RE.

CALLING OR COMPROMISE? has been compiled by the Religious Education Committee of the Association of Christian Teachers with the aim of helping 'those who are trying to understand the challenge of multi-faith religious education in schools.' They hope it will be read, amongst others, by church members and Christian parents who may be perplexed by multi-faith RE. They recognise that there is 'an urgent need for greater understanding of the nature of multi-faith RE, the reasons for its current use, and the problems and perplexities that it poses for Christian RE teachers'.

The question is asked at the beginning of the booklet, 'Can I teach religions other than Christianity and still retain my firm Christian commitment?' Four approaches that evangelical Christians could take to the teaching of multi-faith RE are then suggested and analysed: to teach it unreservedly and uncritically; to refuse to teach it; to teach it from a particular perspective; to teach it within certain limitations. **The main purpose of this booklet is to show that 'evangelical Christians can teach multi-faith RE and retain their commitments and their integrity'**, provided that they are strong in their own faith, recognise some potential hazards and are prepared to be discerning in their approach to teaching.

A number of reasons are then adduced as to why Christians are involved in multi-faith RE. Legally, they have no choice, since the Education Act (1988) Section 8.3 states that 'any agreed syllabus...shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. Most Christian teachers are happy with this, since the importance of teaching Christianity is given legal status for the first time, whilst due note is taken of the other major

world religions present in our society. 'Christian teachers who are secure in their faith will not be nervous about exploring ideas from a range of faiths with their pupils', state the authors.

The development of RE from 1944 to the present day is traced: the assumption of the 1944 Education Act that Religious *Instruction* (note the title) would be Christian, though not including 'any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination' (Section 26); the influence of the research of Goldman and others in the mid-1960s which led to the emphasis on 'child-centred' education, which conveniently for them tied in with liberal theology and minimised the importance of the Bible in what then became called Religious Education; the growth of the 'world religions' and phenomenological approach in the 1970s, which led to a great increase in interesting teaching materials on various world religions, but neglected Christianity; and then to the situation today, when, for example, 'teachers who are positive and observant Muslims, Sikhs or Hindus have sometimes been welcomed as valuable resources in multi-cultural education whereas **Christians with similar attitudes and commitments have been treated with suspicion and even hostility**'.

RE today is faced with a number of problems: RE teachers are divided between those who consider the personal spiritual development of the pupils to be the concern of teachers, and those who do not; there are problems caused by a lack of good teaching materials for Christianity, and the lack of money to buy such as do exist; problems caused by RE being subsumed into 'Humanities' courses, or a programme of Personal and Social Education, where the subject can soon lose its identity; and the problems caused by children and other teachers from totally secular backgrounds who find RE irrelevant and arid.

A number of the hazards of teaching multi-faith RE are then given, such as the dangers of superficiality and misrepresentation. However, **for Christian teachers one of the greatest hazards is that of misunderstanding, and when this comes from other Christians it can be hard to cope with.** 'Christian teachers who maintain both a firm and clear witness to Christ as the only Saviour, and who are also committed to the sensitive and accurate presentation of various faiths from the viewpoint of adherents, may well be misunderstood. In school they may be regarded as inconsistent or even dangerous. In church their treatment of other religions may be seen as an unacceptable compromise'.

The final part of the booklet gives four case studies from the individual experiences of teachers, which helps those outside school to understand something of the pressures, problems and tensions that Christian RE teachers can face.

It is most likely that anyone teaching RE today in a state primary or secondary school will be teaching a range of faiths. Evangelical Christian teachers are and need to be involved. They also need to be understood, supported and encouraged by their churches. They see themselves primarily not as evangelists (although many are involved in voluntary Christian activities in school), but as educators. It is the privilege and responsibility of the church to preach the gospel; of Christian parents to bring up their children 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord' (Eph 6:4)

and of Christian RE teachers to be the best educators they can, to the glory of God, under the authority of the state, and for the benefit of the children.

This booklet raises several important issues, not all of which have answers. It makes a number of helpful points, and is useful for helping non-teaching Christians to understand what is happening in RE in schools, and for alerting them to some of the problems being faced by Christian RE teachers, many of whom would say they are called by God to this work, and who need the understanding, support and prayers of their fellow Christians in their local church. The booklet can be read with profit by pastors, parents and other interested church members as well as by the teachers themselves.

Mr Chris Hess BA DipEd is Deputy Headteacher, Glan-y-Môr Comprehensive School, Burry Port, Dyfed and Secretary of the Association of Christian Teachers of Wales.

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 4. To stimulate interest in contemporary theological matters among BEC churches by the way in which these topics are handled and by indicating their relevance to pastoral ministry.
 5. To keep our constituency informed about the contents of new books and journals, as a means of encouraging their stewardship of time and money.
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