

Editorial	1
Where is the God of Spurgeon <i>Paul Cook</i>	2
Bible Versions for Public Worship <i>Robert Sheehan</i>	7
Exegesis 13: Prayer in the Spirit, Jude 20 <i>Michael Haykin</i>	16
Feminism and the Ordination of Women <i>Ken Brownell</i>	20
Review Article Pluralism and Truth, on 'Dissonant Voices' by Harold Netland <i>John Ross</i>	29
Book Reviews <i>What Evangelicals Believe</i> <i>Evangelical Spirituality</i> <i>Unity in Truth</i>	39

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BRITISH EVANGELICAL COUNCIL

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a journal of evangelical theology

The God of Spurgeon

Bible Versions for Public Worship

Prayer in the Spirit

Feminism and Ordination

Pluralism and Truth

Unity in Truth

**F O U N D -
A T I O N S**

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Editorial

FOUNDATIONS is not the only journal to mark the centenary of C H Spurgeon's death in late January 1892. We do so by opening with a challenge by Paul Cook entitled, *WHERE IS THE GOD OF SPURGEON?* Here is a salutary reminder of the significance of Spurgeon's theology and ministry for our own day. We hope it will whet your appetite for an article by David Boorman, which we hope to include in our next issue, on *Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy*.

A stimulating comparative review of BIBLE VERSIONS FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP is next provided by Robert Sheehan. In our EXEGESIS series, Michael Haykin expounds the subject of PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT, from Jude 20, seeing it primarily as a *Bulwark Against Apostasy*.

Two contemporary issues are then tackled. First of all, the subject of FEMINISM AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN, in which Ken Brownell makes a valuable, balanced survey and assessment of recent writings in the United States. Here is a subject we will need to return to often in the future. Then follows a review article, entitled PLURALISM AND TRUTH, by John Ross of the book, *Dissonant Voices*, by Harold Netland. This is a scholarly discussion of the pressing questions raised by religious pluralism about the certainty of absolute truth. The reviewer's knowledge of the missionary scene makes his introduction to a helpful book even more valuable.

Recently, the FIEC adopted an up-dated Doctrinal Statement, called *What We Believe* and they have now published a commentary on and exposition of that Statement under the title, *WHAT EVANGELICALS BELIEVE*. The current BEC Executive chairman, Peter Milsom, welcomes this small book and makes some observations on its contents and usefulness. Neil Richards concludes this issue of FOUNDATIONS with two reviews, one on *EVANGELICAL SPIRITUALITY* and the other on *UNITY IN TRUTH*. The latter, especially, is warmly recommended; the book consists of messages originally given under the auspices of the BEC (1967-71, 73, 77 and 79). In editing this book, the Rev Hywel Jones writes that the addresses 'deal with questions which are not only central to the matter of unity ... but also to the quality, strength and usefulness of true faith and to the preservation and propagation of authentic Christianity' (p 18).

Pressure on space this time means that the promised article on the origin and development of *Liberation Theology* will appear next time, in November 1992. We trust you will find this issue of the journal both challenging and satisfying.

Where is the God of Spurgeon?

Paul Cook

The centenary of the death of C H Spurgeon on January 31st this year requires comment. The measure and influence of the man has not yet been fully evaluated. He was one of the greatest preachers this nation has known. In some ways he was a true Victorian, certainly in terms of his life span (1834-1892); but the principles and values by which he lived were far from being Victorian. He embodied within his person and ministry the essence of evangelicalism. His place in the history of biblical religion in our nation was definitive. He drew all that was best from his evangelical predecessors and distilled it over a period of forty years in a ministry which circled the globe. He was no mere Baptist; he rose above petty sectarianism - that is how he became a Baptist and later left the Baptist Union - and commanded a following wherever lovers of biblical truth were found.

Spurgeon was far more than a personification of the biblical influences which preceded him. Evangelicalism in Great Britain over the last hundred years has been his lengthened shadow in many ways. Evangelical believers have been fed and sustained by Spurgeon through the vast distribution of his published sermons and other works. He has represented for his successors the throbbing heart of the evangelical faith. He staked out the ground of evangelical belief. The name *Spurgeon* conjures up for us the glorious truths of our gospel. He has been criticized by some men of Reformed persuasion for his moderate Calvinism but Spurgeon was careful to observe biblical boundaries. Philosophical niceties did not appeal to him. He preached the *wisdom of God*. Nonconformity since 1892 has reflected his influence in its evangelical life and fulfilled his dire warnings in its sad decline. And if Spurgeon could be described as the modern Elijah then Lloyd-Jones was the modern Elisha upon whom his mantle fell.

The loss of such men can have a traumatic effect upon the faithful left behind. It was so in the days of Elijah and Elisha (cp 2 Kings 1 & 2). When Elijah was taken up to heaven, his successor Elisha took up the mantle which fell from him and striking the waters of the Jordan cried, **Where is the Lord God of Elijah?** (2:14). Elisha wanted to know that, though Elijah had been taken, Elijah's God was still with his people. As we look back to January 31st 1892 we find ourselves in need of the same re-assurance. Elisha had need to ask the question because he was living in days of apostasy when many professed believers were turning from the living God and despising his revealed word. We too have a similar reason for asking **Where is the Lord God of Spurgeon?** The God of creation, providence, prophecy and of miracles has been repudiated today in favour of man-made concepts. Others speak in super-naturalistic terms, but so subjective are their claims that frequently they resent any attempt to bring them under the judgment of God's word.

Spurgeon was a man of the word. He did not deny that sometimes the Spirit operates directly (cp Sermon on John 14:22, June 10th 1855), but maintained that God always acts in harmony with his word. Whether by rationalism or by extreme subjectivism the truth of God's revealed word is being devalued in our day. Christian unity is being

pursued upon the basis of a common search for truth instead of the sure foundation of truth already *revealed from heaven*. Elijah had to contend against such a mentality. Many in Israel at that time were setting up the worship of Baal and Ashteroth alongside that of the Lord God. Elijah proclaimed revealed truth over against idolatrous views and man-made practices of worship (cp 1 Kings 17:18). Charles Haddon Spurgeon did likewise. 'It is our solemn conviction', he wrote, 'that where there can be no real spiritual communion there should be no pretence of fellowship. Fellowship with known and vital error is participation in sin'. (Sword and Trowel, November 1887, p 559). That too was Elijah's message. It ought to be obvious to the children of light. Truth and error are irreconcilables, as are light and darkness.

During Spurgeon's lifetime, the Higher Critical Movement had seriously affected the Nonconformist churches. Spurgeon saw the dangers and vigorously contended for the faith of the gospel, especially during the years from 1887 until his death. This became known as the *Downgrade Controversy*. The issues then were the same as they are today, and as they were in New Testament times when Jude exhorted believers to 'earnestly contend for the faith which was once (*hapax*) delivered unto the saints' (v 3), and as they were when Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal and Ashteroth.

Preaching at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on April 18th 1889 Spurgeon observed:

In years gone by, you could pretty surely reckon on hearing the gospel if you went into a Nonconformist place of worship; but you cannot reckon in that fashion nowadays, for in some places false doctrine is openly taught, and in others it is covertly advanced. In former times good men differed as they always will, as to the form of their doctrinal system; but with regard to fundamental points, they were at one: it is not so now. (MTP, 1889, p 266).

He then gives details of the fundamentals of the faith which were being called into question:

The Deity of our Lord and his great atoning sacrifice, his resurrection, and his judgment of the wicked, never were moot points in the Church; but they are questioned at this time. The work of the Holy Spirit may be honoured in words; but what faith can be placed in those to whom he is not a person, but a mere influence? God himself is by some made into an impersonal being, or the soul of all things, which is much the same as nothing. Pantheism is atheism in a mask. The plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, as we have understood it from our childhood, is assailed in a thousand insidious ways. The fall of Adam is treated as a fable; and original sin and imputed righteousness are both denounced. As for the doctrines of grace, they are ridiculed as altogether out of vogue and even the solemn sanctions of the law are scorned as bugbears of the dark ages.

Spurgeon in the same address adds:

For many a year, by the grand old truths of the gospel, sinners were converted, and saints were edified, and the world was made to know that there is a God in Israel; but these are too antiquated for the present cultured race of superior beings. They are going to regenerate the world by Democratic Socialism and set up a kingdom for Christ without the new birth and the pardon of sin. Truly the Lord has not taken away the seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal, but they are, in most cases, hidden away, even as Obadiah hid the prophets in the cave. The latter-day gospel is not the gospel by which we are saved. ...It has not been given by the

infallible revelation of God: it does not pretend to have been. It is not divine: it has no inspired Scripture at its back. It is, when it touches the cross, an enemy; when it speaks of him who died thereon, it is a deceitful friend. Many are its sneers at the truth of substitution: it is irate at the mention of the precious blood. Many a pulpit, where Christ was once lifted high in all the glory of his atoning death, is now profaned by those who cavil at justification by faith.

Like Elijah, Spurgeon suffered greatly for his stand, and, in some senses, died for it. But Spurgeon's words have a contemporary ring. The fundamentals are being denied in the present day. Even professing evangelicals are making light of truths, for which the martyrs were burned, by collaborating with men of liberal, humanistic views and with those of a ritualistic outlook who preach *another gospel*. We are in grave danger of losing the gospel. What is so often preached as *gospel* is lacking in doctrinal and biblical content and is often reduced to a bland sentimentality. There is no real doctrine of sin and no solemn warnings of the place *where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched* (Mark 9:44).

Some may think it improper that we should commemorate men. But Elisha did not consider it improper to cry, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* He did not just say, *Where is the Lord God?* God used faithful men moved by the Holy Spirit to communicate his word; and he calls faithful men to preach it. It is fitting, therefore, that the great works and movements of God should be associated with the names of prophets and preachers.

We dare not think what the spiritual state of our nation today would have been had not God given us Spurgeon. The Congregational churches which numbered 4,000 in 1900 have been devastated by liberalism and reduced to a mere shadow of what they once were. Why have the Baptists remained more faithful to the biblical message? One important answer is Spurgeon himself. Spurgeon's College remained a strong influence for the Reformed faith until Dr Percy Evans became Principal in 1925. His review of B B Warfield's *The Inspiration and the Authority of the Bible* reveals how far he had departed from an evangelical position. Many of the Baptist churches in the Home Counties were established by Spurgeon and the men he sent out from his college; and the influence to some extent has persisted. Spurgeon's sermons have been read by people of all denominations. They became a pattern for many preachers and not a few Anglican clergymen, some of whom actually made a practice of re-preaching them. Spurgeon has provided the main evangelical literature for many Christians over the past 130 years. There are very few of the so-called pulpit giants of the last century whose sermons could be read with profit today and the sermons of some of the truly great preachers of the past, such as Whitefield, were better heard than read. There is, however an abiding worth in Spurgeon's sermons.

Elisha cried, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* not because Elijah had been the only faithful man in his generation, but because God had used him as an outstanding prophet and leader of the believing remnant in a period of serious apostasy. The same can be said of Spurgeon. In a period of growing rationalism, when enormous confidence was being placed in man's abilities to produce a golden age and when the leaders within the churches were departing from the evangelical faith of their fathers, Spurgeon stood firm and reiterated the truths of the everlasting gospel.

His significance

1. **Spurgeon was a Bible man.** He was captive to the Bible as the word of God. The biblical index of his Sermons reveals the extensive use he made of Scripture. He believed that the whole Bible is the word of God to men. He held to the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible as originally given. He rejected the growing liberalism of the nineteenth century which increasingly subjected the Scriptures to human judgment. For Spurgeon, human thought had to be brought under the judgment of divine revelation and for this reason he repudiated the philosophy of evolution and any other speculative theories in violation of Scripture. This is what lay behind *The Rivulet Controversy* of 1855 and five years later *The Baldwin Brown Controversy*. He was not very interested in apologetics, and when he attempted it in *THE CLUE OF THE MAZE*, 1881 he was clearly not at his best. He believed that the Bible was well able to look after itself. (cp Speeches given at the Annual Meetings of the BFBS in 1864 and 1875 in *Speeches by C H Spurgeon*, 1878). The best defence of the Bible is to let loose its great truths, and this he did to an astonishing degree. He was not enticed by speculative thought in any way; whether of liberal theories, philosophical debate or uncertain prophetic interpretations. He knew his God-given commission was to preach the word.
2. **Spurgeon was a gospel man;** not just in the sense that he believed the gospel as do all Christians, but the gospel of God's free grace to sinners was the organizing principle of his whole life and ministry. In this respect he was clearly not a Victorian; he had none of the moralism of that moralistic age. His opposition to the *social-gospellers* arose out of his deep conviction that society can only be effectively changed when individuals are born again by the power of God. It is regrettable that the Radio 4 broadcast services at the end of January arranged by Spurgeon's College should have focused upon his social work as though that were his main contribution. He saw the gospel at the heart of all moral and social restoration. The gospel does not make its appeal to what is within man, as though there is some spark of goodness which can be fanned into a flame. That was not Spurgeon's view. He knew that apart from the free grace and favour of God there is no hope for man. The sinner needs God's mercy and God's renewing power. He saw the gospel as the single ray of light in a fallen world. His handling of the Scriptures, his exposition of the word and his preaching were all conditioned, rightly we believe, by the gospel. This probably accounts for the lack of a clear distinction in his preaching between ministry to the saints and gospel preaching to sinners. All his Sermons are 'gospel sermons'. He can visualize no motivation and godly action on the part of believers apart from the gospel and certainly no hope for unbelievers.
3. **Spurgeon was a Christ-centred man.** In as much as the gospel focuses upon Christ, and the gospel of God's grace was the organizing principle of all Spurgeon's thinking, so Christ was central in his preaching; and not just Christ, but *Jesus Christ and him crucified*; as was imprinted on the covers of all volumes of the *METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT*. The purposes of God revealed in the gospel find their fulfilment in the Cross. As far as Spurgeon was concerned the eternal decrees, the OT revelation, the Incarnation and even the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost and the growth of the Church, all hinged upon *Jesus Christ*

and him crucified. To shift the focus of attention to the decrees of God, or to the Incarnation, or to the Holy Spirit and Pentecost, will upset the balance of truth. No preacher has maintained a greater biblical balance than Spurgeon.

In a day when confusion seems to reign, the churches need to enquire, **Where is the Lord God of Elijah?** and **Where is the Lord God of Spurgeon?** The questions can be answered clearly and emphatically. The Lord God is where his word is proclaimed. That is how he speaks and makes himself known; and when his glorious gospel is preached, it can come to men *not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit* in answer to believing prayer. Whenever the Lord Jesus Christ is honoured and exalted, and faith, life and hope are centred upon him, there God is pleased to presence himself among men.

So faithfulness to the Bible, to the truths of the gospel and to the person and work of Jesus Christ must be our priority. Like Spurgeon, we must emphasize the centralities of the faith. Believers are falling out today over secondary issues and at the same time often failing to assent to and maintain the fundamentals of the faith. Spurgeon closed his conference address to his college-trained men in 1889 with these words:

I shall be gone from you ere long. You will meet and say to one another, 'The President has departed. What are we going to do?' I charge you, be faithful to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrines of his grace. Be ye faithful unto death and your crowns will not be wanting. ...The Lord himself bless you! Amen.

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

'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' This question comes in most appropriately when some great difficulty lies in your way. Before Elisha, the Jordan is flowing, a deep and rapid stream; how is he to cross it? He takes the mantle which those waters knew before, when Elijah passed that way, and striking them with it, he cries, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' and the waters at once divide, and the prophet walks through. Have you come to a great difficulty, my dear friend? Cannot you get over it? Are you in trouble about it? Now, if this is a difficulty that ought to be removed, the shortest way to have it removed is to go to God about it. If it be one that ought not to be removed, then also you have done rightly in going to God for he who will not remove it will at least give you grace to glorify him in some other way. The best thing we can do, in all times of trouble and trial, is to lay the matter before the Lord.

I do not think that we shall ever find that any man truly trusted in God, and yet was confounded. No difficulty which was ever propounded to the Most High, and left in his hands, ever remained a difficulty long. He has the solution of all our problems, the answer to all our riddles. He can work out to a blessed result all our difficulties. There is nothing which can possibly be beyond the power of Him whose name is Jehovah, the I AM, God all-sufficient.

C H Spurgeon on 2 Kings 2:14, MTP 44, p 543

Bible Versions for Public Worship

Robert Sheehan

I am making two assumptions in this article. Firstly, I presuppose an unconditional acceptance of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Secondly, I am assuming that the issue to be considered is not one about the text of Scripture, whether we prefer a 'received', majority or eclectic text, but the principles involved in the translation of that text.

It has to be said by way of introduction that some pastors and churches make the choice of the version used for public worship not on the basis of any real principles, but on the grounds of prejudice dressed up as principle.

Evangelical attitudes to Bible versions

1. Pathological Conservatives

Erasmus complained in his day that 'some people are too conservative to change their shoes or their underwear or eat fresh eggs' ¹. In the same way, James Buchanan lamented the tendency of some to argue, 'what is new in Theology is not true, and what is true is not new' ².

Their attitude is best summarised by the adage that 'what has been is best, what is now is decadent, and what shall be is unthinkable'. Pathological conservatism is a hysterical commitment to tradition. Every age has its portion of pathological conservatives. Sutor of the Sorbonne opposed Erasmus' intention of correcting the Vulgate on the grounds that if he did so, 'the entire authority of Holy Scripture would collapse, love and faith would be extinguished, heresies and schisms would abound, blasphemy would be committed against the Holy Spirit, the authority of theologians would be shaken, and indeed the Catholic Church would collapse from the foundations' ³.

A year after the Authorised Version had been published, Hugh Broughton wrote his book, 'A Censure of the Late Translation for our Churches', in which he declared that the AV translation 'was so poorly done that it would grieve him as long as he lived. He insisted that he would rather be tied between wild horses and torn apart than let it go forth among the people' ⁴.

It is no surprise to find in the twentieth century this tradition of hostility to new translations continued. Indeed, Professor J P Lewis has noted, 'that the feeling towards the KJV when it was new was no different from that shown towards new versions in the twentieth century' ⁵.

2. Pathological Progressives

These have their home base in Athens where they spend 'their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas' ⁶. They are often young men, although not always, and view everything said, done or produced before yesterday as belonging to the dark ages. They see today as the best day in which to have been alive so far and tomorrow as full of potential and promise.

These 'Athenians' are great enthusiasts for Bible versions. The latest is always the best. Each new version is the last word in skilful translation technique and absolutely magnificent. Each new translation is viewed as even better than the previous ones which were also lauded as best.

Pathological progressives are every publisher's dream. They supply such enthusiastic quotable quotes that readers are left wondering whether the latest version has introduced at least the millenium, if not eternity!

3. Uncomplicated Traditionalists

Some people are honest enough to admit that their choice of Bible version arises out of nothing more than tradition. They love their old version. God has used it to do them and others much good. They want no change and see no problem with their version which is unable to be overcome by those who want to use it. To change the old version seems to them as distressing as 'seeing a carbuncle on the face of an old friend'.

To simple traditionalists - and I use the term 'simple' not as a pejorative term nor in the patronising way - new versions do not look, feel, sound or even smell like the old version.

Each age has had its uncomplicated traditionalists. Thomas Fuller remarked with regard to the Authorised Version that, 'some of the brethren were not well pleased with this translation' ⁷. Professor Lewis explains why: 'Published without notes, it seemed lacking in comparison with its rival, the Geneva Bible' ⁸. Indeed the AV 'did not meet with early acceptance and most Puritans for the next three generations preferred the Geneva Bible' ⁹. It is false to claim that the AV was the Bible of the Reformers and the Puritans. It was not. It post-dated the Reformers and was largely disdained by the Puritans for the Geneva Bible. They loved the old Bible, not the new one.

4. Pliable Progressives

Some people may be termed pliable progressives because they do not adopt a version because of principles but because of lack of backbone. They find it impossible to swim against any tide, to resist any trend or to refute any theory and so when the young people, or that most frightening of all spectres, *la femme formidable*, requires them to adopt a new version they meekly obey. Pressurised pastors can be pliable rather than principled and make translation choices because of popular demand rather than thoughtful choice. And so of some it must be said that, 'Molluscs have taken the place of men and men are turned to jelly-fishes' ¹⁰.

5. Principled Conservatives

We turn from those who make their choices on an unsatisfactory basis to men of principle. It has been correctly asserted, 'What is the pre-eminent trait of a good Bible translation? The answer must be accuracy of translation' ¹¹. Conservatives have argued that accuracy of translation can only be gained by allowing the *source* languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) to control the *receptor* language (in our case, English). Hence the original language dominates the language into which translation is made. Let me illustrate this by suggesting five principles called for in a consistent translation:

a) Hebrew and Greek grammatical structure is imposed on the English form.

This will be the norm as far as is possible without making nonsense of the English

sentence. The original languages of the Bible do not shrink from using long and complicated sentences. The 202 words making up Paul's sentence in Ephesians 1:3f have been said by Hendriksen to roll 'on like a snowball tumbling down a hill picking up volume as it descends'¹². The sentence consists of a mass of inter-related dependent clauses. It is a highly evocative sentence. However in modern days, 'few languages customarily use such long sentences'¹³. Should the translator then break up the long sentence into shorter ones or impose Greek syntax on the English? Consistent conservative principles follow Greek and Hebrew rather than modern English usage.

The AV generally illustrates this approach. In the 19th Century, John Seldon commented that in the AV 'the Bible is rather translated into English words than into English phrase'¹⁴. Hence the sentence structure of the AV is Judeo-Hellenistic rather than English.

In the same way, Hebrew often begins sentences with WAW and Greek with *kai* or *de* meaning 'and'. It is good Hebrew and Greek, but in the modern world 'completely contrary to good English usage'¹⁵. The conservative translator, however, allows 'and' to remain in the English text at the beginning of sentences because the source language rules the receptor language.

- b) A literal word parallel is used wherever possible.

A word for word literal translation is not always possible. Dr M C Fisher gives a literal translation of Genesis 33:14, 'As for me, let me lead my gentleness to the foot of the business which is to my face and to the foot of the children that I shall come to my lord to seir'¹⁶. A word for word translation would be meaningless. A translation of equivalent meaning is necessary.

Commenting on the opening words of Philippians 3:8, Dr Hendriksen reminds us that a literal, word for word, rendering in English would be, 'But, indeed, therefore, at least, even...'¹⁷. Again a translation of equivalent meaning is needed.

The conservative translator, recognising the difficulties of complete parallel on all occasions, seeks verbal parallels wherever it is possible without making a nonsense of the English. Of course, in many cases it is possible.

- c) Technical vocabulary is retained.

For many of those involved in developing translation theory, the retention of technical terms such as 'redemption, propitiation' etc is of no importance. They argue that a correct translation does not mean one that conveys the original technical word into English, but 'correctness must be determined by the extent to which the average reader for which a translation is intended will be likely to understand it correctly... The new focus has shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor'¹⁸. Additionally it is an axiom of modern translation theory that in translation the understanding of 'non-Christians has priority over Christians'¹⁹.

The conservative translator ought to respond to this in a number of ways. Firstly, he ought to accept that a limited amount of the Bible is written to non-Christians, eg John's Gospel²⁰, but the Scriptures are primarily directed towards the church. Secondly, he should recognise that the original Scriptures contained technical language even for the people of its day and necessarily so.

Dr Fisher argues the case well. 'Since the Scriptures, like any other particular discipline or field of study, contain a unique and highly specialised message, they

employ a vocabulary or terminology peculiarly suited to their purpose. A physician does not prescribe “some of that fizzy green stuff” for his patient but uses the exact chemical formula or manufacturer’s trade name for the required medication... The lawyer, the engineer and others must express themselves in terms totally mystifying to the untaught in order to specify accurately the exacting requirements of their services. There are, similarly, matters of the spirit for which our language has the means of precise and adequate expressions as well, and each new generation of believers needs to be taught the significance of such terminology’²¹.

Thirdly, the conservative translator believes that the non-Christian comes to understand the message of the Bible through preaching not merely through reading. Philips are still needed to explain the Scriptures to Ethiopians²².

- d) Second person singular forms are imposed on the translation.

In his article ‘Thou or You?’, Dr O T Allis accepts that the Biblical languages and some modern languages have a plural and singular form of address. Historically the second person singular pronoun was ‘thou’. Dr Allis argues that in using ‘thou’ for singular persons, ‘the AV is not following Elizabethan or Jacobean usage but the language of the Bible. This means that the AV simply follows the biblical usage. Where the Bible used the singular, AV used the singular; and where it uses the plural, AV uses the plural’²³.

On the conservative principle that the original language rules the receptor language, except where it creates nonsense, it is arguable that ‘thou’ should be retained in translation if it is not deemed to be nonsense in modern English.

- e) Cultural norms should not be changed.

Translational procedures have often allowed the cultural status of the Bible to be changed into the cultural situation of the reader. The AV sometimes writes of pounds, pennies and pence and makes many a parable seem rather odd. Not even evangelical ministers today work a whole day for a penny!

A conservative approach to translation will require the retention of Biblical weights and measures, and presumably some marginal reference or table at the back to explain them. Attempts to put monetary amounts in will soon be rendered anachronistic by inflation. Modern children think yards, feet and inches went out with the ark, so marginal references would have to refer to metres and centimetres.

6. Principled Progressives

Those who could be described as principled progressives have a great deal of hesitation about much modern translation theory and feel themselves to be progressive conservatives rather than wild-eyed radicals. They, however, are not convinced by some aspects of the conservative arguments.

Principled progressives accept the priority of the receptor language, English, over the originals in matters of grammar and form. They do not accept that Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, because they are Biblical languages, are in any sense special or primary. They concur with the opinion that, ‘The languages of the Bible are subject to the same limitations as any other natural language. Greek and Hebrew are simply languages, like any other language, and they are to be understood and analysed in the same manner as any other ancient tongue’²⁴.

In addition, principled progressives note that the New Testament was written in Koine

Greek, the ordinary Greek of the day. This was not because classical Attic Greek was unavailable in the first century for, 'In the first century, books written for the literati were still written in Attic Greek'²⁵. The use of Koine or Hellenistic Greek is significant because it was the language of the people. There are now less than 50 words in the NT without parallel in Greek literature, compared with 767 in 1886²⁶.

It is the contention of the principled progressives that the Bible written in the ordinary languages of *its* day must be translated into the ordinary languages of *our* day. In five areas already considered, this means that a consistent translation on progressive principles calls for:

- a) English grammatical structures as far as possible without changing the meaning. Long Hebrew and Greek sentences will be broken down into shorter sentences, and English usage will be followed as to whether sentences should begin with 'and'. It is easy at this point for someone to scream out that such a procedure treats certain words in the original as 'surplus verbiage'²⁷, unnecessary words. But that is a simple fact of translation from one language to another. In his Greek-English Concordance of the NT, J B Smith lists a hundred different Greek words left untranslated in the AV on a thousand occasions²⁸. One language does not always translate to another word for word, idiom for idiom, grammatical rule for grammatical rule.
- b) A literal word parallel is used wherever possible. Principled progressives entirely concur with this principle as long as it is properly understood. Words only have meaning in their contexts, and therefore have many shades of meaning. In the full preface of the AV 'The Translators to the Readers' the translators commented, 'We have not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing or identity of words...Truly that we might not vary from the sense of that which we had translated before, if the word signified the same thing in both places (for there be some words that be not of the same sense everywhere) we were especially careful'²⁹. Consequently, in the AV one word in the Hebrew is translated by 84 separate English words, another by 60, another by 59; one Greek word is translated 17 different ways etc³⁰.
- c) Technical vocabulary is retained. There is complete agreement here with the conservative position. Principled progressives do not approve of paraphrased explanations in the text. Of course, there is room for some debate over what is and is not part of technical vocabulary.
- d) Modern English usage is followed for the second person singular. In his article, Dr Allis tries to claim that 'thou' is modern English use³¹. He duly shoots himself in both feet, however, by acknowledging 'thou' and its parallel language forms as part of the 'quaint, old-fashioned' style of the AV, by regarding 'thou' as part of the 'vertical...language of reverence and humility' in contrast to 'colloquial or horizontal language'. He further suggests that most schoolchildren learn a foreign language and concludes, 'If they can do this they certainly should not have difficulty in mastering the thou-speech of the Bible'³². In other words, 'thou' is *not* modern usage. It is a 'foreign' language. It might, however, be asserted that 'thou' and its language form should be retained in the Bible because it is a reverent and Biblical way of speaking to God. There is no doubt it does help some people but not all, to be reverent. Praying, however, is

more than word forms. It is an attitude of heart.

More importantly, the argument for 'thou' cannot be said to be a Biblical way of speaking of God to any greater degree than it is a Biblical way of speaking to Satan or an individual man. The same 'singular person' reasoning which requires us to address God as 'thou' requires us so to address Satan and individual men. As modern English has no special form for the second person singular, and the Scriptures have no special form for addressing God, a translation may not impose one.

- e) Cultural norms should not be changed.

Again there is no difference from the conservative position.

Three translations considered

In the modern situation we are faced with the claims of three translations of the one Bible: the AV, the NKJV and NIV. There are numerous other versions but these three are the only ones of real significance in the evangelical constituency.

1. The AV

The AV is much loved by many uncomplicated traditionalists among whom are some of the finest Christians in our congregations and pulpits. The AV is idolised by the pathological conservatives. One such church accused its minister of heresy because he would not assert that where the AV differed from the Hebrew and Greek, the AV corrected them, not the Hebrew and Greek it!

Pathological progressives abominate the AV and pliable progressives prefer to forget it, except where someone formidable requires them to remember it.

Consistent principled conservatives have a high respect for the AV. They are pleased with its retention of the language structures of the original languages, technical vocabulary and old English form of the second person singular and its related language. They are generally happy with its attempts at parallel words, although aware that it can be improved and corrected and is misleading where it transculturises.

A principled conservative may use the AV but not uncritically. Preaching on Romans 6:2 and the phrase 'God forbid', he might comment, 'It is not a strictly literal translation. The Apostle did not use the word *God* at all' ³³. In the same sermon, commenting on 'We that are dead to sin', he might have to say, 'Unfortunately the AV, in this instance, has a bad translation' ³⁴. The very next week still preaching on Romans 6:1-2, he might comment on the word 'we'. 'Our AV does not bring out the power and force that the Apostle put into this word' ³⁵. And later on in the same sermon. 'The AV is most unfortunate at this point' ³⁶.

Principled conservatism respects the AV but does not worship it. It distinguishes between the Word of God in the original languages and the translation it holds in its hand, which is not inspired.

Principled progressives respect the AV but are dissatisfied with its imposition of original language grammar structures, its use of the old English second person singular form and join with conservatives in regretting some of its translations and transculturalisation. Principled progressives, however, respect its desire for parallel words and technical terms.

2. The NKJV

Uncomplicated traditionalists will never accept the NKJV even though it is only a 'face-lift' rather than a new translation. They are emotionally attached to what they saw before 'plastic surgery' occurred.

Pathological conservatives sing only one tune, 'The old is best' and so, being blind, cannot look and assess. Pathological progressives hating the father will hate the son. Pliable progressives are waiting to see who shouts the loudest.

Principled conservatives will find much to commend in the NKJV. It retains the grammatical structures and language parallels of the AV, the technical terms, removes the transcultural mistakes and improves the translation so that the sermon series on Romans 6 would not have made three-quarters of its criticisms. The only loss to the principled conservative is of 'thou' and its associated language forms.

Principled progressives will applaud the removal of transcultural gaffes, translation inadequacies and old language forms, although doubting if the modernisation is thorough enough. The NKJV is clearly a revision but retains some peculiarities, eg the retention of 'begot' in genealogies. The NKJV does come a long way to meeting their objections to the AV although not far enough.

3. The NIV

Uncomplicated traditionalists see neither need nor attraction in any new version, least of all this one. Pliable progressives are being told it is nearly indispensable and so, of course, it is! 'They' say so.

Pathological conservatives vent their spleen on this translation! Pathological progressives hardly know whether they are still in the body or in higher realms as they relish the delights of this 'definitive and truly monumental work'.

Principled conservatives have principled problems with the NIV. They view the loss of Hebrew and Greek grammatical forms on the English structure as a reduction of formal accuracy. They detect an unevenness in the translation which ranges from very formal parallels to occasional paraphrase. They are concerned about the small amount of erosion of technical vocabulary in NIV, although it is a small amount. They regret the total loss of old English form. They applaud the general lack, although not total, of transculturalisation.

For the principled conservative the NIV is a step too far in the direction of modern methods of translation. It needs revision back towards the more conservative position of the NKJV at least.

Principled progressives applaud the imposition of English grammatical forms on the text, although not always agreeing with the way it is done. They like the translation in general but also hesitate about those occasions when it tends towards paraphrase. They approve of the general retention of technical vocabulary but would prefer it to be total. They totally consent to modern English and the general lack of transculturalisation.

The principled progressive is willing to use the NIV making exactly the same type of critical comment in his exposition of the NIV text as the principled conservative does in his exposition of the AV text. He is not an unthinking enthusiast. He dislikes the 'hype' about the NIV but also the crass nature of much of the criticism. To him the NIV is neither so bad that it is unusable nor so good that it is unable to be revised.

Concluding Comments

To those readers who may be pathological conservatives or pathological progressives I make this plea, based on Cromwell's statement 'I plead with you, by the tender compassion of Christ, to consider that you may be wrong'. If wrong, then how will you defend your abusive opposition to your opponents? Even if you should be right, has your spirit been right? The possession of the 'correct' Bible version, if such there is, is not an adequate replacement for lack of love.

To those who are pliable progressives I ask. 'Have you never read that *the fear of man brings a snare*'³⁷? How can a man shaken by every breeze have respect for himself or respect of others? Principled behaviour is needed.

To the uncomplicated traditionalists I request that you do not bolster your tradition with the arguments of the pathological conservatives, nor pretend you are principled conservatives. Be honest enough to hold to your AV because you have grown to love it. Be big enough to allow others to love their version too.

To those conservatives and progressives who have worked out their position on the basis of principles, I make these requests:

- a) Look what you have in common: a shared doctrine of Scripture; a shared desire for accuracy; a common desire for the retention of technical vocabulary and verbal parallels wherever possible; a hesitancy about transculturalisation.
- b) Is it not possible for a middle way to be found as we approach the 21st century? Could not conservatives and progressives allow modern English language in a translation retaining original grammatical forms wherever possible? To put it another way, could not conservatives and progressives work on a revision of the NKJV and NIV that gives to the next century a conservative translation in progressive English?

Of course, there are always those who would be on the extremes rejecting any such translation, but I am concerned to see the middle ground occupied so that people travelling from one conservative evangelical church to another will not need a suitcase with them full of versions which might be used!

- c) In the meantime, let us make our people aware of the principles which guide us and others in the choice of versions for our churches, so that prejudices may be removed and understanding increased.

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But now, what piety without truth? What truth - what saving truth - without the Word of God? What word of God, whereof we may be sure, without the Scripture? The Scriptures ... can make us wise unto Salvation. If we be ignorant, they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us.

The Scriptures then being acknowledged to be so full and perfect, how can we excuse ourselves of negligence, if we do not study them? The Scripture is a treasury of most costly jewels ... a fountain of most pure water springing up unto everlasting life. And what marvel? The original thereof being from heaven, not from the earth; the Author being God, not man; the inditer, the Holy Spirit; penmen such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's Spirit ... Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night.

Selected from the AV Translators' Preface.

Exegesis 13: Prayer in the Holy Spirit

Michael Haykin

A consideration of Jude 20 and prayer in the Holy Spirit as a bulwark against apostasy.

‘The most neglected book in the New Testament’, is the way that one writer has described the letter of Jude.¹ Such neglect is a great pity, for as part of the canon of God’s word, Jude is ‘profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness’ [2 Tim 3:16, NKJV].

Structure

Crucial for a proper understanding of this letter is careful attention to its structure. In v 3, Jude issues an appeal for his readers to ‘contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints’ [NKJV]. Then, in v 4, he proceeds to indicate why he is issuing this appeal:

Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ [NKJV].

The verses which follow this statement, vs 5-19, go on to provide a full-length portrait of these false teachers. It is not until v 20, however, that Jude returns to the theme of v 3 and explains what is entailed in ‘contending for the faith’. Thus, vs 5-19 ‘are intended to awaken Jude’s readers to the dangerous reality of their situation which makes Jude’s appeal necessary.’² It is only when Jude has outlined the serious situation which has called forth his letter that he gives positive directions on how to face this situation. Seen in this light, vs 20-23 constitute the very climax of the letter.³

If this basic structure of the letter is overlooked, one easily comes away with the impression that the chief means in opposing heresy is verbal denunciation of heretics.⁴ Not so; the major way to resist doctrinal and moral error is to put into practice the admonitions of vs 20-23. While vs 22 and 23 delineate the attitude which the Christian community is to take towards false teachers and those who have come under their influence, it is in vs 20-21 that Jude prescribes the antidote to error:

Beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life [NKJV].

Interpretation

Of the four admonitions contained in these verses it is the second one which is probably the most difficult to interpret. What exactly does Jude mean when he urges his readers to pray in the Holy Spirit [v 20]? First, whatever its precise meaning, it definitely presents a contrast to the graphic statement with which Jude has just concluded v 19. There Jude is able to declare with confidence that the false teachers about whom he is warning his fellow believers are men devoid of the Spirit of God. It is quite probable

that these false teachers claimed to be spiritual men, men who possessed the Spirit of God.⁵ Possibly they connected this claim to the fact that they were the recipients of visions, a point to which Jude alludes when he describes them as dreamers in v 8.⁶ Be this as it may, Jude does not hesitate to deny their claims. For a careful observation of their lifestyle reveals not the fruit of holiness, but immorality, the end product of ungodly desires [vs 4,16,18].⁷ To Jude, such a lifestyle was impossible for men who had drunk deeply of the Spirit of God, whose pre-eminent characteristic is holiness [see 1 Thess 4:3-8, espec v 8]. It naturally follows that the false teachers, as men devoid of the Spirit, could not possibly fulfill Jude's exhortation to pray in the Spirit.⁸

There are some authors who feel that by praying in the Spirit a special type of prayer is being indicated, namely, praying in tongues. According to this interpretation Jude is urging his readers to include praying in tongues as part of their arsenal in the fight against heresy. But, if this were the case, Jude certainly hints at it in a rather obscure fashion.⁹ Moreover, when the Apostle Paul, in Eph 6:18, also urges believers to pray in the Spirit, he adds a significant qualifier: '*With all prayer and petition* pray at all times in the Spirit' [NASB]. Every conceivable type of prayer which a believer might pray, including the simple cry from the heart 'Help!', is to be uttered in the Spirit.¹⁰

Nor is it, as a Canadian author has recently argued, 'simply surrendering to the Spirit when we pray, forsaking any self-effort.'¹¹ For prayer does require strenuous effort. As John Bunyan (1628-1688) related in his classical discussion of prayer:

Verily, may I but speak my own Experience, and from that tell you the difficulty of Praying to God as I ought; it is enough to make your poor, blind, carnal men, to entertain strange thoughts of me. For, as for my heart, when I go to pray, I find it so loth to go to God, and when it is with him, so loth to stay with him, that many times I am forced in my Prayers; *first*, to beg of God that he would take mine heart, and set it on himself in Christ, and when it is there, that he would keep it there (Ps 86:11). Nay, many times I know not what to pray for, I am so blind, nor how to pray I am so ignorant; *onely* (blessed be Grace) *the Spirit helps our infirmities*.

Oh the starting-holes that the heart hath in the time of Prayer! none knows how many by-ways the heart hath, and back-lains, to slip away from the presence of God. How much pride also, if enabled with expressions? how much hypocrisy, if before others? And how little conscience is there made of Prayer between God and the Soul in secret, unless the *Spirit of Supplication* be there to help?¹²

Meaning

What then does Jude mean when he exhorts his fellow believers to make prayer in the Spirit an integral part of their lives? There is a vast difference between prayer in the Spirit and prayer that is not in the Spirit. Prayer in the Spirit reaches the ear of God, for it goes 'through Christ,' whereas prayer that is not in the Spirit does neither. Jude 20 needs to be linked with Paul's statement in Eph 2:18, 'through him [that is, Christ] we...have our access in one Spirit to the Father.' Through Christ, that is solely on the basis of his sacrificial death, which Paul has just outlined in Ephesians 2, believers as one united body have access to God the Father. In Jesus only 'do we have our introduction into the Divine presence. All prayer that is acceptable and reaches the ears of God, therefore is prayer that is conveyed to Him through Jesus Christ. For sinners the atonement of Christ lays the only basis for real prayer.'¹³ And it is the Spirit, the

Spirit of Christ, who makes this work of Christ a subjective reality in the lives of believers both corporately and individually; for 'by *one Spirit* ... we have access to the Father'. The believer's privilege of worship and prayer, purchased by Christ at such great cost to himself, finds its guarantee and outworking in that Spirit who indwells the believer. So, **to pray in the Spirit means nothing less than to claim and make use of this access to God which Christ's death provides.**

Second, prayer in the Spirit is inseparably yoked to a deep awareness of the fatherhood of God. When a person prays in the Spirit he or she is vividly conscious that the God to whom he or she is praying is not a distant figure, but One who is very close, in fact, One who is his or her Father. Bunyan, speaking of this aspect of prayer in the Spirit, could declare:

Here is the life of Prayer, when in, or with the Spirit, a man being made sensible of sin, and how to come to the Lord for mercy; he comes, I say, in the strength of the Spirit, and cryeth, *Father*. That one word spoken in Faith, is better than a thousand prayers, as men call them, written and read, in a formal, cold, luke-warm way.¹⁴

This conviction that those who are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ can approach God as their Father with freedom and reverent familiarity was one of the key Biblical truths rediscovered at the time of the Reformation. According to H Wace, 'one thing was the centre of all the life and all the teaching of the Reformers - that God was speaking to them as their reconciled Father, and they were in direct communion with Him.'¹⁵ The testimony of Veit Dietrich to the manner of prayer of the German Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) offers an excellent illustration of this point:

He prays as devoutly as one who is conversing with God, and with such hope and faith as one who address his father. 'I know,' said he, 'that thou art our God and Father ...' When I heard him utter these word ... my heart burned within me for great joy, because of the familiar and devout tones in which he spoke with God.¹⁶

Third, prayer in the Spirit is prayer that the Spirit empowers and directs.¹⁷ For most of us regular, private prayer is the most difficult aspect of our lives as Christians. The reason is not hard to find. As Richard Lovelace astutely notes: 'our fallen nature is actually allergic to God and never wants to get too close to him. Thus our fallen nature constantly pulls us away from prayer.'¹⁸ Specifically, prayer reveals the believer's innate poverty as well as his dependence on Another. More than anything else prayer makes us conscious of our limitations and weakness. Naturally, we tend to shy away from such a revelation. So it is that we need the Spirit's empowering in prayer, both to pray and to persevere in prayer. Here though, one must heed the words of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), the eighteenth-century Baptist theologian, who commenting on the very phrase we are considering from Jude 20, states:

The assistance of the Holy Spirit ... is not that of which we are always sensible. We must not live in the neglect of prayer at any time because we are unconscious of being under Divine influence, but rather, as our Lord directs pray for his Holy Spirit. It is in prayer that the Spirit if God ordinarily assists us. Prayers begun in dejection have often ended in joy and praise; of this many of the Psalms of David furnish us with examples.¹⁹

A desire to be led by the Holy Spirit in prayer does not entail forsaking all effort in prayer and 'simply surrendering to the Spirit.' Rather, it should actually lead one to increasingly give oneself to prayer, and so experience the empowering of God the Holy

Spirit as he or she prays.

What does Jude mean when he urges his readers to pray in the Holy Spirit? Nothing less than to experience true prayer as **we are brought by the Holy Spirit into the presence of God our Father to hear his voice address us through the Spirit of his Son, and to speak with him with boldness and reverence.** Without such praying, Jude assures us, the defence of orthodoxy will avail for little.

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Feminism and the Ordination of Women

Ken Brownell

Without a doubt the women's issue is one of the most contentious facing the church today. In particular the ordination of women to the ministry is proving very divisive. We are all familiar with the agonies of the Church of England over this matter, though the terms of the debate are somewhat different from that in the free churches. Conservative evangelicals in the Church of Scotland are coming under greater pressure in this area. In all churches the question of the role of women in church life is being asked. Until relatively recently it was generally clear on what side in the debate evangelicals would come down. For most evangelicals the ordination of women to the office of elder/pastor would have been a clear violation of Scripture. But this is no longer the case. In the last decade men and women with impeccable evangelical credentials have accepted the validity of such ordination. Suddenly evangelicals are divided. When we consider who we are talking about we realise that it is not a case of mainstream conservatives versus progressives on the borderline with liberalism. Walter Kaiser, Kenneth Kantzer, Roger Nicole and men like them have come to this position. What are we to make of all this? Is this simply another example of disagreement among evangelicals over a secondary issue or is it yet another example of compromise and accommodation by evangelicals with the spirit of the age?

I have been asked to assess why this breach in the evangelical ranks has occurred. But before I do that I want to define what I mean by *ordination*. By ordination I mean here the setting apart of a person to the work of an elder and in particular of a pastor/teacher in the church. I am not talking here about the peculiar Anglican variant in this debate which seems to confuse a Reformed concept of ministry with a Catholic concept of priesthood. Nor am I talking about setting people apart for other ministries in the church, such as pastoral visitation or the diaconate.

In this article I wish to suggest five reasons for the shift of some evangelicals towards accepting the ordination of women to the ministry.

1. The impact of feminism.

One of the loudest voices in contemporary society is that of the feminist movement. Especially in the USA, feminist ideology has profoundly penetrated every aspect of society and the church is no exception. Almost all the major Protestant denominations in the USA ordain women to the ministry. Feminist theology is powerfully influential in church councils and theological seminaries. Inclusivist language in relation to God is the theological fashion. The UK lags only a little behind in this. The INDEPENDENT recently ran a series on Saturdays on feminist theology and one article dealt with the issue of language and gender in our understanding of God. If it were not for the difficulties in the Church of England the issue of ordination for many would be old hat by this time. The debate has moved on to questions about the nature of God himself. It would be surprising if evangelicalism were not affected by this. Many books by evangelical authors advocating women's ordination follow in varying degrees the

feminist agenda. None to my knowledge has advocated inclusivist language in relation to God, but some advocate inclusivist language when referring to people. The early books in the field, such as those by Jewett, Mollenkott and Scanzoni and Hardesty revealed considerable feminist influences. The emphasis was on the equality of women and their legitimate rights in the church. Any suggestion of male headship was out of the question. Later Virginia Mollenkott would go so far as to say:

I am beginning to wonder whether indeed Christianity is patriarchal to its very core.

If so, count me out. Some of us may be forced to leave Christianity in order to participate in Jesus' discipleship of equals. (Mickelsen, p 51)

That is an extreme view, but it shows how deeply feminism has influenced some.

More recent evangelical authors have been less strident. Books by women such as Gretchen Gaebelein Hull or Mary van Leuwen Stewart are calmer, gentler and less strident in tone. Indeed they make many very valid points in regard to male attitudes towards women and say many good things about the mutual responsibility of both parents in child-rearing. Nevertheless there is still a strong note on the rights of women in church life that strikes a discordant note.

A good example of this new approach is an article by Nicholas Wolterstorff in the December 1990 issue of the REFORMED JOURNAL. He seeks to answer the charge that evangelicals such as himself have been influenced by feminism. Wolterstorff argues that like any cultural development, feminism has its pluses and minuses. Christians can appreciate it and appropriate what is best critically and with discernment.

He writes:

The (Reformed) tradition never says that any movement, including feminism, is wrong through and through. It says that what is called for is a critical appropriation, a discerning critique of what is good and what is bad.

He then goes on to suggest why there is resistance to women's ordination among evangelicals: some men struggle to cling on to power; some argue biblically; some fear the loss of biblical certainty; some think women unclean. Finally he appeals to Jesus' vision of community in which there is justice for both men and women.

2. The changing status of women in modern society.

No one can fail to notice the profound changes that have occurred in western society in this century. In particular the position of women has changed beyond anything that our Victorian forebears would have recognised. Virtually every profession is open to women today. More and more women are in the workplace. Home life has been made far easier for the ordinary woman. Educational opportunities for women abound. In short, there is hardly a sphere in society where women do not have a place. When this is the case we can understand why many should ask why the office of minister should be an exemption.

Here again it would be surprising if evangelical churches remained unaffected by these changes. Many churches find women wanting to do more than teach Sunday School and serve tea. Now I must admit that I do not think that this desire is a bad thing in itself. Insofar as restrictions on women's involvement in church life are merely cultural and not biblical then we can change. I believe that there are a number of areas that we need to look at if we are to use the gifts of women in our churches more effectively. Though outside the scope of this article I cannot see why women should not be admitted

to the diaconate. Changes can be made. But there is a point where the church begins to conform more to the prevailing culture than to the Scriptures and that is when we should be concerned.

3. The desire of some women to become pastor/teachers and in some cases the evident success of their ministries.

In many denominations women are ordained as leaders of churches and there are a good number of evangelicals among them. This is the case in the Baptist Union. Some of the new churches (The Ichthus Fellowship is an example) as well as some of the older Pentecostal and Holiness churches recognise women in leadership. No doubt biblical justification is sought for such a practice, but I suspect that the bottom line of any rationale is basically pragmatic. Women desire to be overseers and who can deny that God has called them? Furthermore we can point to numerous examples, historical and contemporary, where God has blessed the ministry of women. Was it not William Booth who said that some of his best men were women? And the mission field abounds with women, past and present, who have done the most remarkable work for the Lord. I personally know women in ministry who are clearly evangelical and whose churches are growing. For many people this in itself justifies ordaining women to the ministry. But whatever we make of such ministries we cannot say that they give the churches authority to ordain women. We must, as in everything else, appeal to Scripture.

4. The divergent attitudes towards biblical authority and interpretation by those who call themselves evangelicals.

Early on in the debate on women's ministry, in the 1970s, the issue appeared to be over the authority of Scripture. Paul K Jewett, for example, in his book *MAN: MALE AND FEMALE*, came to the conclusion that Paul was wrong to restrict the ministry of women in the churches. The better Paul was the Paul of Gal 3:28. It is not hard to see what such a view would do to one's doctrine of Scripture. In fact, Jewett's position became one of the signs of the declension of Fuller Seminary. In reaction to Jewett and others, Susan Foh, a Westminster graduate, wrote *WOMEN AND THE WORD OF GOD* (1981). The title is significant. For Mrs Foh the fundamental issue was the authority and infallibility of Scripture. Her opening chapter was an exposition of the classical evangelical doctrine.

Since then the debate has moved on. More recent writers who advocate women's ordination take great pains to affirm their conservative evangelicalism. For them the argument has shifted from one about biblical authority to one about biblical interpretation. The issue, in other words, is a *hermeneutical problem*.

The best insight into this shift is a symposium edited by Alvera Mickelsen entitled *WOMEN, AUTHORITY AND THE BIBLE* (1986). I would like to highlight several essays in this book. The first one by Robert K Johnston seeks to tackle the whole issue of the authority of Scripture in relation to this debate. What is interesting is how he uses the 'new hermeneutic' to question the traditional interpretation of the biblical passages. He criticises the attempts of some evangelicals to arrive at an objective interpretation of Scripture. The interpreter's culture, sex, prejudices, etc, are too powerful to allow any interpretation to be really objective. Using Anthony Thiselton's concept of the *two horizons* he affirms the vital importance of the second horizon, the

reader, in the interpretive process. In the debate on women's ministry this means that it is virtually impossible to arrive at a definitive interpretation of the key texts. We will simply have to live with ambiguity. Johnston recognises the danger of subjectivism in his *reader-sensitive criticism* and appeals to the church, the canon and the Holy Spirit as checks and balances.

The second essay is by Richard Longenecker. In discussing the issue of authority in male-female relationships Longenecker advocates what he calls a *developmental hermeneutic*. Basically this approach says that the teaching of the Bible on a certain topic develops progressively through biblical history. Longenecker would seek to identify the zenith in the development of an idea. So in relation to women's ministry he would identify the zenith in the attitude of Jesus towards women and a statement such as Gal 3:28. Where aspects of the NT would seem to contradict these he would see either a balancing of creational and redemptive concerns or accommodation to particular cultural circumstances. Longenecker also rather tentatively allows further development beyond Scripture as biblical principles are put into practice in new circumstances:

A development hermeneutic calls us to distinguish between (1) what the New Testament proclaims about new life in Christ and (2) its description of how that proclamation was practised in the first century - realizing that the implementation of that proclamation is portrayed in the New Testament as having been only begun and is described as being then worked out in progressive fashion. Thus we must focus our attention on the principles of the gospel message, not just on its first-century implementation. The gospel and the ethical principles that derive from it are presented in the New Testament as normative for every Christian. The way or ways in which the gospel was practiced in the first century, however, should be understood as signposts at the beginning of a journey - signposts that point out the path to be followed if we are to reaply that same gospel in our day (p 83).

The third essay by David Scholar on 1 Tim 2:9-15 is primarily exegetical, but he also discusses hermeneutical questions. He makes a number of points, but I can cite only one. With Johnston he emphasises the cultural conditioning of the text and interpreter:

The concept of genuinely objective biblical interpretation is a myth. All interpretation is socially located, individually skewed, and ecclesiastically and theologically conditioned. Nowhere is all of this more clear than on the issue of understanding biblical teaching on the place of women in the church's ministry. Generally, persons raised within holiness, pentecostal and certain Baptist traditions experienced women teaching authoritatively in the church long before they were equipped to interpret 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and never found that passage a problem. Conversely, persons raised in many Reformed traditions knew long before they were equipped to interpret 1 Timothy 2:11-12 that women were to be excluded from authoritative teaching in the church. They grew up finding the verses clear support for what they believed.

All biblical interpreters, regardless of where they now stand on the issue of women in ministry, have been deeply influenced by both the sexism and misogyny of our culture and also the currents of nineteenth-century women's rights and twentieth-century feminist movements.

Not only are interpreters conditioned. The authors of biblical texts also lived and

thought within particular historical-social settings. The biblical texts themselves are addressed to various historical settings for many different purposes. Thus, the Bible as God's word is God's communication in history, not above it or apart from it in this sense, the entire Bible consists of historically conditioned (i.e. culturally conditioned) texts (p 215).

From these examples we can see how the attitude of some evangelicals has shifted in relation to biblical authority and interpretation. **I think that such views at some points endanger the historic evangelical doctrine of Scripture.** Clark Pinnock sees this very clearly from the point of view of one who sympathises with feminist concerns. He questions whether there can be any such thing as a *biblical* feminist. He thinks that to arrive at such a position the Bible would have to be radically edited. Of course this is just what the liberals want to do. At the end of the day while evangelical feminists have some important things to say, Pinnock does not think that they can win the argument.

Nevertheless, among evangelicals there are some who do not believe that the Bible teaches appointive male leadership. They point to female leaders in Paul's own entourage, and they try to evade the traditional interpretation of various passages in the epistles. For example, they find mutual submission in Ephesians 5 and not female subordination. They seek to remove any sense of authority from the male headship to which Paul refers there. Of this line of argument, one must say that is possible and often productive of fresh insight: but in the last analysis for most people, it is unconvincing. Why? Not because the individual points made by the biblical feminists lack truth and relevance, and not (I hope) owing to sexism on the other side. Rather, the impression one gets is that Hurley has a simpler hypothesis to offer. He can accept the hierarchical texts and allow liberating insights from Jesus' attitude to modify it and does not find himself in as many awkward situations exegetically as biblical feminists seem to. This simplicity of hypothesis, coupled with the weight of traditional interpretation, gives Hurley quite an edge (p 56).

All this should make us wary of the fancy foot work being done in the name of hermeneutics. The more I read these people the more the Scriptures seem to become a nose of wax in their hands. The logic of their views is to say that in the end we can have no interpretive certainty about any teaching of Scripture. Though they would deny it, I think that the strong emphasis on the cultural conditioning of text and interpreter could as easily be used to advocate changing our views on homosexuality as on women's ordination. And there seems to be something very arbitrary about Longenecker's *development hermeneutic*. Why choose Gal 3:28 as the zenith of Paul's theology and not some other text? I would recommend reading a valuable article by John Woodhouse of Moore College, Sydney, in *EXPLORATIONS*. He questions the way the Bible is being used in this debate and argues that the cultural setting of, say, 1 Timothy 2 is essential to understanding the principle being taught in the text and its application for today:

I am suggesting that the way in which evangelicals find themselves on the side of Jewett and others in the ordination debate is by means of a hermeneutic, or use of the Bible, which (in the two examples I have cited) is an illegitimate use of the Bible. Our use of the Bible must be consistent with the nature of the Bible. The human words of the Bible are God's words. They are *all* words addressed, in the

first instance, in a specific cultural situation. But nothing in the Bible is simply cultural. It is always a cultural expression of the mind of God. We can therefore expect the *most* culturally specific injunctions to reveal God's mind to us. Not necessarily directly, but truly nonetheless. The fact that 'Adam was first formed, then Eve' (1Tim 2:13) may have consequences today that are different in detail from the consequences in the first century. But there will be consequences, and they will express the same principles in our culture as Paul's injunction expressed in his culture.

To conclude: My argument has been that divisions among evangelicals often involve different approaches to *applying* the Bible. This gives cause for both hope and alarm.

I am encouraged to think that if we can come to a common mind about what is legitimate and what is illegitimate in application of the Bible to modern questions, then we may come to agreement on many controversial issues. And it seems to me that evangelicals ought to have a clear understanding of the nature of the Bible which will provide criteria for assessing hermeneutical methods.

On the other hand I am alarmed that the issues at stake in many modern controversies (such as women's ordination) are even larger than they might at first appear. For to accept the arguments for women's ordination is to accept a hermeneutic. Once that hermeneutic has been accepted it will, if it is wrong, lead us into other, perhaps more serious, errors. (pp 13-14).

5 .The differing interpretations of key texts relating to the ministry of women.

At the end of the day evangelicals have to sit down and examine the word of God. I think it needs to be said that for evangelicals such as Kaiser or Kantzer this is determinative. They may or may not be influenced by other considerations, but they appeal to the Bible in support of women's ordination and we must listen to what they have to say. Indeed we must do more than that. We must be willing to change, if they are right. In the end the Scriptures and not a tradition of interpretation must determine our practice. There are three key NT passages over which evangelicals disagree at various points. I will not be able to cover all these points but I will try to identify the principal issues. In this I draw heavily upon Sanfords Hull's appendix to Gretchen Hull's book *EQUAL TO SERVE*.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

- a. The meaning of the word 'head' (*kephale*) in v 3. Wayne Grudem and James Hurley argue that it means 'authority'. Pro-women's ordination advocates such as the Mickelsens argue for 'source'. Walter Liefeld advocates the idea of 'honoured' or 'prominent'. The issue at stake is the idea of hierarchy in male-female relations.
- b. Almost everyone agrees that Paul permits women to pray and prophesy. Exactly what the latter activity involved and the circumstances Paul had in mind is the source of disagreement. Most would say that Paul is speaking of the meetings of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:33-36

- a. What does Paul mean by 'speak' (*lalein*) in v 4? The choices are: (i) any kind of speaking (Liefeld, Grosheide); (ii) gifts of the Spirit; (iii) the examination of prophesy (Grudem, Hurley); (iv) teaching (Knight); (v) asking questions of husbands; (vi) sacred cries of joy or mourning (Kroegers).
- b. What does the 'law' mean in v 34? (i) Gen 3:16 (ii) Gen 2:21 (Knight); (iii) The OT (Hurley); (iv) Rabbinic tradition on women's silence in worship (Jewett); (v) Jewish and pagan laws on participation in worship (Liefeld).
- c. Are vv 33-35 a Corinthian slogan? Most commentators see these verses as Paul's command, but Walter Kaiser sees them as a slogan of the Corinthians that Paul contradicts in v 36.

1 Timothy 2:8-15

- a. Is Paul referring to wives or women in vv 11-12? Wives, say some; women in general, say Knight and Moo.
- b. What does 'quietness' mean in v 11? An attitude of learning, says Bilezikian; silence, says Moo.
- c. To whom are women to submit, v 11? Some say the teachers in the church; others, the husbands of the women; still others, men in general (Moo).
- d. What is the force of 'I do not permit' (*epitrepo*) in v 12? Moo, Knight and Hurley take it as a universal prohibition. Others emphasise the present tense of the verb and render it 'I am not presently permitting' and thereby restrict its force to local and temporal circumstances. This is an obvious key to interpreting this passage.
- e. What does Paul mean by 'to teach' (*didaskain*) in v 12? (i) teaching in the NT involved a variety of methods and individuals and had no special authority; (ii) Teaching in the NT involved authority and was restricted to particular individuals. Moo and Payne disagree over this; (iii) Paul had the teaching of false doctrine in mind (Kroeger).
- f. What is the meaning of 'to have authority' (*authentein*) in v12? (i) To possess authority (Moo, Knight, Hurley); (ii) to domineer (Payne among others); (iii) to engage in fertility rites (Kroeger).
- g. Is 'man' v 12 the object of to teach and have authority? Yes, says Moo, Knight, etc; No, says Payne, etc.
- h. Is Paul prohibiting two things or one in v 12? (i) Two distinct but related activities (Moo); (ii) one activity, 'authoritative teaching', the teaching ministry of an elder (Hurley). The view one takes on this point would determine whether women could occasionally teach but not as elders.
- i. What is the place of vv 13-14? (i) they provide the reason for Paul's prohibition; (ii) they are simple an analogy (Payne, Scholer).
- j. What is the point of v 13? (i) Because Adam was created first men have authority over women (the traditional view); (ii) the role of women should accord with the role of Eve in Eden as a help-meet.
- k. What does 'formed' (*eplasthe*) mean in v 13? Most commentators take it to mean God's creative act. But Walter Kaiser argues that it means formation, that is, instruction. This is not the common word for creation (*ktizo*).
- l. What is the point of v 14? (i) Women are more susceptible to deception (Moo); (ii) Disaster transpires when roles are reversed (Knight and Moo); (iii) Eve was

untutored and thus easily deceived. If the latter position is adopted then what Paul is doing is prohibiting untutored women teaching in church. To the extent that this situation no longer applies today, women could be allowed to teach and be elders. Another possibility I have not seen discussed is whether v 14 refers to God's judgment on women.

- m. What situation was Paul addressing here? (i) The presence of heresy (Moo, Payne, Kroegers and most others); (ii) untutored women; (iii) the rejection of traditional roles. The latter option would fit with the difficult v15.

Attempts have been made to reconcile the different passages. The particular problem is reconciling Paul's permission for women to pray and prophesy in 1 Cor 11 with his prohibitions in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2. The more traditional interpretation would be that Paul does not forbid women to pray and prophesy because these are not exercises of authority, whereas preaching and teaching are and are therefore prohibited. The newer interpretation would see 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 as temporary measures for specific problems.

From all this we can see that a diversity of interpretations exist among evangelicals. Whatever we make of them I think that we would have to say that men and women *can* hold to some of these interpretations while maintaining their evangelical integrity. For example, Kaiser may be claiming too much for the word 'formed' but there is nothing inconsistent with his position and a fully inerrantist doctrine of Scripture which he upholds. If this is so, then the question of the ordination of women may have to be treated as a secondary issue over which evangelicals will differ.

Yet I still have a niggle. I cannot help but feel that the problem is more than one of interpretation. **I think that evangelicals are under a great deal of pressure to conform to the spirit of the age.** Something very fundamental is at stake. It touches the very depths of our humanity as made in the image of God. We must be very careful here and resist the temptation to compromise. By all means let us encourage women to be fully involved in the life of the church. Let's be for women's ministry. Let's get rid of practices and restrictions that demean women. But let's also not go *beyond what is written*. Here, where the pressure is great, we must stand by the word of God. Having analysed the shift in Christian thinking in this matter, J I Packer has these salutary words for modern evangelicals:

If the above analysis is right, the present day pressure to make women presbyters owes more to secular, pragmatic and social factors than to any regard for biblical authority. The active groups who push out the walls of biblical authority to make room for the practice fail to read out of Scripture any principle that directly requires such action. Future generations are likely to see their agitation as yet another attempt to baptise secular culture into Christ, as the liberal church has ever sought to do, and will, I guess, rate it as one more sign of the undiscerning worldliness of late 20th century western Christianity. (CHRISTIANITY TODAY, 11 Feb 1991 '*Let's stop making women presbyters*')

Selected Reading List

Books supporting the ordination of women

Gilbert Bilezikian, BEYOND SEX ROLES, Baker, 1986

Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, *EQUAL TO SERVE*, Fleming Revell, 1987, SU, 1989
Nancy Hardesty and Liza Scanzoni, *ALL WE'RE MEANT TO BE*, Word, 1974
Paul K Jewett, *MAN AS MALE AND FEMALE*, Eerdmans, 1975
Alvera Mickelsen (ed), *WOMEN, AUTHORITY AND THE BIBLE*, IVP-USA, 1986
Mary Stewart van Leeuwen, *GRACE AND GENDER*, IVP, 1990

Books generally opposed to the ordination of women

Susan Foh, *WOMEN AND THE WORD OF GOD*, Presb & Ref, 1979
James T Hurley, *MAN & WOMAN IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE*, Zondervan, 1981
George W Knight, *THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE ROLE RELATIONSHIP OF MEN AND WOMEN*, Baker, 1977

Articles of interest

Walter Kaiser, *Shared Leadership of Male Headship*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Oct 3 1986
Kenneth Kantzer, *Proceed with Care*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Oct 3 1986
Catherine Kroeger, *Ancient Heresies and a Strange Greek Verb*, REFORMED JOURNAL, March 1979
Douglas Moo, *1 Tim 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance*, TRINITY JOURNAL, 1 NS (1)
Douglas Moo, *The Interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11-15, A Rejoinder*, TRINITY JOURNAL, 2 NS (2)
J I Packer, *Let's Stop Making Women Presbyters*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, 11 Feb 1991
Philip Payne, *Libertarian Women in Ephesus, A response to ... Moo's Article ...* TRINITY JOURNAL, 2 NS (2)
Bruce Waltke, *Shared Leadership of Male Headship*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Oct 3 1986
Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Between the Times*, REFORMED JOURNAL, Dec 10 1990
John Woodhouse, *The Use of the Bible in Modern Controversies: A watershed among evangelicals?*, EXPLORATIONS 1, 1987

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Since this article was written a further significant contribution to this debate has been published. *RECOVERING BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD*, subtitled *A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, is a 566 page symposium of 26 Chapters from 22 authors and edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. It includes a 44 page Appendix in which Grudem answers those who have criticised his understanding of *kephale* and in another Appendix the Danvers Statement of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. It is published by Crossway with a UK price of £15.99.

Pluralism and Truth

John Ross

A review article on DISSONANT VOICES, a discussion of Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth, by Harold A Netland, 323 pages, published by Apollos at £14.95

On January 27th 1992 Bernard Levin, that brilliant but cynical commentator on current events, turned his interest to evangelism. He was incensed by an advertisement of the Californian-based Jews for Jesus. Although he raised the usual liberal smoke-screen by criticising their tactics (entitling his piece, *Clodhoppers on Crusade*), he nevertheless showed a canny idea of what the real issues are. He alleged, "the vulgarity and religious ambiguity of Jews for Jesus are a liability to two faiths".

What exactly did he mean? Simply this, that by engaging in evangelism, in seeking to bring Jewish people to believe the gospel and commit themselves to Jesus as Messiah both Christianity and Judaism were being threatened; the Jews once more falling victim to Christian hostility, and the Church isolating itself by its untenable claim to have the only true way to God. Most evangelicals, I suspect, have not for one moment thought of themselves as engaged in acts of hostility each time they witness or hand out a tract. But that is exactly how they are perceived by the followers, not only of Judaism, but many of the other world religions too.

Levin's perplexity, shared by many today, finds expression in the following words, "In these ecumenical days it is surely reasonable to ask Christianity what its founder meant when he said, 'None shall come to the Father but by me' (sic)." Adding, "I do not offer those words to give offence, but many a devout Christian is worried by them, and many a bishop, opening his heart to other faiths, must be hard put to it to provide an answer." He sums up his thoughts, "The Jews simply deny the thesis (that they should believe in Jesus as Messiah); the Christians will have to search their hearts to see whether evangelism, after all, may be right."¹

George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has caved in to pressure to reinterpret evangelism. He sees its purpose not as the conversion of members of other faith communities but rather as a means of strengthening the convictions of Christians. He had been put under severe pressure by the Jewish lobby and inter-faith groups such as the Council of Christians and Jews. In mid-February the JEWISH CHRONICLE carried a story reporting that the sought-for assurances had been given. Dr Carey, it seems, had taken the initiative to reassure representatives of the Board of Deputies that he was not in favour of direct evangelism. Anna Maxted's article proclaimed - "Archbishop distances Church of England from Jews for Jesus."²

DISSONANT VOICES is, therefore, a very welcome contribution helping to clear the fog surrounding the current ecumenical, inter-faith, missions debate. This book exudes a breath of clean, cool air into a highly charged area of contemporary thinking. For Christians valiantly witnessing to the growing³ and increasingly vocal members of Britain's ethnic and religious groups, **Netland's clearly presented arguments are encouraging and confidence building.** They help beleaguered evangelicals to hold,

without embarrassment or arrogance, to an exclusivist position, firmly denying that any other faith but Biblical Christianity provides a way back to God.

There can be no doubt that Netland knows the issues thoroughly, having been a pupil of that most outspoken champion of pluralism, John Hick. Hick's views came prominently to our attention in 1977 with the publication of the highly controversial symposium, *THE MYTH OF GOD INCARNATE*.⁴ In the context of his graduate studies in philosophy, Netland has grappled with the issues of religious pluralism and the conflicting truth claims among religions. The book is Netland's response to those who, like Hick, deny the validity of the traditional Christian position.

Put simply, the question Netland addresses is, **"how we are to live as disciples of the one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the midst of a highly relativistic and pluralistic society"**⁵. To find an answer Netland engages a logical and clear mind to show, to use his own words, "not only is philosophical rigour compatible with commitment to world evangelization, but the two can have a mutually enriching relationship."⁶ Renowned missiologist David J Hesselgrave enthuses over Netland's contribution: "With scintillating perspicuity and impeccable reasoning he demonstrates that it is Christian exclusivism that is biblically required, logically valid, and ontologically hopeful".

After an initial discussion of the salient features of the problem now facing the Church, Netland moves on in chapters 2 and 3 to survey the essential claims of several of the world religions. Selecting Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Shinto, he shows how, on the face of it, they are mutually incompatible; an incompatibility which is much more than a conflict of individual doctrines, for at their heart they have irreconcilable conceptions of, and approaches to, Ultimate Reality. Netland argues cogently that it is implausible to hold that all religions teach fundamentally the same thing and that the seeming differences are superficial, merely the product of different historical and cultural vantage points.

Christian exclusivism

In chapter 4 Netland deals with the problem of Religion and Truth. It is here that the reader needs to bear in mind what he is setting out to do. His aim is not to produce a rigorous theological study, based on a close and careful exegesis of the biblical data, but rather to deal with matters of basic epistemology. He sees his contribution as "a kind of defense of Christian exclusivism - a prolegomena to an evangelical theology of religions."⁷ We hope that other scholars will take the lead and complete the work. This chapter then tackles very helpfully four areas of common confusion. Firstly, he answers the old dialectic that says you can have personal truth or propositional truth but not both. He is worth quoting at length:

But surely, construing the matter in these terms is mistaken. An account of divine revelation that is faithful to Scripture and epistemologically sound will include both propositional and non-propositional revelation. ... However insofar as revelation is informative about God - and surely this is the whole point in divine revelation in the first place - it must be capable of being expressed propositionally. It is simply nonsensical to think in terms of knowledge of God that is non-propositional. If the propositional element is eliminated from divine revelation, whatever else one is left with, it cannot be informative about God.

Netland argues that though it is undeniable that religious discourse differs from the discussion of matters scientific or political, and though it is furthermore true that religious faith involves some subjective interaction on the part of the believer with the object of faith, yet this should not be allowed to cloud the fact that, even in religion, the idea of objective, propositional truth is necessary.

The second argument refuted is that which says religious truth is ineffable and beyond articulation, an outlook which, incidentally, may be found in an unsophisticated form in certain branches of evangelicalism, expressed in the dictum - 'it's better felt than told'. Tracing the line of development through the influence of Rudolph Otto's work *THE IDEA OF THE HOLY* and doing full justice to the orthodox idea of the incomprehensibility of God, Netland brings us back to the fact that to hold to the idea of God as knowable we cannot rule out the use of language being used to describe this knowledge. If what he calls, "ineffability with a vengeance", be true and "no meaningful and informative statements can be made", then such a statement itself is self-refuting, being itself a statement about God. We are brought back to the orthodox contention that though God cannot be known comprehensively he can be known really and that this knowledge can be communicated through language.

Thirdly, Netland introduces us to the idea that asserts that religious truth is a higher form of truth and cannot be discussed through the use of the normal conventions of language and logic. Traditional reasoning is based on the principle of non-contradiction, that is to say that where there are contradictory claims advanced, not all of them can be true. At least one must be false. But writers such as Paul Knitter, John A T Robinson and Wilfred Cantwell Smith set out to show how, in their opinion, it is false to apply traditional conventions to the study of religions. However, the cost of such a rejection is too high. Netland demonstrates, through a carefully stated argument - worth equally careful reading - that "by rejecting the principle (of non-contradiction) one does not attain more profound 'truth'; one is reduced to incoherence or utter silence."⁹

Assessing truth claims

Chapter 5 is entitled, *Evaluating Religious Traditions* and here demands are made on the average reader to read carefully and think clearly. A great many people today hold to the idea that there is something indelicate about responding to the claims of other religions with a critical spirit: "don't make value judgments of any kind, positive or negative; simply allow the other religions to carry on in their own way"¹⁰. Yet evaluating religious claims, far from being a show of arrogance, is in fact required of us as human beings created in the image of God, with rational abilities and critical faculties. Indeed, Netland informs us that even John Hick has reminded us that the great religious leaders of the past assessed and re-evaluated the religious beliefs and practices around them. Hick sees in this questioning spirit an evidence of "deep religious seriousness and openness to the divine."¹¹

The crucial difficulty is how do we evaluate and with what criteria do we judge conflicting beliefs, ideas and practices?

Hick uses two general criteria, those of moral and rational adequacy. The moral criterion is, he confesses, altogether unsatisfactory due to our limited knowledge and the complexity of religious traditions. But, he believes, neither is rational analysis capable of establishing the superiority of one tradition over against another. Both

criteria are, according to Hick, legitimate in principle but in practice they are of little value. Are there then no criteria that may be used? Hick suggests a pragmatic test, which assesses religions on their ability to achieve for their followers, what he calls the *soteriological function*. Hick assumes, and Netland shows the falsity of this assumption, that all religions have a similar aim of providing salvation, liberation or enlightenment for their followers. Netland demonstrates that a religion can only be regarded as soteriologically effective if its remedy is appropriate to an accurate diagnosis of the human condition. To apply the pragmatic criterion to determine whether, say, Buddhism's way of salvation is more effective than Christianity's, we must first be convinced that Buddhism's analysis of the human predicament is correct.

Roman Catholic theologian, Paul Knitter, also propounds a view that the correct criteria for evaluation is performance based. Using the cliché, "the kingdom", Knitter judges the effectiveness of religions by the way they advance "the kingdom". But as Netland points out, he never defines just what "the kingdom" is:

But, it must be asked, whose kingdom? The Kingdom of God as articulated by Jesus? The theocratic society envisioned by Islam? Does Buddhism, Hinduism, or Shinto even have a concept of the kingdom - with the accompanying principles of justice, righteousness, and individual as well as social well-being - which warrants use of the term in this manner?¹²

But this also depends on an accurate diagnosis of the human predicament. If man's problems are almost entirely *this worldly*, then Knitter's criteria may be helpful but if his fundamental problem is alienation from God as a result of sinful rebellion, and the ramifications of this rebellion extend beyond this life, then such criteria are clearly inadequate.

How then shall we evaluate religions? Netland's answer delights the heart of any evangelical (as well as satisfying his mind!):

The most important question is not what a given religion does for society at large or for any of its members, but rather what it affirms, explicitly and implicitly, about reality is in fact true. The most significant question we can ask of any religion is whether its fundamental claims are true.¹³

However, to make the claim that non-arbitrary criteria exist to evaluate world views brings us, sooner or later, into conflict with the advocates of relativism. A point of view which has made an enormous impact on contemporary society, as Francis Schaeffer never tired of telling us. Typical of those advocating relativism is Don Cuppitt of Cambridge. His view is what he calls *perspectivism* - seeing things from our own historically coloured and culturally conditioned viewpoint. There is, says Cuppitt, no objective, neutral or pure knowledge of reality. All we can say is how things appear to us from our point of view; we cannot say how they are absolutely. Not only so, but our vantage point on reality is constantly changing, new discoveries challenge the way we looked at things before and lead us on to radically new views. We may choose our ground and fight our opinions but we cannot do so with the kind of old fashioned certainty of "permanent anchorage in an unchanging order".

Netland's answer is to argue that the major difficulty with relativism is that it is incoherent. Though it claims to be a response to cultural diversity it fails to determine the question of truth. Relativism fails to take seriously the inconsistency of ideas about rationality in particular social contexts, truth cannot simply be defined in terms of what

society accepts. The price is too high; an acceptance of relativism means the forfeiture of the right to make any judgments about world views. All we are left with is the ability to state our subjectively determined preferences.

Netland's own rational criteria for appraising religious claims are put forward modestly, recognizing the difficulties in this area. (This is perhaps the most technical discussion in the book and is quite demanding on the powers of concentration of non-experts in the field of logic.) Netland introduces us to the concept of a *defining belief*, that is to say a key concept central to the religion of which it is a part. Some beliefs can be accepted or rejected without challenging the very nature of a religious world view. For example, to reject the doctrine of baptism does not threaten the position of Christianity itself. However, belief in a creator God is a cardinal Christian doctrine - a defining belief. Each religion seems to have a set of such defining beliefs (though it may be difficult for adherents, let alone outsiders, to agree as to what these in fact are). We may then, according to Netland, use this concept to move forward to a definition of a true religion. "A religion (say, Hinduism) is true if and only if all of its defining beliefs are true; if any of its defining beliefs are false, then (Hinduism) is false."¹⁴

It is not Netland's aim in this book to apply this principle but rather to demonstrate that it exists, that it is legitimate and that it can be used in challenging religious claims. In questioning a religion's defining beliefs Netland argues for the use of the basic principles of logic, the avoidance of self-defeating statements and the need for inner coherence. Moreover, a religious world view ought to be able to provide answers to questions that lie at the heart of mankind's religious concerns: "Any religious world view which is unable to account for fundamental phenomena associated with a religious orientation or which cannot provide adequate answers to central questions in religion should not be accepted as true."¹⁵ Also, for a religion to be true its claims must be compatible with established knowledge in other fields. True religion and true science or history will be in fundamental harmony with each other. Another criterion requires that for a religion to be true it must not set up an irreconcilable tension between the religious ultimate and basic moral values. Netland concludes this section with a very helpful, though non-exhaustive, list of the kinds of criteria that may be applied to determine the truth or falsity of defining beliefs.

Confronting syncretism

Chapter 6 challenges the prevalent theory that all religions ultimately lead to the same destination. Could millions of sincere Indians, over so many centuries, be utterly wrong in their acceptance of the principles of Hinduism? Is it conceivably that all in the world except the Christians are wrong? Can we really accept that Christianity alone has the key that unlocks the door to salvation? There are those who refuse to accept the exclusivity of any single religion's claims and suggest that despite the many external differences between religions, at heart they are united. It is difficult to see that such a view does justice to the remarkable diversity of opinion that does exist, and it is sometimes pointed out that those who accept this view may distort the data to fit their theory. Others, such as Hick, draw our attention to this diversity but prefer to believe that it is accounted for in terms of cultural and historical conditioning. Each religion, with its dogmas, practices and beliefs, is not a statement of actuality as it is in itself but rather a description of ultimate reality as seen through the tinted and, perhaps somewhat

distorted, spectacles of the viewer. As Hick puts it in his own words, “the great religions are all, at their experiential roots, in contact with the same ultimate divine reality.”¹⁶ Netland demonstrates that this theory is implausible, not least because Hick is not simply trying to be faithful to the various data from the array of religions, but that he seems to be pointing toward to a reinterpretation of difficult doctrines thrown up by these different world views, in order to forge together a more synthetic perspective. Netland points out that the irony of Hick’s reductionism is that his understanding of the beliefs of the world religions as *myths* bears little resemblance to that of the followers of these traditions and, in many cases, would be rigorously opposed by them. Hick’s tortuous notions result simply from his reluctance to accept that at least some of the central claims of the different religions must be false. Netland courageously backs Hick into a corner and confronts him with the logical weakness of his position.

No other name

Chapter 7 brings us to the question of the uniqueness of Jesus and Christianity’s central claim that in his name alone is salvation to be obtained. Netland quotes Harvey Cox’s comment that in the process of dialogue between Christians and others, sooner or later - usually sooner - question of the claims of Jesus will have to be faced. Indeed Cox points out that whilst Christian partners in inter-faith dialogue often show a marked reluctance to introduce the subject of Jesus, non-Christian participants in such conversations seem eager to discuss the central issue. To which the reviewer would merely add that discussions with the Jewish people rarely seem to centre on the person of Jesus and the claim that he is Messiah and God!

Netland faces the challenge of the conflicting Christologies which the inter-faith process has produced, by setting out in the first place a clear statement of traditional Christology in terms of the classic two-nature Chalcedonian theology accepted by Roman Catholicism, the theologies of the Reformation, and the confessional statement of the World Council of Churches.¹⁷ It is this conception of Christology that Netland urges must undergird any biblical response to pluralism.

He rightly points out that one of the most distressing developments in modern theology is the capitulation by those on the inside of the Christian religion to higher critical theories which regard two nature Christology as outmoded, superseded by a more enlightened view of the New Testament data in the light of other religious traditions. As is so often the case, the most deviant views of the Christian faith are often propounded by those who having once embraced an evangelical position have turned their backs upon it. Hick is in this category and most notably aired his views on Christology in the symposium he edited, *THE MYTH OF GOD INCARNATE*. Hick argues that the Christology of the Biblical record evolved from a simple view of Jesus as Master and Messiah to a more complex metaphysical understanding of him as the incarnate Son of God. Many scholars have challenged his understanding, not least C F D Moule who has shown that Hick’s theories cannot be fitted into the New Testament data with any degree of plausibility. Howard Marshall has also pointed out that, “The view that it (the doctrine of the Incarnation) is found merely on the fringe of the New Testament is a complete travesty of the facts”.¹⁸

From here, Netland proceeds to take on Paul Knitter’s less sceptical but equally

unhelpful understanding of the New Testament data. According to Knitter, Jesus came to point people to God, his presence in this world was a manifestation of divine revelation and salvation. However, after his death and whatever is meant by his resurrection, a change overtook the early church so that the “proclaimer became the proclaimed”. Thus the portrayal of Jesus in the books of the New Testament should be seen for what it is, an impressionistic portrait rather than a photograph; its “Christological language is mythical or figurative, not literal”. Exclusivist language should be understood as the hyperbole of devotion; to be sure for the Christian there is no-one to compare with Christ - but that may be true only for the Christian. What the New Testament does is speak the “love language” of the disciple’s personal experience, it does not make ontological claims in the language of dogmatics or science. Netland deals with Knitter’s proposals by raising a series of objections both from his (Knitter’s) understanding of the New Testament and his approach to the exclusivist claims of the early Church. Why should we regard these statements merely as expressions of feelings of commitment? The answer simply put - but more complexly argued - is that Knitter is simply unprepared to accept the natural meaning of these statements because of the undesirable ramifications this will have for his whole understanding of religion. He is unwilling to accept the uniqueness of Jesus and his superiority over every other religious leader.

The Unevangelised

The final section of chapter 7 deals with the question of those who have never heard. It commences with a quotation from the Lausanne Covenant of 1974, a clear and unambiguous statement that Jesus Christ the Saviour is only offered to men through the preaching of the gospel. He is not to be found hidden in the folds of non-Christian religions, nor is he faithfully offered to men through any system based on syncretism. Put simply, the Lausanne Covenant states that all men are perishing in their sin and salvation is available only through Christ. But men die without hearing of Christ; must we believe that somehow God has allowed them to die beyond hope of salvation? Some evangelicals try to soften the sharp edges by refusing to give an unqualified “yes” to this question. They prefer to struggle with this difficulty in terms of God’s grace rather than man’s response of faith. Such was the view of J Oswald Sanders; men who have not explicitly responded to Christ in faith, but who sincerely have sought after God will be accepted on the grounds of their sincerity and provided with further light to lead them to salvation.¹⁹ Donald McGavran also has suggested that some who have never heard of Christ might be saved. God, it is suggested is sovereign, if he chooses he can bring people to salvation through hidden means not revealed in Scripture.²⁰ J Herbert Kane, writing from a dispensationalist viewpoint, likewise hints that some who have not heard of Christ may be saved because, as dispensationalism teaches, God saves in different ways during different dispensations. Is it implausible to believe that his sovereign discretion could not be exercised within a dispensation?²¹ The British Islamicist, Sir Norman Anderson, also leaves the door of heaven ajar for those without Christ. The way that people within Old Testament times, *chronologically* before Christ, experienced salvation provides hints as to how God may choose to deal with those who have not yet had opportunity to hear of Christ and who now live *informationally* before Christ.²² Netland, as he surveys other approaches to the same problem by other writers

gradually works us toward the somewhat less inclusivist position of people like Stott. However all authors quoted by Netland hold at least to some theoretical possibility of the salvation of the unevangelised, yet affirm their belief in evangelism.

To be sure, the problem is thorny, yet this is, in my opinion, the weakest point in this book so far. Have we any justification to believe that, apart from the mentally deficient and children dying in infancy, there is any Scriptural justification for leaving the door of heaven ajar by even a hair's breadth for those without faith in Christ? The problem must be set in the light of human sinfulness and an objectively perspicuous general revelation that leaves all men without excuse. Despite the fact that he helpfully stresses that we must confine ourselves to revealed teaching and not wishful thinking, Netland is somewhat disappointing in failing to take seriously the true depth of the human predicament he is so concerned to correctly evaluate. It would have been more helpful to discuss the crucial teaching of, say, the first three chapters of Romans in his approach to this question. However, we must be grateful to him that he reminds us of the staggering consequences of the implications of the uniqueness of Christ.

The missionary task

In the final chapter we come to questions relating to evangelism, dialogue and tolerance. Increasingly Christians will have to get used to the idea that in a pluralist climate evangelism will be seen as an intolerable act of spiritual aggression. We in Jewish evangelism are frequently portrayed as perpetuating traditional Christian anti-semitism through our activities.

Christian mission has been reinterpreted to marginalise the idea that encourages a change of religious affiliation; it is now set in the framework of inter-religious co-operation and dialogue. Netland encourages us to continue the traditional understanding of evangelism as the proclamation of the gospel intended to bring people to faith in Christ. Evangelism is to be conducted with a sense of urgency emanating from an underlying obligation which results from a knowledge of the plight of sinful man in relation to God. Netland puts it with startling clarity:

If in fact, as the Bible claims, the fundamental cause of our predicament is human rebellion against a holy and righteous God, and if the only remedy for this ailment is to be found in the salvation available through Jesus Christ, then clearly evangelism - the communication of the good news of salvation through Jesus - is not only a legitimate option but an inescapable imperative.²³ As the apostle Paul put it. 'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!' (I Cor 9:16).

On the subject of dialogue, Netland has some helpful and carefully drawn distinctions to make, which evangelicals should take care to note. Avoiding the temptation of *open ended* dialogue and sounding a clear warning that the evangelical believes certain truths to be non-negotiable, he reminds us that it is possible to sit down with representatives of other faiths in conversation. Particularly, he draws attention to a number of evangelicals in the USA who have, without compromise, over the last number of years, held a series of discussions with representatives of the Jewish community. He also notices that as yet evangelicals do not seem to have approached members of other religions in quite the same way. Despite the fact that, arguably, contemporary Judaism is the most anti-Christian religion, having no place whatsoever for Jesus, yet due to its common acceptance of the Hebrew Scriptures there seems to be a legitimate basis for some kind

of dialogue. Yet one hesitates to use the term 'dialogue', so coloured as it is by the participants of the inter-faith process. What Netland means by dialogue is, I fancy, what J H Bavinck would call *approach*. It is that part of the evangelistic encounter that is preliminary to the presentation of the claims of Christ. It is the process of taking people seriously. Bavinck put it so:

God ... takes us very ... seriously, and as his ministers we ought to do the same. Abstract, disembodied and history-less sinners do not exist; only very concrete sinners exist, whose sinful life is determined by all sorts of cultural and historical factors; by poverty, hunger, superstition, traditions, chronic illnesses, tribal morality, and by thousands of other things. I must bring the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ to the whole man, in his concrete existence, in his everyday environment. It is obviously then a great error on my part if I do not take a person's culture and history seriously.²⁴

Netland believes, and this reviewer is inclined to concur in his view, that dialogue *properly understood* is not incompatible with evangelism, but is a legitimate part of the evangelistic process.

Finally, what of tolerance? It is a strange phenomenon of modern western thinking that a major characteristic of religion is a spirit of tolerance. Historically nothing could be further from the truth. History is replete with examples of those so dominated by their religious convictions that they would both kill and die for them. Islam has been one of the least tolerant religions, Christians, Jews and Baha'is have been persecuted by Muslims. Hindus have killed Muslims. Jews and Muslims have been hounded and murdered under the sign of the cross. Protestant Christians have fought Roman Catholics and vice versa. Even within the 'ivory towers' of academia the *odium theologicum* has fostered division and dissension.

What Netland does so helpfully is to enable us to think through what it is we can be tolerant of and what we cannot tolerate. He disagrees strongly with the viewpoint of Jewish writer Blu Greenburg who alleges that evangelism conducted on the presuppositions of the exclusivity of the Christian faith is an act of violence; she represents it as proselytism, and that seen through Jewish eyes is 'forced conversion'. Netland correctly reminds Greenburg of the underlying motivation that drives the evangelical Christian. He evangelises out of obedience and love to Christ and compassion towards non-Christians.²⁵ Of course we will be misunderstood and misrepresented:

To those who take it for granted that one cannot have certainty about basic religious questions the evangelical proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, cannot help but sound arrogant, naive, and intolerant... In such a climate, then, it is incumbent upon evangelicals not only to proclaim the message of the gospel with humility and sensitivity, but also to demonstrate to a sceptical and relativistic culture *why* it is that it can claim to have certainty concerning ultimate religious questions.²⁶

This is a book which deserves to be carefully read and pondered not only by missionaries - it is essential reading for them - but also by ministers in pluralistic Britain. Netland's book is a strong affirmation of Christianity's claim to know the truth and to know God himself. The difference between Netland and the pluralists like Hick is brought out sharply in a comment of John Duncan's on a saying by Lessing²⁷ - "Did the Almighty, holding in his right hand 'truth' and in his left hand, 'search for the truth',

design to proffer me the one I might prefer, in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request, 'search after truth'." Duncan replied - it "contains the essence of all devilry. It is delight in the mere activity of faculties that is chosen, the search that is fearless and free, unimpeded and unrestricted. To be left alone for ever to pursue the endless chase, cut off from the Eternal Being, would be for me the horror of all horrors."

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BOOK REVIEWS

What Evangelicals Believe

*Edited by Andrew Anderson
Fellowship of Independent Evangelical
Churches, 1992.
55pp, £1.99*

This booklet is a helpful commentary and exposition of 'What we Believe', the new doctrinal statement of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. It is good to see Christians endeavouring to state the Bible's teaching in language which is clear, readable and accessible to contemporary Christians. Doctrinal statements are often neglected and this example, with the book based on it, will serve to strengthen the convictions of the present generation of Christians.

I will first make some comments on the doctrinal statement. 'What We Believe' has 9 sections: God, the Bible, the human race, the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the church, baptism and the Lord's supper, the future. It strikes the distinctive notes of the Reformation, *sola fide*, *sola scriptura* and *solus deo gloria*. It makes broad statements in areas where Christians differ, eg the Holy Spirit, baptism and the second coming. It addresses contemporary issues. The statement on verbal inerrancy reads, 'Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the word of God' (Section 2: the Bible). On evangelical unity it reads, 'The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel' (Section 7: the Church). The eternal pun-

ishment of the ungodly is affirmed, 'The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment..' (Section 9: the Future). Baptismal regeneration, transubstantiation and the repeated sacrifice of Christ are specifically rejected (Section 8: Baptism and the Lord's Supper). There are a number of positive emphases which are helpful. The God-given dignity of human beings is affirmed, 'All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their great purpose is to obey, worship and love God' (Section 3: the Human Race). Total depravity is expressed in unambiguous terms, 'As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life...' (Section 3: the Human Race). This and the previous quotation illustrate the use of 'men and women' rather than simply 'men'. The universal offer of the gospel is specifically stated, 'Salvation...is offered to all in the gospel' (Section 5: Salvation).

The book itself has been written by members of the Theological Committee of FIEC. They have a threefold purpose; a key to open up the Christian faith, a useful summary of what evangelical Christians believe, a stimulus to going further and seeking to know more. There are 9 brief chapters, each based on one section of the doctrinal statement and each chapter concludes with 5 study questions. Whilst the needs of the FIEC churches have been particularly in mind in this publication it is hoped that it will be of use to evangelicals more widely. The book will be of benefit for personal use, Bible study and housegroups. It would be a good book to give to anyone interested in knowing

more about the Christian faith, or to someone influenced by false teaching.

Each chapter is well-written and provides a useful phrase-by-phrase exposition of 'What We Believe'. Many scripture references are included, but the study questions expect Christians to be ready to do some work for themselves. The questions are both theological and practical. Two questions from the chapter on Baptism and the Lord's Supper illustrate this; What do you understand by the phrase 'union with Christ'? How should we use a time of quiet during a communion service?

Issues where there is disagreement between Christians are handled sensitively. The comment on the gifts of the Spirit is, 'All the Spirit's gifts are given for the common good of God's people. He baptises us into Christ's body, the Church (1 Cor 12:13), so that in mutual dependence on one another we each play our part as we share our various gifts and graces (Rom 12:3-8).' Whilst recognising different baptismal practices it is clearly stated that 'every Christian should be baptised.' A warning is also given that, 'We should not allow ourselves to become intolerant of those who hold different views from ours about the order of events surrounding Christ's coming (often referred to as millennial views), or about the details of judgement and heaven.'

I would have liked to see a statement about the Lord's *pre-existence* being included, especially in the light of contemporary confusion and the denials of the cults. The doctrinal statement begins with a clear statement of his full deity and humanity, 'The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man', and then goes on to deal with the incarnation. The relevant chapter makes his deity very clear, but lacks a clear explanation about his eternal deity and then his taking human nature at

the incarnation. Those who already understand these things will not be misled, but others would have been helped by further explanation.

In dealing with the transmission of the biblical text I feel it would have been better to avoid the use of the phrase 'small errors have crept in' (p 13), since the doctrinal statement affirms 'the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine.' To help readers with less acute minds a reference in the explanation to 'mistakes' rather than 'errors' might have been better.

Biblical truth is helpfully applied to contemporary issues. In the chapter 'About the Human Race' application is made to the issues of racism, sexism, discrimination, exploitation, and evolutionary teaching. The chapter 'About the Future' specifically refutes conditional immortality and annihilationism.

It is regrettable that the economics of book publishing mean that this most welcome publication has appeared on poor quality paper in a format unworthy of its contents. It really falls between two stools, being too large for a saddle-stitched booklet like FOUNDATIONS and yet not large enough for a substantial paperback. Nevertheless, in an age when Christians have little doctrinal understanding, and when confusion abounds, it will help all true evangelicals to grasp and communicate the unchangeable truths of historic, biblical Christianity.

Peter Milsom, Deeside EC, Clwyd

Evangelical Spirituality

From the Wesleys to John Stott

James M Gordon

340 pp, £12.99, SPCK

For those who enjoy a combination of biography, theology and Christian experi-

ence this is a good read. As the title indicates, the book takes a careful look at evangelical spirituality over a period of three hundred and fifty years, through the lives of twenty-two leading figures grouped in pairs, eg John and Charles Wesley; Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield; John Newton and William Cowper, and so on. The author, who is a Baptist minister from Aberdeen, has put a great deal of work into the book. The result is a highly readable, thorough, fascinating and spiritually helpful book.

Spirituality is not easy to define. It has to do with the relationship between belief and practice. Spirituality is not simply the inward spiritual life of the Christian, but that life as it manifests itself in attitude, word and practice. It is the product of faith and conviction, the *outworking* of a person's understanding of what the Bible teaches about the Christian life.

Even amongst evangelicals there are variations in spirituality, and the author brings this out very well by comparing and contrasting pairs of contemporary men or women. Several factors contribute to these variations: differences of theological emphasis, spiritual experience, temperament, and prevailing moral and spiritual conditions in society. All of these shape our lives in some measure, often unconsciously. The study of how this has worked out historically is fascinating and, more importantly, has much to say to us by way of warning and correction. The book is fairly self-contained and can be read profitably even where the reader's historical knowledge of the period is sparse. James Gordon acknowledges his indebtedness to Dr David Bebbington, whose book *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain - a History from the 1730's to the 1980's* covers the same period, and is worth reading (though the reviewer confesses to some irritation at Dr Bebbing-

ton's failure to distinguish between Calvinism and Hyper-Calvinism, and his tendency to give the impression that pleading with sinners to come to Christ and freely offering Christ to them is somehow inconsistent with the tenets of Calvinism).

So the lives of these great saints of God are set before us. The author lets down his bucket into some very rich wells. These lives are described with sympathy and honesty, and are allowed to speak for themselves. The chapter on John Newton and William Cowper, for example, is excellent, as is that on Horatius Bonar and Robert Murray McCheyne.

The inclusion of men like R W Dale and P T Forsyth is less satisfying. Both of these men were influenced by the rising tide of liberalism. Gordon recognises this particularly in Dale. "By contrast (with Spurgeon) Dale's Evangelical orthodoxy became more and more suspect as he modified, redefined and finally rejected his Calvinistic heritage. His first expository series of sermons on Romans created uproar. The doctrine of original sin and universal guilt by the imputation of Adam's sin upon the whole race, he declared 'unintelligible'." Again, "He rejected the traditional interpretation of original sin and predestination because to him their moral implications were intolerable and their intellectual credibility no longer tenable. The challenge posed by biblical criticism, scientific advance and social changes forced a man of Dale's intellectual bent to attempt a defensive restatement of evangelical doctrine." With all this Spurgeon had no sympathy whatever. Gordon speaks of him as "uncompromisingly hostile to the 'spirit of the age', suspicious of the intellectual and social changes which were becoming more and more unsympathetic to the old theology. Spurgeon's was a spirituality of

conservation, of reverence for the past and of protest against the eroding forces of the present; Dale's was a spirituality of reconstruction, equally concerned to preserve, but prepared to use modern materials if they proved more durable." But it must be said that Spurgeon's resistance to change arose from his understanding as to where those changes would lead and from his unshakeable commitment to Biblical truth. In fact Dale's defections from the truth were by no means slight. He rejected the eternal punishment of sinners, preferring the theory of annihilation. In his view of the Atonement he leans towards the Governmental Theory advocated by Grotius, the 17th century Dutch theologian (see *The Atonement* by R W Dale, and especially the chapter on the Relationship of Christ to the Law). Dale was also a vigorous opponent of Calvinism and said of it (in the Daily Telegraph, Christmas Day 1873) "that Calvinism would be almost obsolete among Baptists were it not still maintained by the powerful influence of Mr. Spurgeon." For these reasons we do not think Dale and Spurgeon go well together.

The chapter on Handley Moule and J C Ryle is most stimulating and useful. Gordon shows their contrasting responses to the *Higher Life* movement and its particular form of perfectionism. At a time when he felt deeply the shortcomings of his own life, Moule heard Evan Hopkins preach at a holiness convention and found in that sermon "the answer to his own deficiency". From then he became an ardent and eloquent supporter of the Keswick Movement. This change is clearly reflected in Moule's two commentaries on *Romans*, the first in 1879 and the second in 1894, and especially in his treatment of *Romans* 7. Here we see the believer struggling vainly with sin in a life largely without the Spirit's power; whereas in

chapter 8 the believer is living the life of victory through the rest of faith. Ryle was wholly out of sympathy with this view, and in his book *Holiness*, "a weighty defence of the Calvinistic spiritual tradition", he presented his answer to the new holiness movement. Gordon gives us a fine comparison of these two men.

In the final chapter the book enters our own times with D M Lloyd-Jones and John Stott. Such close encounters are not easy to handle, but on the whole Gordon has treated them with sensitivity and honesty. There are occasional lapses such as the comment that Dr Lloyd-Jones "remained cautious in his attitude to Keswick holiness teaching ... " - an extraordinary understatement! Dr Lloyd-Jones had no more sympathy for the old Keswick teaching than Ryle, and was as outspoken on many occasions. Those who are familiar with Iain Murray's fine two-volume biography of Dr Lloyd-Jones will appreciate the richness of that biography coming through. The comparison between Lloyd-Jones and Stott is slightly reminiscent of that between Spurgeon and Dale. Stott's openness to modern influences has, to the present reviewer's mind, weakened him especially in his attitude towards ecumenical issues and liberalism. Gordon says of him, "Since 'Lausanne '74' Stott's major works have shown clear signs of a mind which, in growing more catholic in sympathy, has struggled to hold together integrity of personal conviction with sensitivity where disagreement is inevitable." However there is an undeniable bond between Lloyd-Jones and Stott in their commitment to Scripture as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and to the preaching of that Word.

The Conclusion of the book is somewhat disappointing in places. Some less helpful elements in present-day evangelical thinking show themselves. There is a re-

luctance to engage in precise theological definition. Gordon says, "The death of Christ is perhaps best presented as a mystery which defies theological control". We accept that there are mysteries here that none can plumb, yet some elements are plainly taught in Scripture: penal substitution; satisfaction of the righteous demands of divine law; propitiation and consequent reconciliation and peace with God; these we must insist upon. We need however, not only sound doctrine, but also love and humility and holy joy. "Joy, fear of the Lord, gratitude and many other notes are sounded in the song of the redeemed," writes Gordon, "but adding depth to the whole experience is the sense of indebtedness to the crucified Lord. Joy is the joy of being loved; the heartfelt sense of obligation, which is the legacy of forgiveness, is understood as the debt of love; the fear of the Lord is the carefulness of the Christian not to offend against the holy love of God; ... " With all this we wholly concur. Gordon draws attention to Romans chapter 7 as a key text in many of the discussions on holiness. In fact, Dr Lloyd-Jones recognised this and expounded the chapter with great care and thoroughness, disagreeing with the older Reformed commentaries as well as with Handley Moule. The issue is a very relevant one for us all - are the anguish of chapter 7 and the victory of chapter 8 incompatible? What is the pattern of true spirituality?

James Gordon has packed into this book a great deal that is rich and excellent from our evangelical heritage. We are in his debt. Bearing in mind the reservations expressed in the review, the reader will find much here to inform his mind, warm his heart and challenge his conscience. What kind of spirituality are we producing? How Biblical is it? Are we convinced that genuine spirituality is the

product of the truth in its fulness being brought to bear on our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit? Above all are we working out its practical implications?

Unity in Truth

Addresses given by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones for the British Evangelical Council.

Edited by Hywel Jones

204pp £6.95, Evangelical Press.

These addresses, though concentrating on controversial church issues, still bear those distinguishing features that characterised the preaching of Dr Lloyd-Jones - a deep sense of the greatness of God and a jealous love for the gospel of Jesus Christ - and which endeared him to the Lord's people. Some of the addresses would, in the hands of other men, have been lectures, but with the Doctor even historical addresses became sermons. All of them, are polemical to some degree and will arouse different responses in readers - indeed, I suspect that some will wish they had never been given at all. As some felt about Spurgeon a century ago, there are those who would prefer the Doctor to have fulfilled the role of *the grand old man of evangelicalism* and not spoiled that image by controversy. But those who think like that have never understood the man who throughout his ministry sought to face up to the issues of the day. In that sense these addresses, though at times sharply polemical, are entirely in character.

Yet it would be a mistake to think that the Doctor enjoyed controversy. He enjoyed the cut and thrust of debate, as those who attended the Westminster Fellowship know, but disagreeing with his evangelical brethren whom he loved was not pleasant to him. He was a man of much warmth and friendliness, who revelled in the great

truths of the gospel and counted all who stood with him in those truths as brethren beloved. For this reason it needs to be appreciated that these addresses were costly. They cost him friends and a good deal of sharp criticism, and all this he felt deeply.

During this period of his ministry he suffered a great deal of misrepresentation and misunderstanding, much of which has lingered over the years. The publication of this book will, I believe, do much to clarify the nature of the Doctor's vision for evangelical unity, and explode the myths. Four features stand out in these addresses and are central to the Dr Lloyd-Jones' whole approach to the *unity of the church*:

1 An insistence that we have a Biblical doctrine of the church, and that we should face up to its practical implications. To Dr Lloyd-Jones the defence of the gospel could not be separated from the reformation of the church. The church must become what she is, the pillar and ground of the truth.

2 Unity in the gospel involves separation from those who deny the gospel. It was at this point that he took issue with the *Keswick* brand of unity, and with the Evangelical Alliance and its stance of neutrality over the Ecumenical Movement. Dr Lloyd-Jones insisted that in order to express a positive unity between evangelical churches there must be a separation from those who declare a false gospel. This insistence involved painful withdrawal from many evangelical Anglicans who, at least from Keele onwards, were moving in a very different

direction. 3 The evangelical basis of the Doctor's appeal for unity. Although he was a thorough Calvinist in his theology he was not seeking a unity based on the distinctive tenets of Calvinism. His concern was with essential evangelicalism.

4 Dr Lloyd-Jones was a man of vision with his feet firmly on the ground. He was always able to see through the details to the big issues. He had a high view of the church and what she was called to be. Those who heard him deliver these addresses can never forget that element of the *prophetic* that roused the soul and kindled longings for better things. Yet for all that, we were never allowed to forget the darker realities of the situation; he offered no easy solutions, and never pretended the way forward would be anything but stony and difficult. He had great sympathy with men who, while seeing the need to separate from those who preach a false gospel, felt the deepest obligations of love and pastoral care for their churches.

Hywel Jones' invaluable introduction outlines the Doctor's relationship to the BEC, and sketches in the background from which these addresses arise. The fact that they were delivered well over ten years ago in no way reduces their relevance; indeed, because the church situation has worsened, it could be argued that they are more relevant than ever. Altogether, the book provides a powerful apologetic for the BEC and is truly a word for our times.

Neil C Richards, Wheelock Heath BC

EDITORIAL POLICY

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