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



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a journal of evangelical theology

**The Ministry of the Word**

**Lifting the Veil**

**A New Earth**

**Simeon on Ministerial Training**

**Universalism and Hell**

**Cranmer in Context**

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# Editorial

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The previous issue of FOUNDATIONS stimulated several readers to write to me in order to express appreciation for the quality and helpfulness of the articles and also to comment on some of the issues raised. One of these letters, about INFANT SALVATION, appears on page 17. This was encouraging and we hope that this issue will be equally beneficial to readers.

Our first article is written by Simon Chase and is a report of the 1993 BEC STUDY CONFERENCE on the Ministry of the Word in the Church. There is valuable material here for study and further reflection. Our EXEGESIS article is contributed by Paul Brown and it grapples with the text of 2 Corinthians 3.

Tim Grass provides a useful historical perspective with a contribution on CHARLES SIMEON, particularly his experience in the Training of Ministers. A NEW EARTH is the subject Philip Eveson tackles in his article; it will be good to have written responses from readers to this and other articles.

The editor then reviews two new books, namely Don Carson's NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SURVEY and a symposium on UNIVERSALISM AND THE DOCTRINE OF HELL. Both books are important but the latter is of crucial significance for the on-going contemporary debate concerning the nature and duration of hell. There is also a brief review of a new commentary on JEREMIAH and a longer review of recent works on THOMAS CRANMER.

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# The Ministry of the Word

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*Simon Chase*

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*A personal view of the 1993 BEC Study Conference*

"Not only is good preaching rare but preaching itself is at a discount in today's churches. Many Christians have lost confidence in what previous generations would have called the **power of the Word**. This conference aims to consider the broad Biblical basis for the Ministry of the Word and to evaluate this for our own generation." (*Introduction to the study papers*)

The BEC Study Conference took place over three days at High Leigh Conference Centre at the end of March. Under the chairmanship of Rev Hywel Jones about 40 men from various constituencies within the Council met to consider **The Ministry of the Word in the Church**.

Unlike most conferences, the six papers had already been printed and circulated. Each speaker introduced his paper, but did not read it; he was asked to highlight particular points, and the subject was then open for discussion. Those attending were expected to have read and considered the papers already.

## Contemporary Pressures

Dr David Smith, Principal of Northumbria Bible College had analysed the factors affecting preaching today. First he focused on external pressures relating to our cultural context. A major problem is that "churches have been left stranded as sub-cultural islands and preaching has become confined to the circle of those who 'speak the language'".

*Secularization* has fragmented society, destroying any consensus as to the purpose of human life. *Despair* and loneliness are the terrible price people are paying for apparent freedom from Christian values. *Consumer religion* fills the void left by abandoning Christianity. Rather than believe in nothing, modern man will believe in anything.

Preachers face three dangers; they can be insular, turning away from society's developments and so failing to tackle problems church members actually face. They can be culturally irrelevant, experts in exegesis but incapable of communicating the gospel meaningfully to the people around them. Or they can fall into the opposite danger of over-accommodation to cultural mores in communication and virtually lose the gospel.

The difficulties do not end there, however. A whole host of **internal pressures** affect the preacher, arising from changes within churches.

*The feel-good factor* has subordinated truth to experience and the **latter** is confused with the former. The *body-life principle* blames the "one-man ministry" as the main cause of death in churches and consequently preaching is sidelined. *Congregational gifts* do need to be developed and "For too long the church has resembled a sporting event in which twenty-thousand people desperately in need

of exercise come to watch twenty-two men desperately in need of rest. *Communications technology* elevates the visual over the verbal and has affected churches. How can we make the message of the Book relevant to a *generation of non-readers*? Lastly the *minister himself* faces the pressures of "burn-out", whilst incidences of "serious moral failure" are common. When sinful people, battered by this society, look to the pastor for aid, he may well be overwhelmed by the demands they make. So who pastors the pastor?

### **Discussion**

How do we get in touch with the way people are thinking and feeling? Ought there to be more discussional opportunities in local church ministry so that there can be feed-back from the people? Reading widely can help, but some wondered whether many "ordinary people" were asking any questions at all! If they are asking questions, aren't they asking many different kinds of questions?

There is a need to exegete the person as well as the text. Evangelistic methods can reinforce churches' cultural isolation; a programme is less necessary than neighbourliness. We can be over-hasty in separating converts from their culture. Despite having had time to reflect on the issues, the debate was not well focused; perhaps the quotation by Helmut Thielicke with which Dr Smith ended his paper was really the issue - "As long as we have not conquered this 'sickness unto death', which is seated in our unconvincing Christian existence and nowhere else, all secondary remedies are meaningless and restricted to very innocuous symptom-therapy."

Certainly, "We ought not to struggle for the place of preaching any harder than we ought to struggle for better preaching. The best way to secure the place of preaching is by better preaching". So saying, the chairman concluded the first session.

### **The Old Covenant Community**

This paper had been prepared by Rev John Waite, but he was unable to be at the conference due to his daughter's serious illness.

His paper dealt with the leading figures in the Old Covenant Community: Priest & Levite, Prophet, Judge, Wise Man and King. The second part of the paper covered the relationship to the Sinaitic revelation of these offices and advisers. Each one in his own way was responsible before God for supporting the divine covenant with Israel.

In Mr Waite's absence the chairman made some introductory comments, drawing out the way in which there is movement within the Old Testament pointing us in the direction of the New Testament's fuller development.

### **Discussion**

What had happened to the "Judge" function in the transition from old covenant to new? For example, when Presbyterian elders act together, are they acting in this "judging" function? And to what extent has the arrival of the new covenant made judging less significant? Judging has to do with law. The more widespread knowledge of God among the covenant people and the greater emphasis upon (not dichotomy between) grace rather than law might mean that this function

would be less evident and less necessary. Does it come into the province of the gathered church on the basis of Mt 18 or 1 Cor 5?

Then what of the functions of Wise Man/Counsellor? How should such functions be viewed, especially in the light of the growth of the modern counselling movement? Are churches too ready to hand over responsibility for judging and counselling to the "secular powers"? Ought not the new covenant community to deal with these issues? Yet if the church is to carry out such functions, there is also a need to teach proper submission to the caring authority - something unknown in the secular world.

This early evening discussion was most stimulating, but unsatisfactory because there was not enough time to pursue any matter to its conclusion. We still had to discuss another area of the paper so the session had to end.

### **Prophets - Old Testament**

Due to Mr Waite's absence, Dr John Benton's paper figured prominently in the conference discussions. His work on Prophets was taken in two parts, the section on the Old Testament being dealt with in relation to the old covenant community. His argument, based on the view originating from Wayne Grudem, was that there were two "kinds" of prophecy to be found in the Old Testament. The "classical" prophets, ie the writers of Scripture, are inspired in the fullest sense, but he proposed a secondary class of prophecy that was analogous to the non-apostolic prophecy he saw in the New Testament.

This session was most perplexing; there was a lot of metaphorical and literal head-scratching going on. Speaking personally, it felt like being taken on an anthropological dig to find evidence of the missing link! We investigated a number of hopeful sites and a few things were unearthed. Yet rather than hominid remains, the Scriptural equivalent of the remains of an ancient pig came to light. We were raking over the deposits of Holy Scripture and many felt there was too little to support too much.

Enough questions were asked about 2 Peter 1:21 and the warnings against false prophecy in Deut 13 and 18 to give pause for serious reflection.

### **Prophets - New Testament**

The next morning Dr Benton was back in harness introducing the rest of his paper, with an opportunity to develop the basic thesis. He identified aspects of cessation and continuation in the Old Testament; the canonical prophets were related to God's redemptive acts, but there was also a line of secondary prophets that could be linked to the Levitical priesthood and the Temple.

In the New Testament, he argued, we find the same kind of thing. The canonical prophets are in view in Eph 2:20; the secondary prophets are those mentioned in 1 Cor 13:8. Hence it is perfectly possible that a secondary gift of prophecy may continue today.

He cited the instance drawn from C H Spurgeon's ministry of his identifying a shoemaker in the congregation one Sunday who had been continuing his business on the Lord's Day. He not only identified the man, but also publicly - and accurately - declared the amount of profit the man had made. All this was verified when the man was subsequently visited by a London City Missionary.

Dr Benton suggested that this surely was an instance of prophecy where we nevertheless did not need to claim inspiration for every word. Is it not the case, he suggested, that the charismatic movement has rather polarised things and so now we have difficulty accepting what an earlier generation of evangelicals had no difficulty receiving?

### Discussion

There was a considerable debate in an excellent spirit. Dr Benton very graciously defended his position, others very graciously differed. The BEC Study Conference proves that evangelicals can disagree, whilst remaining in true fellowship with one another.

The major point of debate focused on 1 Cor 14:29-32. Dr Grudem is undoubtedly a very clever man; he has gained a PhD and considerable celebrity for his conjectural interpretation of a possible translation of one word in the New Testament - the word, of course, is "*weigh/judge*" found in the verses referred to. The other major area of discussion related to what the nature of this "secondary" prophecy might be. Is the example of Spurgeon helpful here?

In Spurgeon's case, accuracy of detail was essential. The man himself testified later that he would not have minded so much about his Sabbath-breaking, but what really troubled him was that Spurgeon had revealed exactly how much profit he had made! This does not really fit Wayne Grudem's secondary prophecy that has to be "weighed" - it was unanswerable because it was correct in every respect. One error would have let the man off the hook.

This debate will run and run, as they say. It is hardly a criticism to say that the conference failed to settle the matter to the satisfaction of all present.

The danger, it was observed, in both charismatic and non-charismatic churches is to disregard the prophetic aspect of preaching. None of this discussion of prophecy impinges upon the primary need for prophetic, expository preaching.

### Apostles and Evangelists

Roger Welch introduced his paper on two of the gifts to the church mentioned by Paul in Eph 4:11. He listed seven propositions for discussion:

1. The gifts of Eph 4 are people-gifts, ie men who are gifts.
2. The distinction that is made between the Eph 4 gifts and, for example, elders and deacons is that the former gifts have trans-local potential. "Elders function in local churches; Eph 4 ministers function across the boundaries of local churches as called, or sent, and recognised by one or more such church." Their emphasis is particularly on the proclamation of the gospel and the exposition of the Word revealed.
3. The differences from one to another is that certainly *some aspects* of these gifts are temporary, belonging to the New Testament times - especially apostles, and perhaps much that has to do with prophets.
4. The paucity of references to evangelists really points to the extensive overlap of these gifts.
5. Contemporary use of the word "apostle" is misleading; Restorationist apostles would be better described as Bishops, Moderators or Superintendents!
6. Whilst it may be Biblically *permissible* to use the word "apostle" for a messenger,



one who gathers an offering, a church planter or a missionary, it may well not be expedient. Moreover, if Eph 4 refers to the foundational apostles, it would be better to use a different word altogether for these other activities.

7. There is a great need for accountability in churches today. The multitude of "ministries" cry out for regulation. Designation of people in terms of Eph 4 would help, as would local churches being responsible for recognising those involved, eg itinerant preachers who ought to be both recognised and regulated.

The New Testament revelation, though final, also reflects development and transition. There is flexibility in use of terms for function and office. Perhaps it is legitimate to use extra-Biblical terms to avoid confusion if Eph 4 terms were to be employed inappropriately.

## Discussion

We covered much familiar ground: how is the word "apostle" used in Scripture? What kind of apostle was Paul? What of the issue of pre- and post-Pentecost gifting?

More practically, how can the trans-local character of these gifts be expressed today? The phenomenon of ministerial movement may not be the tragedy some see it to be. Is a long pastorate *really* nearer to the Biblical model? Is it appropriate to send non-ministerial candidates to the mission field - weren't Paul and Barnabas just about the best available?

The emphasis on the pastor-teacher has produced men who aspire to a settled situation, to the neglect of evangelist-like ministries with more mobility. What is needed is more church-planter role models.

Underlying this is a deeper spiritual issue. Such men will need a love for the lost; this comes from a love for the Saviour who loved the lost - and wept over Jerusalem. We are in desperate need of such spiritual experience. If we aren't concerned our people won't be either. Perhaps our own relegation of evangelistic preaching has led to young preachers prizing preaching to saints above preaching to sinners. (Budding preachers are often allowed to address children and the unconverted but can't go near the pulpit until properly "trained".)

Nevertheless, Christ can still give gifts to his church, and we can petition him for them. We need men who can reap the harvest - we should pray for them! The session ended with the chairman leading us all in fervent prayer for the cause of the gospel and our own personal quickening.

## Elders and Deacons

Professor Donald Macleod began by pointing out that ministry is a matter of *service*, not power. Ministry is practised by the whole body of Christ, *each having* his own gift and responsibility. The fluidity and flexibility of New Testament terminology means that we must not bind word and concept - it is impossible to develop the role of the elder simply from a word-study of its occurrences. Moreover, we cannot hope to produce the New Testament pattern exactly, because of the transition and development displayed regarding church structures. It is hard to know what the final position was - what of Titus' role for example? Changing social and church circumstances make it even harder.

Nevertheless, three basic ministries can be identified in the area under

consideration: *compassion, the word and pastoral oversight.*

The current social situation means the ministry of compassion is still relevant and the examples of Thomas Chalmers and General Booth should make us ask searching questions. In the paper itself, the Professor had dealt with deacons first, and at considerable length. The diaconate must be recovered from the "gutter and drains" syndrome. There is a role distinct from being just second-class or semi-elders. Churches need to do a lot more thinking about how we can meaningfully show a ministry of compassion today, and think carefully about who to appoint to undertake such a task. The model of diaconate developed in the paper would give a place for female deacons without conflicts about authority. There is no term to designate a preaching "office"; we confuse the primacy of preaching with the primacy of a pulpit-bound ministry. Yet New Testament preaching was very varied and flexible; discussion, argument etc implies that preaching should be defined by its content not its method. If the truth is proclaimed - in whatever way - that is preaching.

Preachers should be full-time and trained; they are not identical to elders or presbyters. Elders have a distinct, though closely related function in terms of shepherding the flock, leading the church, counselling, warning, guarding and praying.

The relationship between elders and preachers/teachers is important. Pastoral care and teaching are closely linked. The elders were supported by their local congregations. Yet ability to teach does not constitute one an elder, nor does being an elder make one a pastor/teacher. The ministries are related but distinct.

## Discussion

What is preaching? The method must be able to carry the message, because propositional truth is involved, but isn't the most effective way to evangelize usually plain simple gospel preaching? The regulative principle for evangelism is surely "all possible means". Perhaps in our gospel services it might be appropriate to drop the musical element altogether if it is poor in quality or dated in form.

The dismantling of the welfare state discerned by at least some at the conference meant that the diaconal ministry of compassion would come into prominence once again. Yet was there any distinction to be made between the involvement of churches/the Church and of individuals in social concern? Certainly we must seek to provide for our own people; but if we stumble upon a wider problem, can we pass by on the other side?

This led to a discussion of the work of Thomas Chalmers in 1820s Glasgow. How 20th century developments have changed the picture received attention; John Stott has said that social concern and the gospel are equally mandated by Christ; Moore College, Sydney has criticised this. Yet if we have no way of helping the poor, why should they listen?

The deacons ministered to the covenant community, but we are still to do good to all men, Gal 6. The need is so great that our energies can easily be dissipated; each must follow his own calling and gifting.

Particular examples of what local churches had done were mentioned. Perhaps stronger churches could help the weak. Can we be satisfied with the situation

where a church says it will have a full-time pastor-teacher and leave it at that? Should we not look more widely at other full-time workers?

If the summary of this discussion appears somewhat diffuse, that is because the subjects raised in such a stimulating manner demanded responses on a range of issues that have usually been examined in a rather different way.

Professor Macleod's paper provoked his brethren to think; he opened up a fresh approach to the major ministries of the local church and a great deal of careful thinking now needs to be done.

## **Summary of Issues**

How do you arrange a session to sum up a conference on such an important theme, yet with so many different aspects? You begin by giving the job to Rev Hywel Jones, who undoubtedly preached to us and almost gave us a sermon.

He highlighted the qualities of the Word we are called to minister - in the church, and by the church to the world. It is a book, Scripture, and it is a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. In both cases it is the Word of God; his self-revelation. On this we are all united and clear; nothing must erode the uniqueness of the Word of God. The Word has life and abides, 1 Peter 1:23. It remains relevant because it has life - it does not have to be "made relevant". The Word "stands", Isa 40:8; not simply in the sense of fixed immobility, but in that it will arise - it is dynamic! The Word is always standing up to do its work. The idea is not of immovability, but of invincibility!

Consider the ark before Dagon; who fell down? Today it may seem the other way round, but that is not the true character of the Word in the face of the world's unbelief and opposition. In the Hebrew language "word" also means "event" - when God speaks, something happens!

The Ministry therefore is that means by which the Word gets up and goes. It is the means by which the Word produces its everlasting results. The Word is not a liability but our resource; "There's a stone here for every Goliath in every age." We are to let it loose - but how?

There is the ministry of the Word by all in the church. All believers can engage to some degree in edification and evangelism.

We must look to Christ, who gives gifts to his church. We must not look to fill offices, but for those who are already ministering. Look for those who are being compassionate, who are already counselling helpfully from Scripture. We need preachers who will so proclaim the Word that God makes his Son heard through the message, Eph 2:17.

## **Discussion**

In response to such a rallying cry the discussion focused on the matter of the "call to the ministry". What constitutes a call? Are desire + character + gifts sufficient? Is an experience analogous to that of the apostles or prophets necessary? Or is the "call" a reflection of our individualistic culture, so that people go off and "get trained" without reference to their home church?

## Conclusion

Alan Gibson and his helpers are to be congratulated on a well-run conference. Early on he publicly acknowledged a mistake he had made; such an admission from one of his efficiency encourages us all.

One difficulty was properly addressing six papers in the equivalent of two full days; there was never enough time to pursue a matter thoroughly. Even in an apparently focused theme there are so many strands that even if superficiality in discussion is avoided, the danger of inconclusiveness isn't. Perhaps just three papers would have been better. Or perhaps only three of the six could have been designed for discussion. We really had an embarrassment of riches.

Probably the best way of assessing the conference is in terms indirectly related to the theme. The BEC is alive and functioning. It can host a conference on problematical matters and have everyone sit down to meals together after discussions. It can tackle important matters related to the ministry of the Word without one doubt being raised as to the necessity of ministering that Word.

At a conference where so many questions were asked we can gain much encouragement from knowing there are still a lot of big questions we do not need to ask. For those attending, and for those whom many there represented, silence meant not mere acquiescence but agreement - and more than that; absolute commitment.

The ministry of the Word of God holds centre stage in the BEC and our great need is for the **power of the Word** to be displayed again in our day, and to this generation.

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## *The Ministry of the Word*

This ministry clearly requires that a man give himself wholly to it. This is why the apostles did not want to become involved in the problems of administration. They wanted to 'give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4). It is important to note that the precise business with which the apostles did not wish to be entangled was ecclesiastical. Not even the work of the diaconate should be allowed to distract a preacher of the gospel. How much more does this apply to secular pursuits! It is impossible to engage in an effective preaching ministry if we have to snatch our moments of preparation from the demands of business, trade, politics or the caring professions. Men must give themselves wholly to these matters, devoting themselves single-mindedly to reading, teaching and preaching (1 Tim 4:13f) - and to prayer (Acts 6:4).

There may be times in the history of the modern church, as there were in the days of the apostles, when circumstances force preachers into a part-time ministry. But this is not the biblical pattern. Preaching is no exception to Dr Johnston's dictum: 'No man ever did anything well to which he did not give the whole bent of his mind.'

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*Donald Macleod, Paper V, 1993 Study Conference*

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# Exegesis 16: Lifting the Veil

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*Paul Brown*

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This study lifts the veil on 2 Corinthians 3:13-18 and looks at the way OT texts are used by NT writers and by us.

If we agree with F F Bruce that “of all the Pauline epistles, 2 Corinthians is probably the one which presents most problems to the interpreter”,<sup>1</sup> we might also add that chapter three is probably the most difficult to interpret, with verses 12-18 presenting the greatest problems. Van Unnik says about them, “The path to their right interpretation is beset with a great many difficulties and there is hardly a single point on which expositors agree.”<sup>2</sup> In her recent, detailed study of this passage Linda Belleville says, “Almost every exegete who has studied 2 Cor 3:12-18 has struggled with its apparent lack of cohesion and its exegetical ambiguities”,<sup>3</sup> and when A T Hanson comes to v 17 he says, “we now approach what could be called the Mount Everest of Pauline texts as far as difficulty is concerned.”<sup>4</sup> This article does not aspire to scale Everests, but presents a modest excursion into the foothills and hopes to cast some light on Paul’s use of the *veil* in these verses.

By way of introduction, we ought to comment on v 12 and what Van Unnik calls the key-word, *parresia*, because this provides the contrast to Moses veiling his face. Paul and his colleagues use great “openness”, unlike Moses who veiled his face. It is difficult to be certain of the exact nuance of *parresia*. Is it “boldness of speech”, “confidence”, or “openness of behaviour”? “Openness of behaviour” (at one point Belleville uses the phrase “up front”!) seems to suit the context best, and provides a suitable contrast to Moses’ action. Moses hid the glory that shone from his face, but the apostle and those with him live lives that are open to scrutiny (4:2; this verse indicates that “openness” also includes the clear preaching of the truth).

## The Exodus background

The account of Moses veiling his face comes in Exodus 34 and is the background to Paul’s thinking here. So much does Paul depend on Exodus 34 that Colin Kruse in his commentary entitles the section 7-11, “Exposition of Exodus 34:29-32”, and verses 12-18, “Exposition of Exodus 34:33-35”. Part of Linda Belleville’s case is that Paul not only uses Exodus 34 but also elements of what she calls the “Moses-Doxa tradition” which she describes as a “tapestry of traditions rather than a single, unified Moses-Doxa tradition or midrash.”<sup>6</sup> It is not surprising that Paul’s handling of the Old Testament should reflect his rabbinic training, and it is not necessary for us to assume that only what were uniquely Pauline insights could find a place in his letters, after all he can quote from a pagan poet if this is appropriate, Tit 1:12. However, Exodus 34:29-35 is clearly his basic text and the way he handles it has the stamp of his authority as an apostle.

Part of the difficulty in following Paul’s thought in this passage is that he does

not take up the picture of Moses veiling his face in v 13 and develop an argument from that. What he appears to do is to go back to the account in Exodus several times in order to bring out a fresh point each time. There are four main points that he makes in these verses and these are parallel rather than sequential. They could be set out like this:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Moses put a veil over his face etc | — so that Israel could not look at the end of what was passing away          |
|                                    | — the same veil still lies on the hearts of Israelites when they read the OT |
|                                    | — when one turns to the Lord the veil is taken away                          |
|                                    | — we all with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord.                    |

In other words, what we have here is a number of points or headings arising out of the story of Moses veiling his face. It is necessary to go back in thought to the story in Exodus in order to understand the next point.<sup>7</sup> There is sequence and development in the passage but the points flow out of Exodus, they are not simply the development of an argument from v 13.

Closer examination of the passage makes this even clearer. All the way through we need to refer back to Exodus to understand the flow of the passage, even though in the last two cases this is not explicitly stated. This can be set out also:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Moses put a veil on his face                        | — so that Israel could not look...etc                                       |
| Their minds were blinded                            | — the same veil <sup>8</sup> still remains on their hearts even to this day |
| When Moses turned to the Lord he removed the veil   | — when one turns to the Lord the veil is taken away                         |
| Moses alone gazed with unveiled face on God's glory | — we all with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord                    |

When we look at the passage in this way we have an outline of applicatory points from Exodus 34 to the situation Paul was addressing. It is therefore not altogether surprising to read in Martin about "Moule's hint that we have here the development of a synagogue sermon preached by Paul on some previous occasion".<sup>9</sup> In fact even a quite unsophisticated expositor might note the parallels and draw the applications found here. Exodus 34 is understood in the light of the experience of those who have seen the far greater glory brought by the gospel.

### Three comments might be made about this

First of all it is not being argued that this is precisely Paul's methodology and sequence of thought. Linda Belleville says that these "have remained largely a mystery..... to a great extent because Jewish homiletical patterns and exegetical techniques have not been brought to bear on the details of this passage."<sup>10</sup> She maintains it is necessary to "recognize the essentially haggadic character of the verses" and the schema she discerns is this:

opening statement	v 12
text	v 13,14a; Exod 34:33
commentary	v 14b,15
text	v 16; Exod 34:34
commentary	v 17
text and commentary combined	Exodus 34:35/v 18 <sup>11</sup>

However, what is presented in this article is simply a way of clarifying the relationship of Exodus 34 to these verses. Whether Belleville's schema accurately understands Paul's methodology or not, and I am not at all capable of assessing her impressive research and scholarship, it remains true that it is necessary to see that the sequence of thought arises from Exodus and that one can only follow these verses by referring back to it.

Secondly, the phrase "their minds were hardened" does not occur in Exodus at all. In explaining this Carol Stockhausen says that it arises from the additional scriptural background of Isaiah 6:9,10 and 29:10-14.<sup>12</sup> Linda Belleville however points out that "the response of Israel to the behaviour of Moses is very much part of the Exodus narrative." She refers to Deut 29:3,4 and comments, "Persistent blindness to the activity of God is a biblical indictment of the Exodus generation."<sup>13</sup> This is surely correct. After all, Exodus 32 recounts the idolatry of Israel with the golden calf and Moses' prayer to see God's glory and the second giving of the ten commandments are a sequel to that. This phrase, then, is simply Paul's summing up of the spiritual condition of Israel as revealed in the whole Exodus story.

Thirdly it might appear that point 3 is a little forced - when Moses turned to the Lord he took the veil away; when one turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. But the heart of the comparison seems to be that when Moses turned to the Lord, the veil had to go. He was turning to the Lord to hear his voice and to commune with him and no veil could come between him and the Lord. So when anyone truly turns to the Lord the veil has to go and will go. Blindness and unbelief go when a person turns to the Lord. This is so because "the Lord is the Spirit", the Spirit who writes on the heart (v 3), who gives life (v 6) and who is the dynamic of the new covenant ministry (v 8) - "and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty (v 17)."

**We now turn to two questions:** *how are we to understand Paul's methodology in interpreting the Exodus passage? and how far does this provide us with a precedent for our own handling of the Old Testament?* In answering the first question Paul's methodology will be clarified briefly under five headings.

## **Paul's Methodology**

### **Christian midrash**

Midrash is a term which is constantly used of this passage - for example, Fitzmyer says, "It is one of the few passages in the New Testament which is clearly midrashic in the strict sense"<sup>14</sup> - yet it is also true that most writers feel some hesitation about using it. Midrash "is used to denote early Jewish exegesis of the Bible as characterized by a certain hermeneutical approach."<sup>15</sup> It is classified in

various ways. "(H)aggadic midrash (is) one which comments on the non-legal or narrative portions."<sup>16</sup> There are three hermeneutical approaches which need to be mentioned as all have been thought to be used by Paul in this chapter. The first is *KAL VA-HOMER* which, "asserts that what is true of the inferior member of a similar pair (ie of statements or events) must be true also of the superior, and to a superior degree."<sup>17</sup> See vv 7-9,11. The second is *PESHER* (or interpretation). This involves the application of the biblical text to the present; see for example v 14b. Stockhausen understands much of the passage in this way. The underlying presupposition is perhaps expressed in 1 Cor 10:11. The third is *GEZERAH SHAWA* "which rests on a similarity of verbal expressions in two separate texts."<sup>18</sup> Fitzmyer maintains that Paul's method in this passage is "not far removed" from this principle.<sup>19</sup>

### **Allegory**

R V G Tasker writes, "The apostle now allegorizes the account of the giving of the law found in Ex 34:29-35",<sup>20</sup> and Margaret Thrall says, "Paul then takes the story of the veil over the face of Moses and develops it allegorically in various ways."<sup>21</sup> Once again most writers have hesitations about this. Perhaps it partly depends on definition. Sidney Greidanus says, "The allegorical method searches beneath the literal meaning of a passage for the 'real' meaning."<sup>22</sup> The issue does not seem to be entirely clear, for Philip Hughes, after quoting Tyndale's "vigorous attack on the four senses of Scripture" goes on to say, "Not that the allegorical use of Scripture . . . is illegitimate, but, insists Tyndale, it must be proved by the literal, and borne by it, as a house is borne by its foundations."<sup>23</sup> Two comments could be made here. First, there is no suggestion in 2 Cor 3 that the Exodus account is unhistorical or unimportant, on the contrary, Paul's reasoning depends upon its historicity and literal meaning. Second, the use Paul makes of the veiling of Moses' face is not simply arbitrary, nor is it contrived. There is a real, if spiritual, veil over the minds of the Jews as they read the old covenant. Paul is drawing out the spiritual implications of the Exodus story for his present purpose.

### **Eschatological exegesis and Charismatic exegesis**

Martin, commenting particularly on vv 16-18, says, "By this method (*GEZERAH SHAWA*) Paul is able to seize on the reference to *kurios* in Exodus 34 and apply it to the Spirit by a conviction that E E Ellis has dubbed "eschatological exegesis", ie, the writer views the OT promises and prophecies as having fulfilment in his own time and experience; or alternatively, as "charismatic exegesis", ie, the new age of the Spirit gives fresh meaning to an ancient text and makes it relevant to the (Christian) writer's needs."<sup>24</sup>

That Paul does view the "OT promises and prophecies as having fulfilment in his own time and experience" is incontrovertible. It might be better, however, to use the word "christological" rather than "eschatological". The new covenant and the end time have come with the Christ, and it is supremely in him that the promises and prophecies find their fulfilment (2 Cor 1:20).<sup>25</sup>

Ellis himself speaks of "charismatic exegesis" in this way; the early Christian prophets and teachers, he says, "proceed from the conviction that the meaning of the Old Testament is a 'mystery' whose 'interpretation' can be given not by human reason but only by the Holy Spirit."<sup>26</sup> There is considerable evidence in Acts for the Holy Spirit interpreting the Old Testament<sup>27</sup>, but the whole concept



of charismatic exegesis needs further study to determine whether what is being claimed is a type of exegesis which is simply given by the Spirit and has no other rationale at all.

### **Illustrational use**

It is possible to see Paul using the story of Moses veiling his face for its illustrational value. Linda Belleville says, "Lenski, for example, is probably more on target in saying that Paul uses the action of Moses veiling his face for its full illustrative possibilities."<sup>28</sup> However, it is surely clear that the comparison between Moses and the ministry of the old covenant, and Paul and his associates in their ministry of the new covenant, is central to the whole argument of the chapter. The reference to Moses veiling his face arises out of this and the connections Paul establishes - for example, "until this day the same veil remains unlifted" - go deeper than would be the case with illustration.

### **Associational use**

Fitzmyer emphasizes the way Paul uses association of ideas in this passage, "What is operative here, and what is perhaps not often enough noted is the free association of ideas which runs through the entire passage. The association is caused by catchword bonding, in which one sense of a term suggests another, and so the argument proceeds."<sup>29</sup> Carol Stockhausen in discussing *GEZERA SHAWA* says, "Linking through hookwords is basic to the mnemonics of most folk literature and to the educational system of many ancient cultures . . ."<sup>30</sup> Some modern writers maintain that the human mind operates much more by associational thinking than by linear thinking. This is the basis for the mind-map devised by Tony Buzan.<sup>31</sup> The veiling of Moses face triggers off a series of associational ideas which form applications of the story for Paul's situation and for answering those who were criticising his ministry.

In considering these methodologies there is obviously a fair degree of overlap and most writers see a combination of them used by Paul. So Linda Belleville speaks of "Scripture and tradition filtered first through the lens of salvation history; that is, Scripture that has been, so to speak, 'allegorized' in the light of God's salvific work in Christ."<sup>32</sup> Paul clearly uses methods akin to Jewish exegesis, including those which, according to Morna Hooker, "must surely make any twentieth-century preacher feel uncomfortable",<sup>33</sup> but which nevertheless have been congenial to the mind-set of very many people and still appeal today to those who do not feel it necessary always to think in a linear manner.

### **A Precedent for Us?**

The final question is whether Paul's use of the OT here establishes any precedent for us in exegesis and preaching. Perhaps we should begin with a caveat. Carol Stockhausen says, "Paul shares much of (the rabbis) point of view on scripture, as well as some of their methodology. But he does not share their genre because he is writing a letter. The question for Paul is, therefore, 'How do you handle scripture when you are writing a letter, trying to convince someone else of your point of view?'"<sup>34</sup>

Bearing in mind, then, different circumstances, motivation and genre, it nevertheless appears difficult to argue that we should not follow Paul's methodology, unless we are to hold to a form of charismatic exegesis that is

restricted to the first century, or to unique apostolic insight. Comparing Scripture with Scripture would appear to involve seeing how the NT interprets the OT. The pattern presented by Paul here is not one which finds much favour in these days, but we may be missing some of the richness of the OT in our haste to avoid anything that looks like allegory or undue spiritualizing. By all means let us seek to understand more clearly how Paul uses the OT in passages like this, and why he does so, but we can also learn from him the crucial importance of reading the OT in the light of the coming of Christ and the replacing of the old covenant by the new.

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- 3 Linda L Belleville, *Reflections of Glory. Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18* (taken from the title; this appears to be a misprint for 12-18), *JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT Supplement Series* 52, 1991; p 16/7
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- 22 Sidney Greidanus, THE MODERN PREACHER AND THE ANCIENT TEXT, IVP/Eerdmans, Leicester, 1988, p 159
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- 26 E Earle Ellis, *How the New Testament Uses the Old*, in NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION, I Howard Marshall, Paternoster, Exeter, 1985, p 214
- 27 'But it would be a mistake to limit the role of the Spirit, where the understanding of Scripture is concerned, merely to that of Christ's "remembrancer". If the Fourth Gospel claimed that the Spirit would call to mind all that Christ had said (14:21), it also claimed that the Spirit would guide into all the truth (16:13). And in Acts we see this second promise being fulfilled as the Spirit leads the Church into all the truth, of which understanding of Scripture formed a vital part.' J H E Hull, THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, Lutterworth Press, London, 1967, p 132/3
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# Letters to the Editor

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*We were pleased to receive several letters commenting on articles in the last issue. This letter from Mike Plant responds to the subject of INFANT SALVATION and is representative of other letters received. As the author of the original article, Gary Brady is also given an opportunity to reply.*

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Dear Gary,

Thank you for your very helpful article about Infant Salvation. I greatly appreciated the trouble and thought that had gone into writing it. Can I make three points for your consideration:

1. A minor quibble from page 8 - not all paedo-baptists are Presbyterians - some of us are Congregationalists!

2. Also from page 8. You point there to a contrast between David's reaction to the death of Bathsheba's son and to the death of Absalom. This is objecting to the Presbyterian view that, "David himself was a believer and so he believed his son would be saved too." As your article is on *Infant* Salvation it is not entirely logical to use Absalom in this way. Absalom is not another infant child of David's but some-one who, on coming to adulthood, has thrown off the claims of God's covenant by rejecting the Lord's anointed one. I would have thought there were few paedo-baptists who would use the same comfort that a dead infant is a covenant child to cover the case of the adult child of a believer who is an open apostate.

Then the logic of your contrast between Absalom and the child of Bathsheba would also suggest that David has no confidence about Absalom because he has not prayed for him. That must be so if "the secret of David's confidence springs rather from the fact that he had committed that little one to the Lord in prayer." Yet during Absalom's lifetime David was in a far healthier state spiritually than he was during the brief life span of Bathsheba's child. Would you intend to argue from the silences of scripture that he didn't do so? It would be a somewhat arbitrary conclusion to draw.

3. I am not sure that your pastoral comfort, that you have prayed for your child and committed him/her to the Lord, is strong enough. Especially when, for example in the case of a cot death, the parents may already be lacerated with a sense of guilt and failure. The fact that your child is a, "holy child" from 1 Corinthians 7 v 14 seems a lot stronger and more full of comfort.

Thank you for the help and stimulus of the article. I hope there is some worthwhile comeback to it.

Yours in the Lord,

Mike Plant

Cannon Park Congregational Church  
Middlesbrough

Dear Mike,

It's a great thing to get a response to an article, even if it is to disagree! Thank you for taking the time and the trouble to write. You may not wish to spend the rest of your life arguing the case with me but by way of response:

1. Sorry I failed to mention the Congregationalists. I only referred to Presbyterians because it is chiefly from such sources that I have gleaned my ideas of what paedobaptists believe. Are there any major Congregationalist works I should consult?

2. I recognise that there is a clear difference between an apostate Absalom and David's baby by Bathsheba. I recognise the fact that no paedobaptist would take comfort from a covenant view faced with the death of an adult child openly hostile to the gospel. I would contend that neither should he take his chief comfort from the covenant view before the child has come to maturity. This view simply fuels the idea that it is better if my children die as infants. If they do come to maturity they may not believe. It also raises the impossible question of how long 'covenant protection' lasts. At what age is cover removed and you are out on your own?

The reason why David had no confidence about Absalom is that despite whatever prayers had been offered on his behalf he clearly had not put his faith in the Lord. As for Bathsheba's son, there was no such contrary evidence. I was not at all suggesting that we can manipulate God in some way by our prayers, rather that having committed a matter to him, if we find no evidence to the contrary, we assume that our prayers have been answered as we wished. Any other view denies that we can have any assurance of answers to prayer.

3. In what way does 1 Corinthians 7:14, as you understand it, give more comfort than I am offering? Are you going to say to Christians who have prayed for a child who then dies, "You've wasted your time really. This is a child of Christian parents so the child will go to heaven anyway, whether you pray or not?" Or even, "The parents weren't Christians so it was pointless anyone praying"? Surely one of the ways by which a child is made 'holy' is that one or both of the parents are praying for it. Far from weakening pastoral comfort, my view puts some flesh on what it means to say that the child of a believer is holy. This is not some unseen talisman but the privilege of being brought up by someone who knows and loves the Lord.

Convinced? Don't feel obliged to respond in writing but I would be happy to debate further. Thank you once again for taking the time to respond.

Yours in Christ

Gary Brady

Childs Hill Baptist Church

London

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# Charles Simeon (1759-1836)

## A Trainer of Ministers

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*Tim Grass*

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In our day it is rarely denied that an appropriate training is essential for those entering the Christian ministry, though there may be differences as to the interpretation of the word *appropriate*. Such an emphasis on the need for training has not always been the case, however; only in the last 150 years has such training been provided within the Church of England.<sup>1</sup> Previously, no theological degree courses existed, nor were there any other courses geared specifically to the training of men for the ministry.<sup>2</sup> The general method of preparation for those seeking ordination was to take a degree course at Oxford or Cambridge; a certificate proving attendance at a short course of lectures given by the Professor of Divinity was all that was required from ordinands at Cambridge. Virtually nothing else was available to those wishing to prepare themselves for their duties (although the Eclectic Society's discussions provided stimulation for Evangelicals already in the ministry). Indeed, many were unconcerned about such preparation, seeing ordination merely as the gateway to a respectable profession in which a man might make his way in the world as well as in any other.

### Ministry to Students

Against this background Charles Simeon's concern to train men entering the ministry appears all the more striking, and his approach to doing so all the more revolutionary. His recognition of the need sprang from his own experience: he was converted in 1779, soon after arriving at King's College,<sup>3</sup> but no other person was directly involved. After this, he spent three years without any Christian fellowship. This enforced isolation was only ended in 1782 when he was introduced to another student, John Venn, whose father Henry Venn had done much work at Huddersfield during a time of awakening there. Venn took Simeon home with him to Yelling, where his father now ministered, and Simeon found great refreshment in the company and counsel of this godly man; from then on he often rode out from Cambridge to spend a day at Yelling with the Venns. Of Henry Venn, Simeon later said: *In this aged minister I found a father, an instructor, and a most bright example...*<sup>4</sup>

Simeon's own ministry reproduced many of the features found in Venn's, summarised by Hennell<sup>5</sup> as comprising ministry of the word, use of the prayer book, revival of sacraments, classes for the spiritually awakened, visitation of the poor, distribution of tracts, fellowship between clergy, and civic involvement. In due course this pattern appeared again and again in the ministries of those who had been trained by Simeon, as he sought to provide them with the guidance he had lacked at the start of his own ministry.

Simeon's own ministry was highly unusual in that it was spent in one parish Holy

Trinity Cambridge, where he ministered from 1782 to 1836. Even before this he had said, *How should I rejoice if God were to give me that church, that I might preach the gospel there, and be a herald for him in the midst of the university.*<sup>6</sup>

He refused to seek a move because he felt that he was reaching a strategic group of people - students.

...many of those who hear me are legions in themselves, because they are going forth to preach, or else to fill stations of influence in society. In that view I look upon my position here as the highest and most important in the kingdom, nor would I exchange it for any other.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, he was aware of the response that was coming from this group to his ministry: ... *it seems daily of more and more importance that I should avail myself of the disposition which there is in the young men to receive the Word.*<sup>8</sup>

By 1811 he was spending two-thirds of his time with his student hearers, and largely through his work Cambridge achieved the reputation of an evangelical centre. Even bishops were to consult him for an assessment of their ordination candidates. Because of his ministry, and also that of those whom he trained, Lord Macaulay could say in 1844:

As to Simeon, if you knew what his authority and influence were, and how they extended from Cambridge to the most remote corners of England, you would allow that his real sway in the church was far greater than that of any primate.<sup>9</sup>

There were a number of contributory factors to Simeon's influence, but the one on which I wish to focus is **his work among those preparing for the ministry.** This is a wider concept than that of structured training and is relevant to those in our own churches with gifts of ministry.

## **The Need for Training**

Simeon's own lack of guidance as a young clergyman made him convinced that preparation was essential for those entering the ministry. Nothing was provided by the church authorities, nor by the University, and he had the field to himself. He was convinced of the necessity of a call to the ministry, which he saw as coming ...partly from a sense of obligation to him for his redeeming love, partly from a compassion for the ignorant and perishing multitudes around us, and partly from a desire to be an honoured instrument in the Redeemer's hands...<sup>10</sup>

But as well as this a man had to have the requisite gifts and these could be greatly improved by training.

The evangelical party within the Church of England had not always conducted themselves in an orderly manner towards the authorities, nor had they acted wisely within their own congregations; because of this, prejudice had arisen which could have been lessened by a more judicious approach. Simeon himself had early followed John Berridge's practice of preaching in other men's parishes but under Venn's influence had given this up and sought to observe the regulations laid down. Through his training he sought to influence younger ministers to do the same; by so doing, he probably helped to greatly reduce the numbers leaving the Church of England for one or other of the Nonconformist denominations.

## Training for Preaching

Simeon's appointment to Holy Trinity was one which went against many of the rules; he was still only a Deacon and thus not yet able to celebrate Holy Communion, he had not served a curacy and thus could not be said to be experienced enough to take charge of one of Cambridge's leading churches so he got his father to write to the Bishop of Ely to put his name forward for the living! Not surprisingly, he experienced sustained opposition from many of the congregation; their own choice of minister (the previous curate) had been rejected by the Bishop, although he continued to hold the position of Lecturer for some years, conducting a service each Sunday afternoon. The church wardens pursued a policy of non-cooperation, refusing to unlock the pews for Simeon's services and removing the benches installed by Simeon for his congregation. Because of this opposition Simeon was unable to do much general visitation in the parish and therefore concentrated his energies on preaching.

The existing tradition of preaching favoured an artificiality of style and content; Simeon felt it important that a preacher speak from the heart. Exposition of the Scriptures as we know it was almost unknown, yet he was convinced that this should dictate his presentation and his content. There was no older minister at hand to advise him and so Simeon, with a characteristic determination to find a practical solution to this problem, set himself to discover how to preach. He took every opportunity of conducting services in other churches when invited to do so, repeating and refining his sermons so that the voice of Scripture might clearly be heard through them. Although poorly taught in Greek (which he blamed on his old school, Eton) he worked hard at exegesis of the text, often spending twelve hours or more on a single sermon. Through much hard work he arrived at the following rules:-

This is the great secret, (so to speak) of all composition for the pulpit. Every text, whether long or short, must be reduced to a categorical proposition; 1st, In order to preserve a perfect unity in the subject: and, 2ndly, in order to take it up, and prosecute it in an orderly manner...

THE RULES WHICH THE EDITOR WOULD GIVE FOR THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON, ARE THESE.

1. Take for your subject that which you believe to be the mind of God in the passage before you...

2. Mark *the character* of the passage.

It may be more simple, as a declaration, a precept, a promise, a threatening, an invitation, an appeal; or more complex, as a cause, and effect; a principle, and a consequence; an action, and a motive to that action; and, whatever be *the character of the text*, (especially if it be clearly marked) *let that direct you in the arrangement of your discourse upon it...*

3. Mark *the spirit* of the passage...

...whatever it be, *let that be the spirit of your discourse...*<sup>11</sup>

Simeon began to lecture to students in 1790, dealing with a range of topics which included composition, and in 1792 he came across a book which advocated an approach identical to his own; the book was AN ESSAY ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON, by a seventeenth-century French Reformed pastor, Jean Claude. Translating and editing this work, Simeon began to use it as a set text for what



had now become his sermon classes, and eventually included it in his magnum opus, *HORAE HOMILETICAE* (of which more later).

Simeon's sermon classes were held in his rooms at King's College; since he never married, he was able to live there as a Fellow of the college all his life. On a Sunday evening (later a Friday) fifteen to twenty ordinands would attend and he described the procedure thus:

I have one evening for the study of Composition, making Claude my groundwork. I give the text for the elucidation of each distinct topic. They treat the text, and I make my remarks on their compositions, pointing out what I conceive to be the more perfect way.<sup>12</sup>

By explaining the text in its context, Simeon also intended that his hearers should gain a clearer view of evangelical truth, and many did.

As well as dealing with the structure of a sermon, Simeon treated such topics as elocution and delivery; he held the view that *It is the want of a good and impressive delivery that destroys the usefulness of a great proportion of pious ministers*.<sup>13</sup> His own delivery at first appeared affected to many, but he later came to be acknowledged as a very powerful preacher; there is extant a series of silhouettes by Edouart depicting him in various characteristic pulpit poses.

### **Horae Homileticae**

Simeon produced several editions of his sermon outlines, the final one of twenty-one volumes appearing under this title in 1833. This vast work included 2,536 sermon outlines, taken from every book of Scripture. These 'skeletons' were intended to be used as frameworks on which ministers could base their own sermons. It was Simeon's hope that they would tend

1. To raise the tone of preaching throughout the land
2. To promote a candid, liberal, and consistent mode of explaining the Scriptures.
3. To weaken at least, if not eradicate, the disputes about Calvinism and Arminianism; and thus to recommend, to the utmost of my power, the unhampered liberality of the Church of England.

and that their effect would be

1. To impart to young Ministers a clear view of the gospel.
2. To help them to an inward experience of it in their own souls.<sup>14</sup>

As always, Simeon's interest was in the practical relevance of Scripture; for him Scripture was not to be viewed as a system but rather as a remedy, and his exegetical practice was rooted in the needs of his congregation. He encouraged his students to take the same view: *Young ministers should inquire, not what can I teach my people, but what they can receive. Jesus did not tell his disciples that which they could not bear, but spoke to them as they were able to bear it*.<sup>15</sup>

"Being no one's convert, Charles Simeon became no one's follower"<sup>16</sup>, and this was true of his approach to the text of Scripture; he rarely quoted other writers, wishing rather to let the text speak for itself. He disapproved of trying to make the text of Scripture fit into a rigid doctrinal system, and had some strong words to say about this practice in an earlier edition of his sermons:

Many have carried their attachment to system so far, that they could not endure to preach upon any passage of Scripture that seemed to oppose their favourite

sentiments; or, if they did, their whole endeavour has been to make the text speak a different language from that which it appeared to do. In opposition to all such modes of procedure, it is the Author's wish in this preface to recommend a conformity to the Scriptures themselves without any solicitude about systems of man's invention. Nor would anything under heaven be more grateful to him than to see names and parties buried in eternal oblivion, and primitive simplicity restored to the Church.<sup>17</sup>

## Conversation Parties

As well as his sermon classes, Simeon held a *conversation party* each Friday evening, such a custom being fashionable at that time. He described the occasion to a minister in Oxford considering something similar:

My own habit is this: I have an open day, when all who choose it come to take their tea with me. Every one is at liberty to ask what questions he will, and I give to them the best answer I can. Hence a great variety of subjects come under review - subjects which we could not discuss in the pulpit - and the young men find it a very edifying season. We have neither exposition, as such, nor prayer; but I have opportunity of saying all that my heart can wish, without the formality of a set ordinance...<sup>18</sup>

Between forty and sixty students would attend, mostly ordinands, and his fatherly concern for them did much to win their love and respect. He dealt with a great variety of subjects, covering such areas as personal religion, exegesis of difficult passages, ministerial duties and diligence in study. Simeon disapproved of neglecting academic studies for spiritual work; students were at University to study, and they must do so to the best of their ability. At a time when students were on occasion penalised in examinations for 'notorious and obstinate Simeonism' his policy must have done much to remove prejudice against him and his message; it is also worth noting that many of Simeon's students achieved academic distinction.

One of Simeon's students (and later his curate for twelve years), Thomas Thomason, expressed his appreciation of Simeon's instruction in a letter home:

Mr Simeon watches over us as a shepherd over his sheep. He takes delight in instructing us - and has us continually at his rooms. He has nothing to do with us as it respects our situation at college. His Christian love and zeal prompt him to notice us.<sup>19</sup>

## Simeon's Curates

A succession of brilliant men served as curates at Holy Trinity, many of whom went on to do excellent work in their own right as ministers and missionaries. At the time a curate was very often appointed to stand in for a vicar who held several livings at once and lived elsewhere; to the curate would be delegated virtually all the work (but hardly any of the income!). Simeon's approach was far removed from this; he sought to train his curates, and treated them as his friends and his equals: '*Not my curate, my brother*'. He viewed them as working with him rather than for him, and greatly valued the assistance they were able to provide as his workload increased. To provide increased opportunities for preaching the gospel he took responsibility for the parish of Stapleford, just outside Cambridge; as well

as this, he would often take services elsewhere on a Sunday afternoon while his curate took Evening Prayer at Holy Trinity. When in 1808 Simeon's health broke down (and he did not fully recover for a number of years) he rejoiced that in his absence Thomas Thomason was not only coping with up to five services each Sunday but seeing God's blessing on his work.

One reason why Simeon was able to accomplish so much in his life was that he **possessed the ability to delegate**; writing of the societies which he had set up to provide pastoral and practical care within the parish, he said:

By these, I hope, great good has been done; whilst by their supplying my lack of service, I have been left at liberty to follow that line of duty which was more appropriate to my own powers, and which I could not have prosecuted, if I had not thus contrived to save my time...<sup>20</sup>

Such delegation he practised with his curates, although at times they must have found it frustrating. In spite of his belief that they worked *with* rather than *for* him, what he tended to delegate to them was the ceaseless round of baptisms, weddings and funerals!

Simeon set high standards in his own ministry, and expected his curates to live up to them; when they failed to do so, he was not slow to point out their faults - a practice which the introspective Henry Martyn found reduced him almost to despair. However, many men expressed their debt to Simeon for the time spent as his curates. A number of them went overseas, for Simeon was ever on the lookout for potential missionaries and was himself instrumental in the foundation of the Church Missionary Society in 1799.

## Letter Writing

It is only natural that Simeon should have kept in touch with his former students and curates by letter, but even when we allow that his was an age in which letter-writing was often the only means of communication, it is amazing how many letters he actually wrote. On his death in 1836, his sideboard was found to contain copies (mostly made by hand) of *over nine thousand* letters, often several pages in length. He did not consider himself a great religious letter-writer, however:

As for sitting down to write a religious letter, it is what I cannot do myself, and what I do not very much admire, unless there be some particular occasion that calls for it. I love rather that a letter be a free and easy communication of such things as are upon the mind, and such as we imagine will interest the person with whom we correspond. Some indeed, who have a talent for letter writing, may employ their pen profitably in the more direct and formal way; but it is a thing I cannot do; religion with me is only the salt with which I season the different subjects on which I write; and it is recommended in that view by St Paul, to be used in the whole of our converse with each other.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of his own words, his letters were full of wise counsel to ministers pointing out their mistakes or encouraging them to persevere in the face of opposition; he had a shrewd understanding of the factors which sometimes make for friction between minister and people:

The difference between young and old Ministers in general, consists in this; that the statements of the former are crude and unqualified, whilst those of the

latter have such limitations and distinctions, as the Scriptures authorise and the subjects require.<sup>22</sup>

This wisdom led him to recognise the interplay between mind, body and spirit, and to avoid a super-spiritual approach to situations; he often warned his friends to mind their health, and to recognise the need for rest. His understanding of practical matters meant that a letter from him might well be accompanied by a generous gift to someone in need, or a well-chosen book. In 1787 we find him writing to David Brown, whose SELF-INTERPRETING BIBLE was his own constant companion from 1785 on, to ask if he could purchase forty copies of this work (for giving away to needy clergy) at the full booksellers' discount.<sup>23</sup>

## **An Assessment**

Clearly, Charles Simeon's ministry was extremely influential in many ways (and we have only looked at one area of it); even today, on the anniversary of his death (November 13th), a prayer is said in the chapel of his old college, King's:

Almighty and everlasting God, who by thy holy servant, Charles Simeon, didst mould the lives of many that they might go forth and teach others also; mercifully grant that as through evil report and good report he ceased not to preach thy saving Word, so we may never be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, who with Thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth one God world without end.<sup>24</sup>

From the factors which made Simeon so effective in preparing men for the ministry we now highlight those which challenge and are relevant to us today. They comprise the three elements in his own admiration for Henry Venn.

**a father...** Simeon strikes us as a man who was prepared to open up and share himself with his students, without falling into exhibitionism. His zeal for their progress was such that he earned the nickname of *The Old Apostle*. His work in training students for the ministry was accompanied by a deep and prayerful concern for them, which continued after they had gone on to work elsewhere. He possessed to a marked degree the ability to 'empathize' with them in times of trouble, and because of his fatherly care earned the right to speak the truth in love to his former students where necessary.

**an instructor...** Simeon was almost the first man in the history of the English pulpit since the Middle Ages to appreciate that it is perfectly possible to teach men how to preach, and to discover how to do so...<sup>25</sup> His ability to look at a problem and find a practical solution to it led him to provide what is now recognised as indispensable for fully effective ministry. The instruction he gave was not merely theoretical but was backed up by his own example as a preacher and by the work he set for his sermon classes week by week. He described the qualifications necessary for a useful preacher as: *...extensive knowledge, deep acquaintance with the heart, a clear, strong voice, a commanding manner, a tender and affectionate spirit, an ardent love to souls, and a most unfeigned desire to approve himself to God...*<sup>26</sup> He was concerned for the development of the whole man, even to the extent of emphasising the necessity of physical exercise in what strikes us as rather a quaint

manner;

I always say to my young friends, 'Your success in the Senate House depends much on the care you take of the three-mile stone out of Cambridge. If you go everyday and see that nobody has taken it away, and go quite round to watch lest anyone has damaged its farthest side, you will be best able to read steadily all the time you are at Cambridge. If you neglect it, woe betide your degree. Yes, - Exercise, constant and regular and ample, is absolutely essential to a reading man's success.'<sup>27</sup>

Simeon's genius for problem-solving led him to innovate, and to vitalize some of the practices current in his day, such as the letter and the conversation party. We may not adopt the same methods today, but we can surely make use of the opportunities presented to us by our culture.

What is most impressive about Simeon's work as an instructor is the priority which he gave it; in spite of the size of his parish, and the many outside activities in which he was involved, he spent a large part of his time in training future leaders. He saw very clearly that in so doing he was multiplying the fruit that would result from his labours, and that such work was to be seen as an investment in terms of time, money, and personal concern. In this he was following the example of Jesus Christ with the twelve disciples, and setting us a thought-provoking precedent.

...and a most bright example. Already we have seen the power of Simeon's example; through his influence many younger evangelicals were persuaded to remain in the Church of England and to exercise wisdom and discretion in their ministries; in so doing they overcame much of the prejudice that initially existed against evangelicalism. Simeon's own consistency of character and conduct did much to disarm his opponents in Cambridge, and it was seen to flow from his total commitment to one thing, as the memorial tablet in Holy Trinity church makes plain:

In Memory of  
THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M.A.,  
SENIOR FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE,  
AND FIFTY-FOUR YEARS VICAR OF THIS PARISH; WHO,  
WHETHER AS THE GROUND OF HIS OWN HOPES,  
OR AS  
THE SUBJECT OF ALL HIS MINISTRATIONS.  
DETERMINED  
TO KNOW NOTHING BUT  
JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.  
1 COR.II.2

## References

- 1 Chichester was the first theological college to be founded within the Church of England, in 1838.
- 2 It does not seem that the dissenters provided much training specifically for ministers, though their colleges did provide a more useful all-round education.
- 3 Full accounts may be found in the biographies by Handley Moule and Hugh Evan Hopkins.
- 4 H Evan Hopkins, CHARLES SIMEON OF CAMBRIDGE (Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), p 34
- 5 In Arthur Pollard & Michael Hennell, CHARLES SIMEON 1759-1836 (SPCK, 1964) ch 6
- 6 Hopkins, p 36
- 7 Pollard & Hennell, p 140 (taken from Abner W Brown, RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CONVERSATION PARTIES OF THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, p 176; (unfortunately I could not locate a copy of this book for myself)
- 8 In a letter to Rev T Thomason dated Aug 8th, 1817 (Included in Wm Carus, MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M.A, Hatchard & Son, 3rd ed 1848)
- 9 Hopkins, p 118 (taken from G O Trevelyan THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF LORD MACAULAY (1876) I, p 68 n
- 10 Pollard & Hennell p 148 (taken from Brown, p 208)
- 11 Carus p 450 (taken from Simeon's "collected works" - presumably HORAE HOMILETICAE)
- 12 In a letter of Dec 9th, 1829 (Carus, p 449f)
- 13 Carus, p 482
- 14 In a memorandum of May 24th, 1833 (Carus, p 506)
- 15 Hopkins, p 133
- 16 *ibid*, p 173
- 17 Carus, p 138
- 18 *ibid*, p 449 Detailed accounts of Simeon's conversation parties held in 1833 are reproduced in Carus, pp 452-8 and Moule, pp 135-44
- 19 J Sargent, LIFE OF THE REV. T. T. THOMASON M.A. (Seeley & Burnside, 1834), p 40
- 20 In a letter to the Bishop of Winchester, dated Dec 11th, 1829 (Carus, p 447)
- 21 Moule, p 192
- 22 Carus, p 408
- 23 Carus, p 55f
- 24 Hopkins, p 221
- 25 C H E Smyth, THE ART OF PREACHING, p 175 (quoted by Pollard & Henell, p 3)
- 26 From his diary for Mar 29th, 1807 (Carus, p 154)
- 27 Hopkins, p 92

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# A New Earth

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*Philip Eveson*

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As evangelicals we all believe in the return of Christ as judge, in the resurrection of the body and in the life everlasting. But how do we view the life everlasting? Most of us think of the future ultimate state in other-worldly terms. Even when confronted with texts which speak of a new earth as well as a new heaven it is still common to think of a spiritual, non-material existence. This is not only the position of Christians generally, it is also true of preachers and scholars. You will look in vain for an adequate treatment of the new creation in, for instance, Steve Travis' books on the Christian hope, James Boice's FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, Paul Helm's THE LAST THINGS; even Berkhof in his SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY is weak on the subject.

## Why Such Confusion?

There are many reasons why people are confused about the eternal state, thinking of it as another term for heaven, or as something which is entirely other worldly: **Scriptures which suggest a bodily existence in heaven.**

1. Jesus ascended into heaven in his resurrected body and his resurrected body was of a different order from his pre-resurrected body. It was a spiritual body that could materialise and dematerialize at will.

2. Paul says in Phil 3:20-21 that our citizenship is in heaven from where we look for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the next breath he speaks of our bodies being changed to be like his glorious body. Coupled with this is the verse in 1 Thess 4:17 which states that at Christ's coming, when the dead in Christ shall arise, those who are alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord and so to be with Christ for ever. It seems to point to an ethereal, other-worldly state.

3 The OT saints Enoch and Elijah went bodily into heaven.

## **Salvation and the kingdom are thought of as totally other-worldly**

1. The kingdom - Because God's rule is sometimes called the 'kingdom of heaven', this is often mistakenly thought of as a heavenly place beyond this space-time environment. Again, Jesus said to Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. Take this with Paul's statement that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and it is easy for people to think of the resurrection hope and the life everlasting as something beyond this space-time continuum.

2. Salvation - This is generally thought of negatively as deliverance from sin and hell and positively as forgiveness, acceptance with God and everlasting glory in heaven. It is seen in purely personal terms with little or no consideration of the rest of creation. Berkouwer speaks of 'a religious and soteriological self-centredness'.

## **Millennialism**

Many evangelical people have had their minds so captivated by the idea of a

thousand year reign of Christ on this earth that they have no real interest in the eternal state. One person I know confessed sadness that the glorious reign of Christ would have to come to an end after the thousand years!

### **The influence of Darwinism and liberalism**

Berkouwer quotes this comment from a German scholar: 'This cosmic aspect of redemption was increasingly lost to Western Christendom since the Age of Enlightenment, and to this day we have been unable to restore it to its strength and clarity'. Because Gen 1-3 has been taken to be non-literal, the whole idea of a future new creation is regarded as non-literal. Added to this, if with Bultmann, the Resurrection and Ascension need to be demythologised it is hardly surprising that the future hope must be demythologised. All this has rubbed off on many evangelicals so that the future is thought of in non-physical, spiritual terms.

### **Why this is so important**

The earth has presently become the subject of considerable interest. Last year the first ever Earth Summit took place in Rio, Brazil. The New Age movement and the Green movement have stimulated fresh interest in the earth and environmental issues. Along with this, there are calls for an 'earth spirituality'. Paganism is re-emerging in the West, supported by feminists, environmentalists, and animal-rights activists, and people are seriously thinking of the earth itself as a living creature. The Greek earth goddess Gaia suddenly has a new lease of life. Gaia has become respectable through the philosophies of certain scientists working in the field of sub-atomic physics and microbiology. At a time when there is a new tendency to print God with a small 'g', it is becoming fashionable to print earth with a capital 'E'. As the end of another millennium draws closer we are also likely to find all kinds of millennial ideas suggested. We already have the New Agers' message that we are entering the age of Aquarius.

These are the times in which we live and we need to remember this in our presentation of the gospel. We must be on our guard against the danger of making the gospel fit the prevailing philosophies, science and standards of the day. We are not in the business of making the gospel acceptable to our generation by twisting it, or ignoring some parts that are unacceptable, but we are in the business of applying the gospel to the situation in which we find ourselves. This is therefore a good time not only to clarify our thinking about the new creation and the new earth, but also to preach and write about it. While we must point out the errors in what the world is saying, our task is to offer a clear biblical alternative. My concern in this article is not with the present state of the earth but with its future as a material reality, although, as we shall see, it is impossible not to look at the one without the other.

Both the Pre- and Post-millennialists have a wonderful future for the earth in its present form and all of them make use of such passages as Is 2:2-4, 11:6-9 and 65:17-25. At one extreme are the heretical 'JWs' with their brand of millennial teaching, which is proving quite attractive in many Third World countries as well as in the West. The realised eschatology of the Health and Wealth gossellers puts a great deal of emphasis on Christians inheriting the earth and reigning as kings now. In place of the old social gospel of the Lord Soper type there is renewed interest among some evangelicals in seeking to bring about Christ's kingdom in



a this-worldly setting by transforming culture, etc. Then we have the Reconstructionists with their programme of rule and authority who look for God to restore peace and harmony to this present earth. All these views fall far short of the reality which Scripture teaches.

In concentrating attention on the earth I do not wish to despise or ignore heaven. Heaven and earth are both spoken of together on many occasions in the Bible, beginning in Gen 1:1 and ending in Rev 21:1. In other places they stand over against each other. God is associated with heaven. It is his home, 'our Father who art in heaven'. Earth is man's dwelling place, 'God is in heaven and you are on earth' Eccl 5:2. Heaven in these cases points to God's greatness and that he is above the created order. *Heaven for believers* is associated more with the intermediate state, with the souls of just men made perfect and where Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father. But in the new creation, the new Jerusalem is seen coming down out of heaven from God, Rev 21:2. Then heaven and earth are united and we read of God dwelling with men. This is interesting, in the light of those within the environmental movement who are anti-Christian. It has become conventional wisdom among many environmentalists that Christianity encourages a destructive use of creation. This belief arose from a paper published by a medieval historian, Lynn White, in the magazine SCIENCE in 1967. Her paper entitled *The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis* calls Christianity 'the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen' and it is claimed that through such ideas as human dominion, the desacralizing of nature, and the belief that ultimate human destiny is with God (and not the Earth) Christendom has encouraged a destructive use of creation. To confront such twisted thinking, a great deal of teaching on every biblical subject is needed. We cannot take anything for granted. But how relevant the subject is! The last book of the Bible depicts the ultimate future of humanity, and yes, it is with God, but it is on the earth! The question then is, **what sort of earth will it be?** How will all this come about?

## **The Biblical Background**

The OT itself speaks of a new heaven and earth, (Is 65:17-25; 66:22ff). Is 24-26 foretells that the earth is to undergo a judgement which lays it waste and uninhabited, as at the beginning of creation. But the same passage speaks of the swallowing up of death in victory and a wiping away of every tear, and of dead bodies living again. Is 35 paints a picture of the renewed world. In Is 2:2-4 the well-known description of peace on earth is portrayed (cf Mic 4:1-3) and in Is 9:1-7 and 11:6ff this eternal peace on the earth is associated with the messianic king of David's line. The words of 11:6ff are, in fact, repeated in the passage relating to the new creation in Is 65:25. The Psalmist speaks of the meek inheriting the earth (Ps 37:11); of God redeeming his life from the power of the grave (Ps 49:15); while Daniel 12 predicts that those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt.

**In first century Judaism, there were three basic positions:**

1. **The Sadducees.** They would have nothing to do with a future life beyond death. They did not believe in the soul's immortality nor did they believe in the resurrection of the dead.
2. A minority of Jews had become influenced by Platonic ideas. They hoped for

a non-physical or spiritual world where the righteous would be blessed after death and where the wicked would be tormented in a non-physical place of damnation.

3. The majority of Jews, including the Pharisees, believed in the bodily resurrection of the dead. Most Jews of 1st century expected an end-time renewal of the whole space-time order, themselves included. They also expected that those who had died in the struggle to bring in a new world would be raised to enjoy it. For them resurrection and the renewal of the whole of creation went hand in hand. Contrary to much 19th and 20th century scholarship concerning the apocalyptic literature, there is hardly any evidence that Jews were expecting the end of the space-time universe. They believed that the present form of world order where pagans held sway would come to an end, but they definitely looked for a renewal of the space-time universe. They hoped to live on earth whence all their enemies and the Lord's enemies had been removed, with peace and serenity finally secured for ever. In their fight for the restoration of Israel, mainstream Jews were not looking to be in heaven permanently, but to be raised in new bodies when the kingdom came as a this-world peace, security and prosperity. While later generations of rabbis began to separate the messianic era from the world to come, in Judaism of the first century AD the Messiah was thought of as the one who would bring in the new world order.

## **Scripture Doctrines**

We shall now survey some of the important doctrines of Scripture to help our understanding of the new creation.

### **1. The Doctrine of Creation**

Genesis insists that the whole cosmos is God's creation. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. Earth, when compounded with heaven, stands for the entire creation. The biblical revelation, moreover, presents us with the truth of the Triune God active not only in the initial creation of the universe but also in upholding, preserving and renewing it. (Heb 1:2-3; Col 1:17 & Ps 104:30). We do not believe in a 'god of the gaps'. God is involved in the realms men think they understand as well as in those they cannot understand.

The Bible focuses from start to finish on what happens here on the earth. To that extent it is very earth-centred. This planet earth is the scene of the most tremendous happenings. When we consider that our sun is only one of millions of stars in the vast universe, not to mention the unseen spirit-world of God's heaven, it is truly amazing that the drama which takes place on our planet has such important repercussions for the whole of God's creation. In Gen 1:2 our attention is immediately directed towards the earth, 'Now the earth was ...' And in the new order foretold in Revelation 21 the earth continues to be the centre of activity. Earth does not go up to heaven, heaven comes down to earth.

A new creation is needed because rebellion against God entered and spoiled the original creation. Spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies has had its evil effects on earth. While some forms of death are integral to the created order which God called good, this did not include man and animals, as some evangelicals suppose. Theistic evolutionists suggest that pre-fall creation always was a rough place and

that God's idea of goodness is much wilder than our own. This is to fly in the face of clear scriptural statements to the contrary. Death for man is the wages of sin and the death of animals is a further consequence of man's fall. What is more, at the beginning, both man and animals were vegetarian (Gen 1:29-30). G J Wenham suggests that the prophets reflect this original situation in their description of future peace on the earth (Is 11:7 and Hos 2:18). Environmentalists, both pagan and Christian, also need to remember that a curse has been put on the ground itself. Not only are our present woes due to man's sinful abuse of the earth (cf Hos 4:3) but the creation itself is not fulfilling its function; God subjected the creation to futility; it is in bondage to decay. Creation cannot stop this process of corruption and death (Rom 8:20-21). Ecclesiastes is a powerful testimony to this truth: 'Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, all is vanity'. It is what our own eyes see all around. So, however much we try 'to restore proper relationships to the earth to make it one of mutual blessing', we shall always be fighting a losing battle (cf Is 24:6). The God who has subjected creation to futility, however, has done so with the long-term objective of restitution ('in hope', Rom 8:20). It is significant that after the Flood the bow in the clouds testifies to God's covenant not only with man but with all creation (Gen 9:8-18). The whole creation is waiting with eager longing (Rom 8:19); it is groaning in travail, as if in the pangs of child-birth (8:22) until liberated from this bondage (8:21). The hope is of a cosmic redemption where there will be no more curse (Rev 22:3, cf Zech 14:6-11). The destiny of creation is closely related to the destiny of man and it is to this doctrine that we now turn.

## 2. The Doctrine of Man

God created man to live on the earth (Gen 1:28). The garden of Eden was one small patch of the earth, the paradise of God where the tabernacle of God was with man and the first couple communed with God. From here man was told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and have dominion over the entire earth. Man created in God's image was to be king over the created order, ruling the world on behalf of God. That was the creation blessing and mandate but it was never fulfilled as God intended. An enemy from outside the garden tempted the couple and they rebelled against God. As a result of the Fall, man was driven out of the garden of God, fellowship was broken and death entered. God did not, however, take away the creation blessing concerning multiplying, filling the earth and having dominion over it. Now, however, man was corrupt and would use his authority wrongly. Pain is promised to the woman and toil to the man. A curse was placed on the ground and there was the general curse of death. Creation's bondage is directly due to man's sin. Man cannot find paradise and lasting enjoyment in that which he now rules over (Ps 8). Even after the judgment of the Flood, though man's unique status is re-asserted (Gen 9:6-7) and the creation blessing renewed, man is still a sinner and the post-fall practice of killing for food is ratified (Gen 8:17; 9:3; 1:29f). Despite Lamech's hopes concerning his son, Noah did not give the world comfort and rest, although his hope of a future blessing was no vain hope and Noah in one sense was a type. This hope was first given by God at the moment of judgment in Gen 3:15. Ultimate victory over the devil and his brood, who had helped bring the peace of paradise to an end, is promised through the seed of the woman. The hope of the deliverance of creation

is tied to this hope for man. The creation, says Paul, is waiting with eager longing for the revelation of the sons of God and to be brought into their glorious freedom (Rom 8:19,21). The line of promise through Seth seemed to offer no hope. There is nothing but death and yet, even in those early days, Enoch was a pointer to a life with God that cannot end and to a victory over the very devil who holds the power of death. Lamech was looking for an end to the curse on the ground. The experience of Noah and his family coming through the judgment of the Flood into a new beginning and the promise made to Shem renewed that hope, despite the continuing sin. After the judgment at Babel and the division of mankind into many languages and nations God made promises to one member of a Semite family, in accord with his original promise, that through the seed of Abram blessing might come to all nations. Abram would have descendants as numerous as the stars above and the sand on the seashore. Tied to this promise is the inheriting of land, which leads to our third doctrine.

### 3. The Doctrine of the Land

There is a close correspondence between what the Bible has to say about Israel and her land in the context of the covenant and what it has to say about man and the whole earth in the context of creation. The patriarchs are promised land as a gift from God although they possess nothing but a small graveyard in Canaan. They leave the land for four hundred years and yet Genesis ends with the thought of a return to it. Exodus to Deuteronomy then 'generates tremendous suspense concerning the land; as Chris Wright puts it. The land is described in terms that remind us of Eden, 'a good land' well watered, with plenty to eat ('flowing with milk and honey') and a place where God will dwell among them: 'I will walk among you' (Lev 26:11f). Under Joshua there is conquest and a gaining of the land. But it remains God's land and they cannot do as they like in it (Lev 25:23). In addition, though the land is given to Israel, the promised rest still evades them. Sin spoils, divides and brings various judgments, so that by the end of Judges one wonders whether they will ever survive as a people in the land. The David/Solomon era brings new successes and the promises seem to be realised (1Kgs 4:20-21, 24-25, 34; 10:23-25). But it is short-lived: the kingdom is divided and eventually the people are removed from the land. However, the David-Solomon era becomes a powerful symbol of future blessing for the land at a time when all that glory was a thing of the past (Ps 45:72). The prophets who speak of removal from the land in line with the covenant curses, also look beyond the exile to a new exodus, a new covenant, a new conquest, and a final possession of the land with a new David as their king. The old land theocracy (along with the OT people of God) functions as a prototype. Old Israel and its Davidic king still formed part of the old humanity and the land still part of the cursed earth, but they are foretastes of something bigger and better. The people of God are to come into their inheritance and dwell safely for ever in a renewed earth (Is 2:2; 11:6-9; 35:1-10; Jer 31:1-14; Hos 2:18-23).

There is a question. **Is all this talk of future land or earth to be spiritualised, or does it have a physical space-time fulfilment?** A strong body of opinion would say that it must not be forced to mean 'heavenly Canaan' beyond the clouds. It is fulfilled, so the argument runs, in the thousand year reign of Christ on earth.

Actually, the only reference to the thousand year reign is in Rev 20:1-8 and it is by no means clear that the saints reign with Christ on the earth. On the other hand, Heb 11:9-10,13-16 might suggest that the patriarchs looked for a final spiritual fulfilment: 'a heavenly, better country'. But this city and country that they were looking for which has foundations, is the heavenly or new Jerusalem (Heb 12:22; Gal 4:26) which will come down out of heaven and be found on a new earth (Rev 21:2). Earthly Zion and Canaan are types of the New Jerusalem and the New Earth. What poetic, metaphorical or symbolic elements there are in the prophets and the NT concerning the future inheritance and worldwide blessing must not lead us to dismiss these passages of Scripture as being non-physical. They are describing what is beyond our present human experience but not unlike the situation before the Fall. The big difference in the new creation is that it will never be affected by any future Fall. The historical people of God and their land were part of a process in God's saving, redemptive purpose. It is to this doctrine of salvation that we now turn.

#### **4. The Doctrine of Salvation**

Salvation is a big term and covers the whole field of God's purposes for his creation. The OT concept of salvation is very concrete and regularly denotes more than spiritual blessings. Negatively it includes the healing of diseases, deliverance from enemies and death, whilst positively it refers to a general state of well-being. Paul is the great exponent of salvation in the NT. It is for him both a present possession and a future hope. We have already passed from death to life, we are regenerate, redeemed from the bondage and rule of Satan and sin, and are new creations. But it is the eschatological aspect that predominates. Our present enjoyment of salvation is characterised by hope. The Spirit is both the beginning and the guarantee of the promised glorious future, and the love of Christ poured into our hearts by the Spirit enables us to rejoice unashamedly in hope. We are not only saved from sin and hell but we are saved unto righteousness and glory. But is this salvation to be seen in totally spiritual terms? Too often it has been assumed that the future state of glory will comprise some other-worldly, non-physical state of bliss. Paul's doctrine of salvation goes beyond the individual, beyond even the church. It embraces the entire creation. In Rom 8:21 he sees the whole creation experiencing a great exodus of which the exodus from Egypt was a foretaste. This exodus will take place in the context of man's ultimate salvation, when the true nature and status of the redeemed sinner will be obvious to all and will include the resurrection of the body. Ultimate salvation for Paul means a very down-to-earth situation where the deliverance and transformation of all creation includes the redemption of our whole selves. We shall be transformed not by release from the physical in Greek, Gnostic, Hindu or Buddhist fashion but by redemption of our bodies. Likewise in 1 Cor 15 he speaks of the consummation of Christ's kingdom and the abolition of the last enemy, death itself, and the subjugation of everything to Jesus and ultimately to the only true God. This sure and certain hope is tied to the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## **The Centrality of Christ**

All that we have examined points us to Christ Jesus in whom all the promises of God find their Yes and Amen. His place in the whole scheme of God's plan cannot be over-emphasised. Under the symbol of the opening of the seals in Rev 5 our Lord Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David, is seen as the one who controls all history; through his death, as the Lamb slain, God's decree concerning the final glorious kingdom is worked out. Let us now see how significant he is for each of the four doctrines we have already considered.

**1. Jesus Christ is central to the Doctrine of Creation.** He is the one through whom and in whom the whole creation comes into being, the supreme Lord over all creation, the upholder and sustainer of all things (Col 1:15ff; Heb 1:2-3). Through the blood of his cross he has reconciled all things to himself, things in heaven and things in earth, so making peace (Col 1:18-20). This is an amazing statement. It is taken for granted that the unity and harmony of the original creation has suffered dislocation and is in need of reconciling. It is Jesus who is the reconciler of all things. God's plan through Christ is to bring all things back to their pre-fall state, to restore the original harmony between heaven and earth and the peace that existed on earth. The powers in the heavenlies opposed to God, the devil and his hosts, he has stripped of their power through the cross (Col 2:14ff). Phil 2:9-11 and 1 Cor 15:24-28 are also important in this, showing that where his victory is not freely accepted it will be imposed. He has established a righteous peace.

These verses confirm the words of Paul in Rom 8 that it is this created universe which is to be set free. It is reconciled through the cross. The very place where man's redemption and reconciliation are achieved and his curse removed, is the place where the whole created universe is reconciled and its curse removed. The original promise in Gen 3 is fulfilled at the cross. The devil, that old serpent, gains no final victory. God brings this creation back to its original glory and harmony and the full dimensions of Satan's defeat will be seen globally as well as in the lives of individual people. It should not be thought fanciful and over-literalizing to speak of humans and animals eating only vegetables again. Paradise is regained never more to be lost. The Son of God was manifested in the flesh that he might destroy the works of the devil. Christ does not fail in his purposes. He who brought all things into being brings creation back to its pristine state. This is not a throw-away universe. If God would have to annihilate the present cosmos, Satan would have won a great victory. For then Satan would have succeeded in so devastatingly corrupting the present cosmos and the present earth that God could do nothing with it but to blot it totally out of existence' (A A Hoekema). Jesus speaks of the time of regeneration when he, as the Son of Man, will sit on his glorious throne with his followers also ruling with him (Mt 19:28). This regeneration is, as the NIV puts it, 'the renewal of all things'. Similarly, in Acts 3:21 Christ will return at 'the times of restitution of all things', the time for God to restore everything in accordance with the promises made to the holy prophets since the world began.

**2. Jesus Christ is central to the Doctrine of Man.** He is the image of God, the last Adam, the second man. Man's destiny is bound up with him as Rom 5, 1 Cor 15

and Heb 2:8ff make clear. In fact it is already realised in Christ. Man's dominion over the earth becomes a reality in and through Christ who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour. In order to bring many sons to glory the Son of God partook of our nature that he might taste death and through death destroy the devil who had the power of death and release those subject to bondage. Ps 8, based on the original creation mandate, will become a reality for those who are eagerly awaiting Christ's second coming when he will appear a second time for salvation (Heb 9:28) and then Satan will be finally crushed under our feet (Rom 16:20). Creation also is eagerly awaiting this revelation of the sons of God.

Jesus Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits of those who sleep in Jesus. It has already inaugurated the future hope. A new bodily life the other side of the grave, which cannot be reduced to Platonic immortality, was everywhere taken for granted by the Early Church. Despite the fact that the pagan world all around them insisted that what mattered was the immortality of the soul or a state of non-physical bliss, Christians clung to the hope of the resurrection of the body. Already the believer has been raised spiritually but one day he is to be raised physically. What kind of a body is the resurrection body? Phil 3:21 tells us it will be like our Lord's glorious body.

There has recently been a heated debate in print between Norman Geisler and Murray Harris on this question of what the Lord's resurrection body was like. Geisler may have over-reacted to Harris' original work which was a scholarly defence of Jesus' bodily resurrection against the demythologising, spiritual interpretation of it by David Jenkins, the Bishop of Durham. Geisler insists that the nature of Jesus' post-resurrection body is closer to that of his pre-resurrection body than Murray would allow. British evangelicals tend to be less precise and to speak of the future glory in less down-to-earth terms than their American counterparts. Geisler speaks of the resurrection of the flesh and of a supernatural body and questions whether the resurrection body of Jesus did dematerialise and materialise. He objects to the idea that the corpse of Jesus in the tomb vanished and that Jesus then appeared to people with his heavenly body. It was in that flesh that lay in the tomb that he arose. He says that soon after eating with his disciples and while they looked intently on him, Jesus ascended into the sky and disappeared 'like a rocket in space'. There I think he overstates his case. He fails to mention the cloud.

The transfiguration scene is helpful for there before the eyes of his three disciples the body of Jesus was glorified. That is what Peter expects to see when Jesus returns (2 Pet 1:16-18). The same body, but glorified. Because he is God in the flesh and because his divine glory will be seen in his resurrected body, we shall not be the same as him in that respect. As far as his humanity is concerned, however, we shall be as he is with one important difference, he will still bear the marks of the cross (Jn 20:20,27; Rev 5:6).

*We shall be embodied.* The fact that Paul calls it a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44-50) must not make us think that Christ's body is an immaterial one and that ours will be too. Spiritual is not opposite to physical but to natural (cf 2:14). Hoekema states, 'Spiritual here does not mean nonphysical. Rather it means someone who is guided by the Holy Spirit . . . The natural body . . . is one which is part of this

present, sin-cursed existence; but the spiritual body of the resurrection is one which will be totally, not just partially, dominated and directed by the Holy Spirit'. Likewise Schep comments, 'If Paul had meant a body not consisting of flesh but of spirit, the Corinthians under the influence of Hellenistic thought would have had no problem.' In 1 Cor 15:50 the phrase 'flesh and blood' is a reference to the body subject to decay, weakness and death, unsuited in its present form to the future earth. Hoekema makes the point that 'if the resurrection body were nonmaterial or nonphysical, the devil would have won a great victory, since God would then have been compelled to change human beings with physical bodies such as he had created into creatures of a different sort, without physical bodies (like the angels)'.

*We shall have a permanent body.* Jesus Christ was raised never more to die and that will be true of every believer in Jesus. The resurrection body is not subject to decay. The unending life will be with bodies that are immortal (1 Cor 15:42,50ff; 2 Cor 5:1-2) and we shall reign with Christ for ever and ever (Rev 22:5).

Murray Harris confuses things by saying that 'heaven is the natural habitat of the resurrection body, its normal sphere of operation . . . (A resurrected body and a non-spacial heaven are irreconcilable)'. He then goes on to speak of a new creation. But that is not the picture we get from the Bible. The setting for this future bodily resurrection is not heaven, even though it be thought of as an actual place, but a renewed earth. New embodied beings require a new world in which to live and Jesus died and rose again to bring that about. Rev 21-22 speaks of that renewed world order in very colourful language. The beatific vision is not in heaven but on this earth where there will be no curse. Heaven and earth will be united in a single embrace.

**3. Jesus Christ is central to the Doctrine of the Land.** The symbolism of old Canaan, with each man dwelling under his vine and fig tree and the whole earth coming to the wise king, finds its fulfilment in Jesus the messianic king. Paul takes up the promise of the land and speaks of Abraham as inheritor of the world. Through Jesus, Christians are the people of God. They are the new, transformed family of Israel, the Jerusalem which is above. Our inheritance is incorruptible, it does not fade away and is reserved for us in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven and it is from there that we look for the coming of the Lord Jesus who is able to subdue all things to himself when our lowly bodies are transformed to be like his glorious body. We belong to the heavenly Jerusalem which does not remain in heaven when the number of the elect is complete. John sees it coming down out of heaven.

Even though we shall inherit the earth, we are not to set our affection on things on the earth, nor on any present holy land or city or material object but on things above where Christ is. One of the reasons for this is, that this present state of the earth is to be cleansed by fire and experience the greatest earthquake of all time (Ps 102:26; Is 34:4,51:6; Heb 12:26-29; 2 Pet 3:7,10-13). Like the old covenant, the present form of things has had its day. But just as there is continuity between the old covenant and the new, and between our present bodily existence and its future, so there is continuity between the old and the new heaven and earth. NIV translates 1 Cor 7:31 as, 'this world in its present form is passing away', which



reflects the words of Jesus in Mt 19, Peter in Acts 3, and Paul in Romans 8. We are to think of a renewal, a transformation through fire, but not annihilation. Some wonder whether the land mass of this renewed earth will be too small for all God's people. The present world population is some 5,400 million living on just over 52 million square miles. If there are under 2,000 million 'Christians' in the world today and this is more than in all other centuries put together, then there is plenty of room, even on the present size of the planet!

**4. Jesus Christ is central to the Doctrine of Salvation.** He is Jesus, Jehovah is salvation, the Saviour of the world. Salvation is the term often used in connection with the mighty works of Jesus in healing people of their diseases. While these miracles were visual aids to emphasise Jesus' message concerning his coming to save people from sin and Satan, we must not limit their significance. They also point to the fact that with the coming of Jesus the kingdom of God had broken upon a world in rebellion against God. Sin had brought untold disaster and suffering. Jesus the Messiah has come to do battle with Satan, and his healing miracles are one indication that he will make all things new. But the end is not yet, as those promoting the health and wealth gospel need to remember.

Christians also groan and look forward to the consummation. There is healing in the atonement and a time is coming when all physical disabilities and troubles will be no more and death itself will be removed. All these things foretold in the OT, put very poetically sometimes, but nevertheless speaking of what is physical, were seen happening in the ministry of Jesus in anticipation of the end (Is 35:5-6). The miracles are foretastes of the new world order under the rule of King Jesus when he returns in power to make all things new. Social gossellers and liberation theologians also need to get their eschatology right. Jesus has certainly come to deliver from all our enemies. In his first coming he dealt with the two basic spiritual enemies that affect everything else. By his death he has gained that decisive victory over sin and Satan. When he returns and the universe is renewed and righteousness dwells on the earth, then and only then will people be free from hunger, poverty and the threat of war, with a perfect state of well-being covering the world. But the end is not yet. In the mercy of God the whole world still groans so that its people might repent and believe the gospel and escape the suffering which is everlasting (2 Pet 3:9,15; Acts 17:30). The eternal torments of the wicked in hell will include bodily suffering, as physical as the blessings of the righteous will be on the new earth. Where hell will be is not known. It is outside the blessings of the new creation; it is a place of outer darkness. One theologian likens hell to a black hole, but we must not speculate.

The Church must not lose sight of its calling to prepare people for eternity. At the same time, Christians must not abuse their present lowly bodies nor the earth in which they live. The earth is the Lord's and everything that belongs to the Lord belongs to the Christian, for in Christ, 'all things are yours' (1 Cor 3:21f). We are to be examples and pointers to a better way (Mt 5:13-16).

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# Book Reviews

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## New Testament Commentary Survey

D A Carson

IVP/Baker, Fourth Edition, 1993, pb, 92pp, £4.99

Here is a must for all preachers and serious students of the New Testament. Three earlier editions have been issued over the past twenty four years but this fourth edition has been recast with the purpose of providing 'theological students and ministers with a handy survey of the resources, especially commentaries, that are available in English to facilitate an understanding of the New Testament' (p 8). Dr Carson emphasises that he is an evangelical but 'many of the positive assessments offered... are in connection with books written from the vantage point of some other theological tradition...' He justifies this by declaring that the usefulness of a commentary, providing it is read critically, 'often turns on something other than the theological stance of its author'. An evangelical commentary, too, may be 'poorly written, or misinformed, or quick to import from other biblical passages truths that cannot rightly be found in the texts on which comment is being offered'. This survey, therefore, is a 'guide to commentaries, not orthodoxy'; it needs to be used with care.

The twelve pages of 'Introductory Notes' (pp 15-27) are helpful in dealing with the need for several types of commentary; individual commentaries or series, older commentaries, one-author sets. Preachers should particularly note that our main need is to establish and understand meanings

accurately. 'The issue at stake', insists Carson, 'is that of sheer faithfulness to the biblical message, rather than smuggling one's own ideas into the interpretation under the cover of the authoritative text'. This type of commentary is further distinguished in several ways. There are those which seek to establish the text and translation, choosing between variant readings and helps with Greek syntax and semantics. Then there are grammatical, linguistic commentaries which help to establish the meaning of words and phrases in their literary context. Theological commentaries 'set words and phrases in the wider context of chapters, books, corpora and canon'. Historical commentaries have their usefulness, too, as well as their dangers whereas other commentaries provide responsible guidance and stimulus in the area of practical application. 'Some of the older commentaries are exemplary in their concern to apply the Scriptures', but Carson warns, 'these hints and helps must be reviewed in the light of strictly exegetical considerations, for practical concerns can so control the text that no one hears the Word of God. Worse, the search for relevance frequently degenerates into the trite or the trivial' (p 17).

Should one buy individual commentaries or a whole series? Carson's advice is to go for individual ones on their merit because series are 'almost always uneven' whereas an author writes an individual volume because 'he or she has something to say that is worth saying'. Among the more substantial series, Carson singles out the IVP New Testament commentaries

(‘brief, simple and designed to be immediately nurturing... Howard Marshall on 1 Peter deserves special praise’, p 21), NEW CENTURY BIBLE (‘a few volumes offer excellent value for the money... some are dry’), NEW INTERNATIONAL BIBLICAL COMMENTARY (‘on the whole competent without being technical or overly long’), NEW INTERNATIONAL GREEK TESTAMENT COMMENTARY by Paternoster /Eerdmans (‘up-to-date, bibliographically almost exhaustive, exegetical and broadly within the evangelical tradition... for clergy and others well trained in Greek and exegesis, the series is one to watch’, p 22), PELICAN series (‘generally undistinguished.. a few quite outstanding’, e g Sweet on the Apocalypse), TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES (‘...many pastors profit... conservative, focuses most attention on explaining the meaning of the text... several of the volumes of this new edition, based on RSV or NIV are... outstanding’, pp 22-23). Concerning the WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY series, Carson sounds a necessary warning: ‘Do not let the “evangelical” label fool you: although some of the contributors sit comfortably within that tradition, in other cases the label applies only by the most generous extension’, (p 23). With regard to one-volume multi-author commentaries, Carson reports that the well used but now ‘seriously dated’ (1970) NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY (IVP) will be replaced very shortly by ‘a new, completely rewritten edition based on the NIV’. Supplements to commentaries are also important. Guthrie’s NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION (IVP) is commended, as is the more recent

and compact AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT by Carson, Moo and Leon Morris. I have used the latter extensively in recent months and am impressed by its overall usefulness. For New Testament theology, among the books recommended are Gerhard Hasel’s NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY; BASIC ISSUES IN THE CURRENT DEBATE (Eerdmans), Guthrie’s NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY (IVP) and Leon Morris’s NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY (Zondervan: ‘... much briefer and more elementary’ p 33).

Pages 35-89 provide a survey of individual commentaries. I intend only to sample the survey by referring to four New Testament books which I have myself worked through and preached over the last three years.

### Acts

I agree with Carson that ‘Acts is still not particularly well served by commentaries’ (p 51). For Carson, E Haenchen is ‘important for the really serious student... but an unsuitable starting-point for most preachers’. F F Bruce has written two commentaries on Acts but the one (NL/NIC, Eerdmans) ‘generally more useful to the preacher’ is out of print but the recently revised and enlarged one (IVP) on the Greek text ‘offers substantial technical information!’ Howard Marshall’s TNTC (IVP) is regarded by Carson as ‘very useful’, replacing the one by E M Blaiklock who is ‘amazingly thin on theology, for which coins and inscriptions are no substitute!’ R N Longenecker’s Expositor commentary is also given a high rating (‘quite excellent’) and J Alexander’s (BOT) is ‘a practical supplement’ (p 52) while Stott’s

volume on Acts is 'one of the best in the BST series' (IVP). However, a warning! 'Numerous thin expositions flood the market, but need take up no space on the preacher's shelf'.

## Philippians

Carson has no hesitation in describing Peter T O'Brien's NIGTC (Paternoster) volume as 'by far the best commentary on the Greek text of Philippians... theologically rich... treatment of ... 2: 5-11 is superb' (p 68) while Moisés Silva's BECNT work is 'excellent for its relative brevity and especially strong in tracing the flow of the argument...' R P Martin's earlier work in the TNTC series is no longer available but is 'still worth obtaining' (p 69) and better than his most recent edition. Hendriksen is 'a solid, verbose and unexciting treatment'. Among the more popular studies, the best for Carson included Motyer's THE MESSAGE OF PHILIPPIANS (BST), James Boice's PHILIPPIANS (Zondervan) and John Gwyn-Thomas' REJOICE... ALWAYS! (BOT), a study in Philippians 4.

## James

This epistle has captivated me again during the past months. Like Carson, R P Martin's WORD commentary would not be my 'first choice' (p 80) but I found Peter David's (NIGTC) work on the Greek text helpful in parts. Moo's TNTC is rightly praised but I still like to refer to the earlier edition written by R V G Tasker. I am grateful to Carson for alerting us to the UBS HELPS FOR TRANSLATORS by Robert G Bratcher on James, Peter and Jude which 'offers good value for money' (p 81). Popular commentaries on this epistle abound. Curtis Vaughan (Zondervan) 'is worth scanning' and Alec Motyer (BST) 'displays the strengths we have come to

expect from this series'. (What about Gordon Keddie's work, too, in the Welwyn series?) 'Useful' reprints include those by Robert Johnstone (BOT), Rudolf Stier (Kregel) and Thomas Manton's classic (BOT).

## 1 Peter

At the exegetical level, Carson regards J Ramsey Michaels (WBC) as 'the fullest commentary in English' while Peter David's is 'competent and clear' (p 82). For the Greek text, Carson maintains that E G Selwyn (1946: o/p) is still the standard work and 'most later commentaries have depended heavily on Selwyn'. J N D Kelly (BNTC/HNTC) on Peter and Jude 'is very useful... thoughtful and sensitive in elucidating the thought of the epistles ...' A M Stibbs (TNTC, 1959 and o/p) 'is full of practical insights' now replaced by Wayne Grudem who is 'always worth consulting' and his lengthy appendix on the 'spirits in prison' passage warrants the price of the book! I am glad Carson concurs with me that the 'best by far' of the popular commentaries is the BST one by Edmund P Clowney. Did you know that Martin Luther's commentary on the epistles of Peter/Jude has been reprinted by Kregel?

Pages 91-92 of this book indicate some 'Best Buys', that is, commentaries which may not be the 'best' but are 'good value for money...'

Carson's choice of commentaries is of course personal and we will not always agree either with his choice or rating of some works. However, this survey by an internationally respected New Testament scholar is competent; the coverage is both extensive and illuminating. Details of publishers, price and availability are also provided together with Carson's evaluation.

Carson's survey and analysis raise questions for us, too. How do we *choose* our commentaries? How well-equipped are preachers to launch into the exegesis of a New Testament book? Do we see the need for various types of commentaries? Are we endeavouring to read seriously about New Testament theology and background thus enriching our study and application of individual New Testament books? Again, do we know how to *use* commentaries? Or are we uncritical and governed by one commentary? Then there is the even more practical question. How can pastors, especially those on very low salaries, obtain some of these essential tools? Churches need to be imaginative and thoughtful here in giving generous book allowances to their pastors and ministerial students. Some of the books could also be bought by churches for their own libraries. By reading this book, churches as well as pastors may see afresh the importance of providing preachers with the tools and stimulus they need to preach the New Testament in all its richness, profundity and relevance. It is as an indispensable aid for New Testament studies.

## **Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell**

*edited by Nigel M de S Cameron*

*Paternoster/Baker, 1992, pb, 317pp, £7.99*

'The creeping paralysis of universalism is rapidly gaining ground...' is the first statement in Trevor Hart's opening chapter, 'Universalism: Two distinct Types' and sets the tone for what follows in later chapters. This is an extremely important book but the chapter by John Wenham, 'The Case for Conditional Immortality' (chapter five) is disturbing while Kendall S Harmon's, 'The Case Against

Conditionalists: a response to E W Fudge' (chapter six) is timely. Chapters two, three and four are useful but mainly historical in character. For example, chapter two deals with 'Universal Salvation in Origen and Maximus' while chapter three concentrates on 'Descensus and Universalism: Some Historical Patterns of Interpretation'. Although concentrating on early church history, both chapters contain valuable historical material relevant to the present debate concerning universalism and hell. Chapter four is an intriguing and even more relevant survey of 'The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Debates about Hell and Universalism', especially in Britain, by David Powys. The usual range of positions advanced by theologians concerning the fate of the unrighteous is usually classified in three ways, namely, unending punishment, conditional immortality and universal salvation. Powys, on the other hand, insists that at least twelve modern positions should be acknowledged (p 95). Writers who are considered in some detail include Dean Farrar, Edward White and Henry Constable. In this account of the early challenge to the doctrine of eternal, conscious punishment, Powys illustrates 'the preponderance of broad theological and philosophical arguments and the minimal reference to biblical material' (p 128). The challenge and the positions derived from these arguments are traced by Powys to issues like:

'whether or not humanity is universally immortal;  
how human free will and divine sovereignty may both be protected;  
whether or not there is scope for post-mortem conversion;

the nature of divine response to the refusal of divine initiatives' (p 129).

Powys attempts to prove that this divergence is grounded in 'divergent presuppositions' with regard to these four issues. 'Presuppositions', he adds, 'had the capacity to determine whether and how the traditional doctrine was challenged and hence the way in which it was subjected to modification' (p 131). On this basis, he commends his hypothesis: 'the great majority of modern positions on the fate of the unrighteous may be classified and largely explicated in terms of presuppositionally-determined reactions against "traditional orthodoxy"' (p 131). As a way forward, he urges the elimination of all unjustified presuppositions, a new openness to the biblical data, a willingness to embrace and apply biblical convictions and presuppositions to the question, and if necessary, a willingness to move freely away from the traditional orthodoxy (p 135). Powys's personal position becomes clear at the end of the chapter when he laments the way in which 'the debate has been constrained by a pervasive though perverse allegiance to a questionable "orthodoxy"'. In chapter five, John Colwell offers Reflections on Barth's Denial of "Universalism" under the title, 'The Contemporaneity of the Divine Decision'. Colwell's aim is to review certain key elements in Barth's theology rather than defend them against the charge of universalism. Barth, he insists, 'both continually rejected the charge in relation to his own teaching and criticized universalism as taught by others' (p 139). The chapter is provocative, well-argued and informative; the now long-standing debate, as to whether

Barth was a universalist or not, continues.

Thomas F Torrance writes in chapter eight on 'The Singularity of Christ and the Finality of the Cross: The Atonement and the Moral Order' (pp 225-256). By 'singularity' Torrance understands 'the one unrepeatable particularity of his incarnate reality as God and man, Creator and creature, indivisibly united once and for all in one Person' (p 226). After discussing four implications of the singularity of Christ, the finality of the Cross is explored. Torrance strongly objects to any restriction concerning the extent of the atonement: '...universalism and limited atonement', he insists, 'are twin heresies which rest on a deeper heresy, the recourse to a logico-causal explanation of why the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ avails or does not avail for all people' (p 248).

'Are They Few That Be Saved?' is the question Paul Helm addresses in chapter nine. Assuming that not all will be saved, the author refers to aspects of the biblical teaching about hell which make it difficult for some people to accept. These aspects have to do with the *particularism* of heaven and hell. In the rest of the paper, Paul Helm examines some of the more interesting arguments which, 'if successful, serve to weaken the exclusivism and hence the particularism of the gospel' (p 259). John Hick's case against exclusivism is first considered before examining Scriptural teaching in the light of the views of Warfield and Shedd. In sketching 'Calvinistic universalism' with particular reference to Warfield, Professor Helm tries to demonstrate that 'historic, biblical Calvinism has on occasion felt the pull of universalism while not advancing so far as to embrace total universalism'. Before

concluding the chapter, Helm offers a 'defence and further elaboration' of Shedd's view that the Holy Spirit may use means other than Scripture in converting adults who remain ignorant of Jesus Christ (p 275) and anticipates six objections (pp 279-281). This chapter demands careful study and a detailed consideration both of the arguments Helm uses and the Scriptures he endeavours responsibly to understand and relate.

The final contribution is by Henri Blocher under the title, 'Everlasting Punishment and the Problem of Evil' (pp 283-312). Professor Blocher wrestles here with the charge that the doctrine of hell seems to aggravate the problem of evil. I am pleased that concerning hell, he sees 'no escape from the main tenets of traditional orthodoxy' (p 286); he further states that annihilationist arguments, set out recently by E W Fudge, 'come short of the proof needed' (p 287). Blocher insists: 'It remains unlikely that "death" and "destruction" in Biblical parlance should be construed as the extinction of existence, the adjective *aionios* taken to mean only "final", or to apply to the effect of retribution rather than to the act, not to "*the punishing*" but to "*the punishment*". The language of Scripture, with its stereotyped metaphors, seems to insist on the durational, permanent character of the state of torment, and to exclude any later change, anything beyond the outcome of the last judgement. One can sense a paradox in the concept of permanence in destruction which the Bible "itself expresses when it speaks of "second death", "undying worm", (pp 287-288).

A major part of this chapter is devoted to an examination of the way in which traditionalists defend the dogma of

hell. While the older emphasis fell on the claims of justice, one of the most modern popular arguments refers to human freedom. Interestingly, Blocher concludes that the thesis of sin continuing in hell 'is found nowhere in Scripture' and 'supporting reasons' are 'so weak'. This is altogether an extremely valuable chapter which touches in depth on some of the theological objections to the traditional doctrine of hell.

Finally, I want to refer to, and contrast, John Wenham's chapter (5), 'The Case for Conditional Immortality' and Kendall Harmon's, 'The Case Against Conditionalists: a response to E W Fudge' (chapter 6).

Wenham's chapter provides details of the way in which he himself was influenced by Basil Atkinson to accept conditionalism (pp 162-164) and he explains the background to his *THE GOODNESS OF GOD* (1973). Wenham is outspoken, strongly committed to his position but in places unfair. For example, he obviously regards E W Fudge's work, *THE FIRE THAT CONSUMES* as convincing and, almost it seems, unanswerable. One can go further. To what extent can Wenham be reasonably objective in his research of this subject when he insists that 'endless torment is a hideous and unscriptural doctrine which has been a terrible burden on the mind of the church for many centuries and a terrible blot on her presentation of the gospel. I should indeed be happy if, before I die, I could help in sweeping it away' (p 190). Most of Wenham's chapter is devoted to a classification and interpretation of the biblical data, an examination of passages relied on for endlessness of punishment together with a consideration of some objections to conditionalism. He states that 'the

nub of the whole debate is the question of the natural meaning of the texts...' (p 181). However, Wenham's treatment is brief and questionable; Revelation 14:11 'is the most difficult passage that the conditionalist has to deal with' (p179). The tone of the chapter, however, is one of contempt for the traditional teaching: for example, 'unending torment speaks to me of sadism, not justice... From the days of Tertullian it has frequently been the emphasis of fanatics. It is a doctrine which makes the Inquisition look reasonable. It all seems a flight from reality and common sense' (pp 187-188). Such sentiments, however, apply to conditionalism!

It is with relief and thankfulness that one reads Harmon's 'Case Against Conditionalism' in which he interacts with E W Fudge and his 1982 book, *THE FIRE THAT CONSUMES*. Kenneth Harman is currently completing his doctoral studies in Oxford on the recent history of the doctrine of hell and I have appreciated corresponding with him in recent months and sharing resources.

After dealing with the problem of definition (pp196-199), Harman turns to the problem of perspective. He suggests our attitude 'should be one of reverent scepticism about the validity of eventual annihilationism' (p 199) and that for two reasons. One is that 'many unbelievers have come to the conclusion that Jesus taught eternal punishment' and, two, that 'the great majority of the finest theologians in the church for the last twenty centuries have held to the traditional view' (p 200).

Harmon then divides Fudge's arguments concerning the biblical material, the intertestamental literature and the witness of Christian history

into four propositions which he helpfully assesses and criticises. Some of Harmon's conclusions are devastating. For example, 'Fudge's book is methodologically flawed since, when interpreting the New Testament passages, he over-emphasises the Old Testament background at the expense of the intertestamental literature. Fudge's thesis that the New Testament language shares the background of apocalyptic writings, but not its ideas, will not stand scholarly scrutiny' (pp206-207). Another weakness of Fudge's work, he claims, is exegetical: 'he often introduces a chronological lapse of time in New Testament passages which is not there in the texts themselves' (p210). Also, 'he fails to understand that the apocalyptic images used for the final doom of the ungodly have a single referent, and instead claims that different images refer to differing aspects of the wicked's final fate' (p 213). His conclusion is that 'more than anything else, conditionalism looks like an attempt to evade difficulties in the apostolic witness by wrapping up these problems in a neater package than that in which they came' (p 215).

In conclusion, Kendall Harmon discusses the question of what 'a proper understanding of hell should be' (p 215) and insists that a 'fully biblical theology of hell must do justice to 3 images of hell...' punishment, destruction and exclusion (p 216). The chapter is a valuable contribution to the present debate. One thing is clear. A lot of basic, competent work is still required on our part at methodological, exegetical and theological levels if we are to defend and also commend the traditional doctrine of hell against a growing number of evangelical critics.

*Editor*



## **Judgement and Promise**

*An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah*

J G McConville

*Apollos/Eisenbrauns, 1993, 208pp, £17.95*

The deceptively simple title should not mislead readers into thinking that this book is a warm exposition of the message of Jeremiah. Although the author hopes that his book might help others to enjoy Jeremiah and to be confronted by the passion of the prophet, it is in fact a scholarly volume written by a professional Old Testament scholar for fellow academics. It is tightly argued and densely written, suitable at its lowest level for third years honours Biblical Studies students wrestling with modern critical studies in Jeremiah. McConville plunges straight into Redaction Criticism and theories of Deuteronomistic editorial activity. He interacts with recent scholarly opinion on Jeremiah at every level (Holladay, Thomson, Carrol, McKane, Nicholson etc). He compares the book of Jeremiah with Hosea and Deuteronomy, and contrasts it with the approach of the Deuteronomistic Historian. He cautiously argues that the book is in some sense a redaction of material originating in very different contexts, and yet brought together under a unifying theological principle. McConville deals with the whole range of Jeremiah topics, including oracles of judgment, oracles of salvation, the oracles against the nations, the "confessions" of Jeremiah, Jeremiah as author and Jeremiah in the prophetic tradition. This brief review cannot interact with the author's arguments: let it be said, however that this book is not an easy read. It would have been more user-friendly if the actual text of Jeremiah under discussion had been quoted more often, rather than giving

only references to chapter and verse. Whole blocks of material are compared and contrasted, which is a difficult exercise unless the reader has the text at his fingertips. Altogether, a demanding book, very useful for the student determined to work hard at the academic study of the theology and formation of the book of Jeremiah.

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## **Cranmer in Context**

*P N Brooks*

*Lutterworth, 1989, 134pp, £8.95*

Dr Peter Newman Brooks is a fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge and University Lecturer in Divinity (Reformation Studies). He seems to have spent his life between two academic loves: the German reformer-professor, Martin Luther, who helped mould modern Europe; and the English reformer-primate, Thomas Cranmer, martyr and shaper of the English language. In 1965 he had published THOMAS CRANMER'S DOCTRINE OF THE EUCHARIST (Mcmillan, 1965 and recently reprinted) and in the year marking the quincentenary of Cranmer's birth (Cranmer was born at Aslockton in Nottinghamshire on 2nd July 1489) Brooks turned his attention back to Cranmer. I have noticed three pieces from Dr Brooks' pen: an article, a sermon and a book.

The article entitled *No doubting Cranmer* appeared in THE TIMES on Monday August 14th, 1989. In the context of Cranmer's apologia to Mary Tudor and his apparent equivocation in Oxford gaol, Brooks invites us to consider what motivated Cranmer. Grounded in biblical and patristic learning which had received such a revival under Erasmus, Cranmer was a

man “deferential to *auctoritas*”. He was a man under authority whose early questioning of the papal supremacy made him a sure candidate for the primacy in the Henrician church when Henry was in trouble in his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Cranmer, like his fellow reformers in Europe, held to the doctrine of the godly prince. Here is the key to his dilemma as he wrestled with loyalty to the Word of God and loyalty to his king. Like the continentals he also broke with the Latin Mass in making it a communion of the people and believing it to be a symbolic spiritual feast to be held in the language of the common people. By scriptural standards he is to be seen as a “rare and principled” man, a scholar who sought to see different sides to a question, a sensitive soul described by Sir Geoffrey Elton (who until recently was Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge) and quoted by Dr Brooks thus: “the old archbishop had ever been a man who met crisis with perplexity; neither coward nor time-server, he always saw too many sides to every question to enjoy the single-minded confidence that inspired” men like Ridley, Hooper and Latimer. Dr Brooks’ article, which includes some pertinent quotations from Cranmer, introduces us to the central issues in any study of the great man.

“It is a sad fact that increasing numbers of otherwise intelligent Christians neither have nor seek a sense of their own history as members of the Church of God.” With this justifiable lament Dr Brooks began his sermon to commemorate the Cranmer quincentenary, preached at Great St Mary’s Church, Cambridge on Sunday 2nd July 1989. He claims that Cranmer exemplified the Anglican emphasis on scripture, reason and tradition.

Although recent scholarship has stressed the element of diversity in sixteenth century Anglican apologetic, we believe Dr Brooks to be right and we can trace this underlying unity in the concern for scripture, reason and tradition from Cranmer and the early English reformers through to Whitgift and Hooker at the end of the century. (Copies of the sermon are available from the Vicar’s Secretary, Great St Mary’s Church, Cambridge).

If Dr Brooks’ article casts him as a protagonist, the sermon as the preacher, his book presents us with the scholar. Without providing a critical book-review as such, I can confirm that the book is an elemental tool for any modern study of Cranmer. The method of the book is to begin each chapter with careful historical and theological discussion of the successive periods of Cranmer’s life and work. At the appropriate point in the text, reference is made to the printed extracts of the relevant sources provided at the end of each chapter. Some of these sources are rare. There is also an up-to-date bibliography consisting of books, articles and unpublished theses.

The book deals with issues similar to those raised in the article and the sermon but in much more detail and at times, as we would expect, in a more balanced way. Nonetheless there is no doubting Dr Brooks’ rightful high regard for Cranmer. So the themes will be familiar: the influence of Renaissance learning on Cranmer; Cranmer as courtier and ambassador plucked out by Henry from obscurity because of his industry in promoting the doctrine of the godly prince, (a doctrine of which Henry himself heartily approved!) which Cranmer sincerely believed to be biblical. Brooks

describes something of Cranmer's involvement with the Great Bible, with the Henrician formularies of the faith and he examines his early liturgical work leading to his BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER of 1549 with its revision of 1552.

In seeking to overthrow mediaeval traditions none of the reformers could avoid controversy. "Cranmer was widely respected for his irenicism, but it was a quality his enemies could confuse with ambiguity. The primate's moderation certainly set him poles apart from men like Bishop Hooper and John Knox. Nevertheless, he was no exception to the general rule, and when pastoral priorities demanded commitment, the archbishop could prove a formidable opponent" (p 69). Brooks supplies evidence to support these points.

Details are provided of Cranmer's equivocation and humiliation in his final tribulation: "By a charade of counter liturgy, England's liturgical genius was thus repudiated" (p 96). The authorities were bent on his destruction; recantations could not save him; his opponents would use his weakness to promote "the old religion". but his brilliance re-emerged at the end when he devastated his enemies by recanting his very recantation (p 100). Brooks justifies A F Pollard's scepticism of Cranmer's RECENTATIONS, "with its terrible dream sequence" (p 98), as a source for his last days.

Since the publication of Brooks' important book, four further works on Cranmer have also come to my notice. David Loades (professor of history at the University College of North Wales, Bangor) has written CRANMER AND

THE REFORMATION (Headstart History Papers, 1991). This is very good: Professor Loades concludes, "Thomas Cranmer therefore died as a martyr, not for the royal supremacy but for protestant doctrine, and the legacy which he bequeathed to the English church was both Erastian and evangelical." Even so, "he was not a saint, or a hero, and was a martyr very much against his will, but he was a man of faith and integrity... and that extraordinarily durable amalgam of protestant nationalism was one of the most significant legacies of the period to subsequent English history" (pp 39-40). Then there is Margot Johnson (ed), THOMAS CRANMER (Turnstone Ventures, Durham, 1990), a *pot-pourri* with essays of varying significance, including a biographical chapter by Professor Loades. The Brynmill Press have reprinted THOMAS CRANMER: TWO STUDIES by Charles Smyth and Colin Dunlop (SPCK, 1956, 1989). Perhaps one of the shrewdest assessments of Cranmer is to be found in Professor Patrick Collinson's chapter 'Thomas Cranmer', in Geoffrey Rowell (ed), THE ENGLISH RELIGIOUS TRADITION AND THE GENIUS OF ANGLICANISM (Ikon Productions, 1992). Collinson sees Cranmer as essentially Lutheran in his clear grasp of the gospel; many of his inconsistencies are to be explained by the fact that Cranmer's privately developed convictions were not publicly revealed in the face of "fluctuating, unstable public policy" (p 91).

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