



General Secretary  
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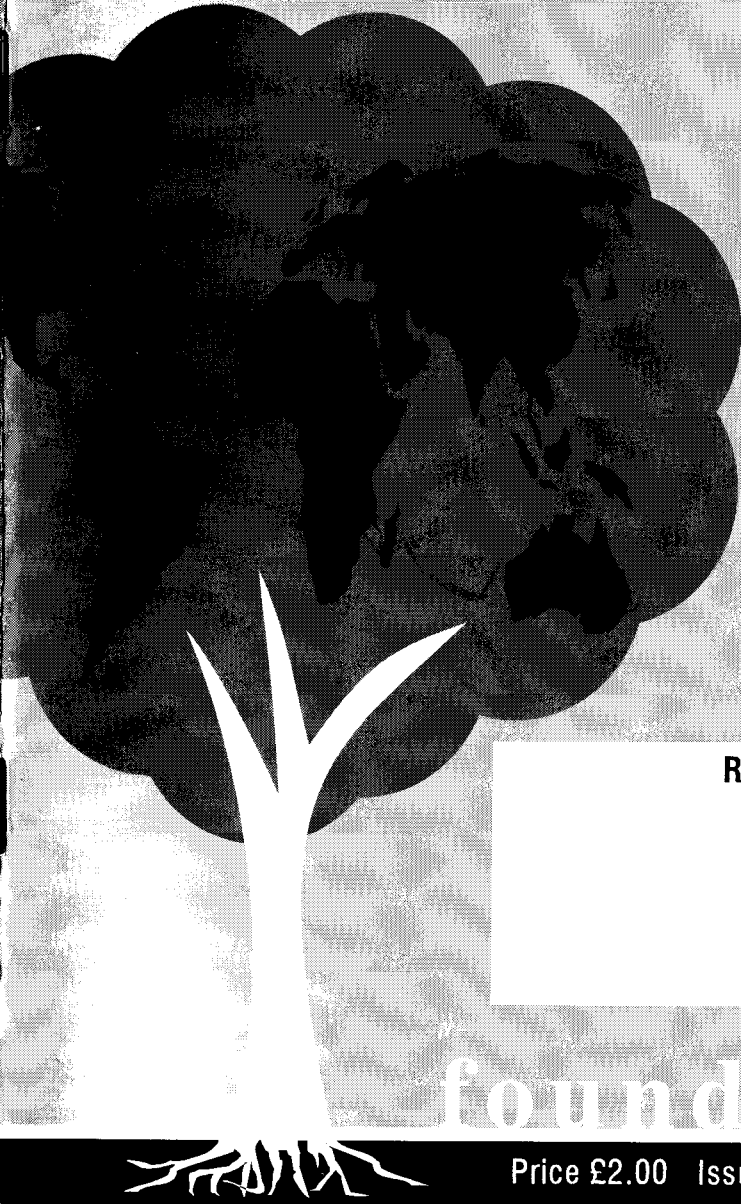
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# Editorial

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Welcome to another issue of our journal. All the articles are again thought-provoking and relevant to the condition of our churches today.

Alan Gibson writes on CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN EVANGELICALISM, while Richard Davies provides a helpful summary of Iain Murray's excellent new book REVIVAL AND REVIVALISM. The issues raised here need to be faced urgently by evangelicals, particularly in the light of the current use of the term *revival* and claims that it has already broken out in charismatic circles.

A slightly extended EXEGESIS article is provided by Paul Brown on *Receiving the Holy Spirit*, in Romans 5:5. The article is thorough and helpful, with application for assurance and doctrinal clarity. THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT is outlined and assessed by Geoff Thomas; he shows that there is room for self-examination on our part as well as for the criticism of others.

Ethical topics are dominant in the rest of the journal. The crucial issue of donated ovarian tissue in embryo research and assisted conception is the subject of the next article under the title FERTILITY TREATMENT in which we give the full text of the joint BEC/EA response to the 1994 HFEA Public Consultation Document.

THE CONFLICT FOR THE MIND is contributed by G Wyn Davies. The author insists that nearing the end of the twentieth-century we are still in a *critical phase in the unrelenting battle for the mind*. He warns that we should not misunderstand *the nature and range of the spiritual forces* which are at work and the intensity of the present day conflict.

As we promised in Issue 32, we are now providing the second and concluding part of my REFORMED THEOLOGY AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS.

One book reviewed is LOVE YOUR UNBORN NEIGHBOUR, assessed here by a practising gynaecologist. Church leaders and theological students will benefit from reading it. The other review is of BEYOND CANBERRA, in which evangelicals reflect on the Seventh Assembly of the WCC held in 1991.

We hope you will be stimulated and blessed through reading FOUNDATIONS.

## New Appointment

We are glad to announce the appointment of Dr Hywel R Jones, Principal of the London Theological Seminary, as **Joint Editor** of FOUNDATIONS alongside Dr Eryl Davies. Readers will be glad to know that Dr Jones is now well enough to undertake these responsibilities following his recent illness. He will be taking special interest in articles relating to Exegesis, Book Reviews and some Systematics subjects.

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# Contemporary Trends in Evangelicalism

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*Alan Gibson*

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This over-view of the evangelical scene is descriptive of how things actually are rather than prescriptive of how things ought to be. We wish to make it clear from the outset, however, that we speak **from within** evangelicalism and that in reflecting on its condition we must share any of the rebuke or encouragement which is appropriate to her condition.

## Who are we including?

Our purposes will be served by defining an evangelical Christian as **one who grasps and upholds the relationship between the gospel, the Bible and the church**. An evangelical is someone who has heard, believed and received the authentic good news of Christ in genuine experience, ie it expresses **what they are** before it says anything about **what they understand**. Such an experience of the gospel includes trusting Christ and his saving work but it also includes trusting that he was right in what he said about the authority of the OT and what he promised about the writing of the NT. Consequently an evangelical submits to the teaching of the Bible not primarily because of the apologetic arguments of scholars but as a fruit of their own experience of Christ in the gospel. The church they see as comprising all those who have similarly experienced Christ and so are committed to one another because they are committed to him.

Evangelicals are not the only **converted** Christians but they are the only **consistent** Christians. Liberals have not seen how the authority of Christ extends to the whole of Scripture; Catholics have not seen how that extends to the traditions and institutions of the church. One trend among some so-called evangelicals relates to the interpretation of Scripture. A contributor to the journal *THIRD WAY* (Jan 94) wrote *I still read the Bible but I no longer believe it contains absolute truth. It can't do because language just isn't like that*. Yet, in later correspondence the author insisted that she holds to the Lausanne Covenant statement on Scripture, to which the journal is committed in its Trust! Many are saying that evangelicalism is now a *plural tradition*, with a spectrum of positions on Scripture, as on many other doctrines. The symposium, *DIFFERENT GOSPELS* (C S Lewis Centre, 1988), is a supposed defence of orthodox Christianity but it lacks any statement on justification by faith or the final authority of Scripture.

## There is no visible body of evangelicalism as a whole

Evangelical Christians are distributed widely across denominations and differ greatly on many matters other than the gospel. Some no longer use the title 'evangelical' to define themselves, eg Anglican evangelicals who believe it would divide them from their fellow Anglicans to make an issue of this title. Even our insistence on the final authority of the Bible is no longer enough. There are Charismatics who have a high view of Scripture but are impatient with evangelicals who claim to believe in an inerrant Bible but deny that some chapters relating to spiritual gifts are relevant to us today, claiming that this is no better than liberalism or dispensationalism. Some evangelicals find it difficult to recognise others as genuinely evangelical unless they accept a similar doctrinal position

on issues not essential to salvation, eg Reformed theology.

## 1. Trends in relation to the gospel

- a) Experience is being elevated above doctrine. Books of a sensational kind sell better than books on theology; there is impatience with sermons needing concentration; a concept has emerged called *entertainment evangelism*.
- b) Specifically, less importance is being given to the doctrines of the transcendence and holiness of God; a subjectivist culture has produced child-centred education, which has led in its turn to man-centred evangelism.
- c) The emphasis in preaching (and worship) has moved away from the Cross of Christ to the Throne of the King; sin is not seen as the greatest problem of mankind; the substitutionary sacrifice is seen only as one *model* of salvation, with others equally valid. No one definition of salvation is considered adequate for the variety of cultures in our global village.
- d) It is increasingly common to hear uncertainty expressed over the eternal punishment of the wicked and it is no longer only liberals who teach the possibility of the unevangelised being saved by Christ but without hearing of him. '*The criterion of salvation is not how much you know but how you respond to what you do know*' Chris Wright, Principal of All Nations Christian College (THEMELIOS, Vol 18, No 2, Jan 1993). In some quarters this is now regarded as the evangelically orthodox position!
- e) Social involvement is now ordinarily considered to be *an essential element* of gospel witness, rather than *a fruit of* gospel witness. Both are seen as equal partners in the mission of the church. This can (but does not necessarily) deflect from the eternal issues of gospel work and it does raise the question of whether traditional evangelism has been too abstract and not sufficiently earthed in the genuine needs of contemporary life. Is there enough preaching about such topics as the idolatry of *economic progress* and its attendant evils, afflicting the lives of millions?
- f) The content of the gospel is being broadened to include *signs and wonders* and some will co-operate only with those who agree with this insistence. This is probably the major stumbling block today to joint evangelistic projects at local level.
- g) Some sectors are showing renewed concern for evangelism, eg March for Jesus; the Decade of Evangelism; *Seeker Services* along Willow Creek lines; some unusual initiatives are being taken, such as *Chill Out Areas* at the huge parties attended by 30,000 ravers!

## 2. Trends in relation to the Bible

- a) Evangelicalism has become 'popular' even 'trendy' in some quarters! There are more evangelical ordinands than ever in Anglicanism, some say up to 50%, but their doctrinal grasp is weaker and there is less training given in expository preaching, hence the emergence of the Proclamation Trust. The Anglican Evangelical Assembly covers a broad spectrum of positions on how to use the Bible as the authoritative voice in morals, the church and national life.
- b) The use of the Bible has been extended by modern language versions and much visually attractive literature is available in a modern idiom from the Bible Society and others. Some evangelicals retain conscientious problems over this. Among Anglican evangelicals the Good News Bible is widely used, among Free Churches there is increasing use of the NIV, whilst the New King James Version is finding acceptance among

reformed churches committed to the *Textus Receptus*.

- c) One growth area of scholarship has been in hermeneutics, putting pertinent questions to traditional views. *Interpreting the given text in the ever-changing contexts is an ongoing challenge involving the need for a coherent theological methodology and a greater sensitivity to the social sciences and to the dynamics of cultural behaviour and the communication process.* BEYOND CANBERRA, p 9. The real danger of this contextualisation issue, however, has been the alleged justification under this guise of, among other things, homosexual acts by Christians and Third World political revolution movements in the name of Christ.
- d) The issue of prophecy has moved from the millennial debates of yesterday to questions about the contemporary role of prophecy in the church today. At worst, this can become an easy way to hear the voice of God without the hard work of Bible study. The writings of Wayne Grudem have been popularised in the UK by Roy Clements. Those who have read them are asking whether all the defences of the traditional view do justice to the discontinuity between the OT and the NT.
- e) There have been many better publications about the Bible in recent years, e.g. NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH, Brian Edwards, is available now in a new edition; cp also the IVP series *The Bible Speaks Today*, the EP Welwyn Series commentaries and the continued publishing programme of the works of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

### 3. Trends in relation to the Church

- a) Some Christians have become indifferent to the church itself; para-church bodies fulfil many functions of the church so a person can be converted in a school SU, gain experience in the college CU and become a missionary with OM without becoming part of a local church at all. Some complain that church structures are inflexible, others express dismay that church politics are irrelevant to their real needs, tracing a parallel with worldly power struggles. In a mobile population, evangelicals forced to move are going to a church where the gospel is, not necessarily where their former church allegiance is represented.
- b) Attitudes to the ecumenical movement have softened. The new CCBI and its national and local bodies includes Roman Catholics as full members. A group of over 100 people 'with evangelical concerns' attending the 1991 WCC Assembly in Canberra signed a call for greater evangelical involvement, included among them was David Coffey, BU General Secretary and a member of the EA Council. Anglican comprehensiveness has been strained by the change in the status of Scripture evident in the women priests decision. Multi-faith worship, compromising the uniqueness of Christ, is being opposed by a minority. But some are now talking of the end of the liberal ascendancy and an opportunity for evangelicals to take over the whole church! Meanwhile the fact that both Catholics and evangelicals hold to an objective corpus of doctrine is creating pressure for closer links between them, on both sides of the Atlantic.
- c) Sweeping changes in worship style have exploded over the last decades, with a new generation of hymns and Scripture songs, more informality and congregational participation. We now have something called *Evangelical Applause!* Whilst the nature of God must determine the character of how we worship him, we must also reflect on the fact that mankind is more than a mind on legs. She/he has a heart and feelings and needs to feel the warm acceptance of being part of a worshipping community.

- d) The big events have untold influence. Keswick has been dwarfed by Spring Harvest, Word Alive, the Bible Weeks and the FIEC Family Week. Big numbers do encourage those from small churches. But in such events there is a danger of mass psychology and manipulating the vulnerable. There is danger too in coming back to a local church and discarding what has stood the test of time. All change is difficult to control, whilst for some the greater peril lies in inflexibility. Great pastoral sensitivity is called for.
- e) Regrettably, biblical separation can result in practical isolation, what one recent speaker dubbed *hyper-independency*. Differences over church order are not of the essence of the gospel. How far should we go? Independency shows its weakness when the local church seems unable to cope with its own problems, eg in ministerial training and pastoral settlement. The BEC expresses at a practical level the need for some visibility of the unity of the *Church catholic*.
- f) There are no indications of a major re-alignment of denominational structures. Despite tensions for gospel men in the Church of Scotland and Methodism, denominational loyalty remains more important than evangelical unity. In one sense, the involvement of such people in the EA renders structural changes less likely. The EA's higher profile, however, makes it open to a triumphalism which ignores those conscientiously unable to co-operate on their terms.
- g) A renewed interest in social issues has provided opportunities for evangelical co-operation in the Pro-Sunday Coalition and making common cause over witness to national legislators on moral matters. Not all, however, have avoided seeing these as examples of ecumenical co-operation, which they are not. We must distinguish between our witness as Christian citizens, rightly encouraged by our churches, and our distinctive gospel witness as churches *per se*.
- h) The national economic situation is creating mounting pressure on local church life, eg in reduced giving, in the numbers of members unemployed and in the stress on those with jobs, now even less able to give time to their family and church. On the other hand, early retirement is freeing a number of evangelicals for Christian work.

### Where is the blessing being seen?

God blesses his gospel despite who and what we are, not because of who and what we are. By so doing he does not validate everything we say we believe. Churches grow not because they are perfect but because God is gracious. Growth is being seen in churches some consider to be ecumenically compromised, excessively charismatic or over-rigid about separation. How do we account for this?

We need to recall that the Scripture issue (inerrancy), the church issue (separation), the doctrinal issue (Calvinism) and the practical issue (using an 'altar call') are not the only truths in the Bible. The Holy Spirit honours, among other things, the exaltation of Christ, obedience to the Great Commission, a relevant ministry, holiness of life and earnest prayer. We need to keep the Biblical balance of dependence on him and personal responsibility to him. *According to your faith be it unto you*. Is there as much genuine prayer for revival as there once was? There is a move away from the central significance of the church prayer meeting and serious decline in those before regular Sunday services. Could this be the most significant trend of today's evangelicalism?



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# Revival and Revivalism

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## *Richard Davies*

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*This year has seen the publication of Iain H Murray's latest historical study, subtitled 'The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858'. The careful detail contained in its 455 pages are helpfully summarised here, clearly demonstrating that the events of that period have had a considerable influence on subsequent evangelical church life throughout the world. The book is published by the Banner of Truth and costs £12.95.*

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In his introduction Murray provides us with nine quotations about revival and it is clear from these that revivals played a significant part in the formation of many American churches. Writing in 1832, Joel Hawes, the minister of the First Congregational Church, Hartford, Connecticut, could say: "The church of which I am pastor, like most of the early churches of New England, was planted in the spirit of revivals. . . Revivals of religion have always been held in high esteem by the church". By the second half of the nineteenth century this view had changed. A season of *revival* had become *revival meetings*. People were no longer surprised by a revival, it could be worked up and a number of preachers became known as revivalists. Revivalism had arrived. In his book **HOLDING THE FORT - Studies in Victorian Revivalism**, John Kent wrote: "American revivalism began as a method of obtaining (at least in appearance) the external signs of conviction, repentance and rebirth".

The first chapter of Murray's book deals with **Samuel Davies and the Meaning of Revival**. Davies not only had a powerful ministry, he also greatly influenced others, both in America and Britain. Davies, a 'Free-born Briton' of Welsh descent had an extremely useful ministry, even though he died at a young age (37 years). Murray paints a good picture of Davies' life, emphasising his spiritual experiences and usefulness. His was a revival ministry. Davies' basic beliefs regarding the nature of revival were clear and orthodox; revival is the work of the Holy Spirit. Both regeneration and the faith that springs from it are the gifts of God. Human depravity, Christ's divinity and atonement were truths he clearly proclaimed. The different degrees of success that gospel preachers experienced showed the sovereignty of God in salvation. Revival was different in degree, not in kind, from the regular experience of the church. He repudiated the claim that revivals restored miraculous gifts. Davies was convinced that a sense of the presence of God was always evident during times of revival. People became awed, solemnised and marked by humility.

A number of key Christian men at this time were acquainted with each other. Chapter Two, entitled **Princeton and the First Fruits of a Glorious Plan** deals with these men. The New Brunswick Presbytery, which had prepared Samuel Davies for ministry, also prepared John Rodgers, Robert Smith and Samuel Finley; all men of extraordinary ability and influence. However, even this influence was exceeded by the **greatest** institution to which it gave rise - Nassau Hall, the College of New Jersey, established in 1756 at Princeton. The ethos of the College was clearly established by the **great** presidents who

served it, namely, Dickinson, Burr, Edwards, Davies, Finley and in 1768 John Witherspoon was brought over from Scotland. In the 1760's the College itself experienced revival. A number of eminent men were sent out from the College - John McMillan, James Power, Joseph Smith and Thaddeus Dod. Between 1781 and 1787 all these men experienced revival in their congregations. Their influence was great, they founded schools and taught and trained men for the ministry, particularly for a missionary ministry.

Chapter Three is entitled **Glory in Virginia**. The 1770's and 1780's were two decades of real blessing in Virginia which was not confined to any one denomination and which produced great results, not least of which was the unity expressed by believers.

Those who benefited most at this time were the Presbyterians. Murray deals with this in Chapter Four, entitled **When Theology Took Fire**. Presbyterianism was transformed from being a church 'sound in doctrine but deficient in experience' into one much closer to the New Testament norm.

In 1787 a number of people were concerned for their church and nation's spiritual condition. Prayer meetings were held. At the beginning of 1788 there was a general awakening in Prince Edward, Cumberland and Charlotte counties. The awakening lasted a long time in some places, eg Briery, where it continued until 1831. The revival had many effects:-

1. the spread of the gospel to other areas,
2. a whole generation of younger men called to the work of the gospel ministry,
3. a gospel unity,
4. prayer restored to its rightful place,
5. fervent charity came to be expected of all Christians,
6. a return to Biblical standards of church membership, where a profession of faith must be accompanied by a changed lifestyle,
7. a demonstration that the usefulness of a church is bound up in her spirituality and unity.

Many new churches were formed in the 1790's. A large number of these churches drew up statements of principles which were practical in nature. Preachers were changed, added to their orthodoxy were eloquence, power, usefulness and authority. Murray sums up what happened in the closing words of the chapter:

The Great Revival taught the Presbyterian churches that orthodoxy and correct preaching, indispensable though they are, are not enough. Authority, tenderness, compassion, pity - these must be given in larger measure from heaven, and when they are it can truly be said that theology has taken fire.

**The Age of the Second Great Awakening** is the title and theme of Chapter Five. The American War of Independence emphasised the rejection of established authority. What was true politically also revealed itself in spiritual and moral realms. There was a development of anti-Christian literature. Thomas Paine, with his *Rights of Man* and *Age of Reason* was at the forefront of this. The Bible was widely rejected, Christian faith and influence ebbed, and church growth was slow. Controversies occupied the attention of the churches. Secession took place, eg the Methodist Episcopal Church saw a 25% fall in membership. Whereas in the years 1790-1800 the US population rose by 32%, church

membership only rose by 12.6%.

This sad situation was soon to be transformed. By 1816 many Americans considered themselves to be living in "the age of Bibles and missionaries". Fairfield County Baptist Society in Connecticut could report: "The atheism of Voltaire and his associates is gone down, almost with their dust to the grave. The blasphemies of Paine are remembered only to be abhorred". The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the churches revitalized and multiplied in an extraordinary manner. In 1835 revival broke out which lasted for between 25 and 30 years, spread over a large geographical area and affected Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist and Episcopalian churches.

Not much is known about this Second Great Awakening, possibly due to the fact that the churches were too busy to spend time recording what was taking place. Yet, membership figures for the period speak for themselves - between 1800 and 1810 Presbyterian membership grew from 70,000 to 100,000, while Baptist membership grew from 95,000 to 160,000. In the years 1801-1809 the Methodist Episcopal Church saw the following growth in successive years: 7,980; 13,860; 17,336; 9,064; 6,811; 10,625; 14,020; 7,405 and 11,043. This saw an increase in membership of 167.8% whilst the population had only increased by 36.4%.

There were no special means used to promote this awakening. The churches relied on preaching and prayer, recognising that it is in God's sovereignty to bless. An extraordinary degree of blessing attended the normal means of grace, and upon the same preachers who had been faithfully labouring for years. The 1790's saw a growing concern among Christians to pray. The Congregationalists and Baptists united "in supplications that God would avert his judgements; prevent the spread of error and iniquity - and pour out his Spirit in plentiful effusions on our guilty land". The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church called for "solemn humiliation, fasting and prayer". The Methodists also emphasised the same duty at this period.

A surge of evangelical and interdenominational activity arose from the awakening. Local missionary societies were formed in Connecticut (1798) and Massachusetts (1799). In 1810 the American Board of Foreign Missions was formed. This sent out its first missionaries to Calcutta in 1812 and by 1821 had sent out 81 missionaries. The Baptist Churches in 1814 and the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1819 followed suit with their own foreign missionary societies. 1816 saw the formation of the American Bible Society and in 1825 the American Tract Society. A great deal of evangelism took place - Sunday School Unions, work amongst black people, monthly magazines and societies for educational or humane objectives. A profound impression was made on centres of learning. Here was an awakening which cannot be explained away as mere emotion.

How did this all come about? Edward Griffin wrote in 1832 'The means employed in these revivals have been but two - the clear presentation of divine truth and prayer: nothing to work upon the passions but sober, solemn truth, presented, as far as possible, in its most interesting attitudes, and closely applied to the conscience. The meetings have been still and orderly, with no other sign of emotion in the hearers than the solemn look and the silent tear'. The Rev John B Preston of Rupert, Vermont, wrote: "Our prayer meetings were crowded, and solemn to an amazing degree. No emotions more violent than shedding of tears, and no appearance of wildness and disorder occurred".

Kentucky was the fastest growing frontier state in America, and **Kentucky 1800** is the title and theme of Chapter Six. In 1792 it had become the fifteenth state of the Union.

Population growth was far greater than church growth and there was a lack of Christian influence. Within the churches there was little spiritual vision, the quality of leadership was poor and too much energy was spent in internal controversy. During the 1790's new ministers moved to the state from Virginia and North Carolina. These men were of a high spiritual calibre, fervent workers, whose labour was blessed of God. During 1800 revival was general across the state.

1800 - 1801 saw the birth of a new phenomenon - the *camp meeting* which originated amongst the Presbyterians in their outdoor communion services. Whilst only a comparatively small number took communion, thousands would attend the preaching services. Thousands came to faith and lives were transformed. These converts were marked by a praying spirit, conviction of sin, a warm view of the love of God, love of souls, reformed morals, family worship and the necessity of sanctification.

There is another side to the revival in Kentucky. So much attention has been given to it that, for some, the work has been discredited in terms of excess and emotionalism. This was **The Emergence of Revivalism** and Murray deals with this in Chapter Seven. Revivals are bound to be attended by emotional excitement. Fanaticism enters when physical effects, or strength of emotion, are seen as proof of God's activity. Falling now became common and some ministers were completely uncritical of what was happening. Emotionalism, 'twitchings', 'jerks' and 'dancing' was normative in some places. While some ministers sought to exercise a degree of control through the preaching of the Word, others saw no need for preaching. In these circles visions, dreams and prophecies abounded.

In 1803 the Presbyterian Synod sought to deal with these abuses. However the advocates of fanaticism and emotionalism left to form a presbytery of their own and Presbyterianism was shattered by division. It was only the Methodists who were not distracted by such internal divisions. They benefited greatly from this revival and the camp meeting came to be associated with the Methodists. The Methodists were opposed to the orthodox Calvinism that prevailed in the other churches and, as a result, the Christian scene came to be marked by schism and wild enthusiasm.

In Chapter Eight, Murray provides us with portraits of **Five Leaders in the Northeast**. These five men are: Edwin Dorris Griffin, Asahel Nettleton, Lyman Beecher, Edward Payson and Gardiner Spring. All these men experienced revival in their ministries and illustrate important lessons for today, such as the clear difference between knowing revival and being a revivalist and the need for wisdom in handling enquirers. These men also spent much time with Christ. Spiritual usefulness and a close walk with God went together in their lives.

In Chapter Nine, Murray deals with **New Measures and Old Revivals**. By 1812 there is evidence of the *altar call* coming into use in Missouri. The State of New Jersey was blessed by revival in the years 1815-1821. In 1821 an important figure became a communicant member of the Presbyterian Church in Adams, New York State; his name was *Charles Grandison Finney*. Almost immediately he began studying for the Christian ministry and in December 1823 he was licensed by the presbytery and ordained in June 1824. For two years he was a frontier missionary and in 1825 he moved to Utica in Oneida County. Here revival was experienced up until 1827. Finney became prominent

but was soon engaged in controversy. He met twice with Asahel Nettleton but was deaf to Nettleton's advice and warnings. The controversy soon became public and the churches of the Mohawk Valley, from Utica to Troy, were caught up in it. In July 1827 a week long convention of ministers was held in an attempt to heal divisions. However, it did not succeed.

The controversy between Finney and Nettleton concerned the *new measures* Finney used in an attempt to promote revival. In fact these measures - an encouragement of physical response to preaching; women speaking in worship; long meetings - all came from practices that some Methodist churches were using. At the heart of the matter was the doctrine of conversion. Finney's teaching differed from that of other Presbyterian ministers but it took a while for this to be seen. He held to Arminian views, believing that people could be persuaded to come to regeneration and that no act of God was required. Finney recognised the newness of what he taught. In 1835 he wrote: "The truth is, that very little of the Gospel has come out upon the world, for these hundreds of years, without being clogged and obscured by false theology". What arrogance and ignorance of history! Finney denied that times of revival "come unpredictably, spontaneously, and sovereignly". With Finney, Pelagianism came in as a flood.

Chapter Ten entitled **Origins of a Great Division** deals with Finney's forsaking of the Westminster Confession and the divisions this brought about, especially as they were viewed in the Presbyterian Church. Finney's teaching and measures divided many congregations; splits took place, godly ministers were sacked. Finney was himself often responsible for these evils through his criticism of ministers and the nature of his teaching. Soon the divisions escalated from individual congregations and affected whole denominations. The Presbyterians saw years of controversy, culminating in 1838 in a formal split.

In Chapter Eleven, **The Illusion of a New Era**, Murray looks at why and how the new measures managed to change so dramatically the understanding of evangelism and revival in America. One reason was the spirit of the age - an age of activism. The 'American spirit' was born. Successful achievements multiplied. The past paled beside the present and there was a general rejection of all things old. A spirit of innovation was gaining ground, everything seemed to be in motion. Both in the church and in society there was an anti-intellectualism. Important doctrinal distinctions, carefully stated in confessions, were swept aside. A new age of democracy was dawning, and the authority of ministers in expounding Scripture was questioned. Anyone could get a hearing, regardless of their being called or trained.

The argument from apparent success was overwhelming. Numbers seen to be responding were claimed as sufficient evidence for changes in teaching and methods. By his own argument of success, however, Finney's claims are proved false. Joseph Ivor Foot wrote in 1838: "During ten years, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, were annually reported to be converted on all hands; but now it is admitted, that his real converts are comparatively few. It is declared even by himself that 'the great body of them are a disgrace to religion'". In his **LECTURES ON SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**, published in 1851, Finney admits this very point yet by the end of the century Finney's reputation was of one who had introduced revivals to America.

The Presbyterian Church was not the only religious body thrown into turmoil as a result of Finney's ministry. In Chapter Twelve Murray deals with **The Baptists in Transition**. By the end of the nineteenth century the Baptists had lost their spiritual heritage, believing that the years before Finney consisted of hyper-Calvinistic barrenness. One of the major reasons for this was the lack of readily available manuscript evidence of the past. Murray shows the orthodox godliness of many pastors. These men knew rich blessing upon their ministries, yet they were later to be maligned and misrepresented.

In Chapter Thirteen Murray deals with the third era of general revival in America, the years 1857-58. He entitles the chapter **James Waddel Alexander and the New York Awakening of 1857-58**. Murray confined his historical narrative largely to the events which occurred in New York City, as there are more details available regarding this area than in other parts. The revival was preceded by a financial collapse, a great deal of unemployment and widespread bankruptcy. James Alexander wrote "From the very heart of these trials emerged spiritual yearnings, thirstings and supplications after the fountain of living waters". Prayer meetings were started and people took seriously the needs of their souls; there were many conversions. By June 1858, 50,000 conversions were reported in New York and 200,000 across the northeast of America.

The mode of true revival was clearly seen in 1858: "hunger for the Word of God, for prayer and for serious Christian literature; a sense of wonder and profound seriousness; the same work evident in many places at once; joyful praise; readiness to witness; a new energy in practical Christian service; the recovery of family worship and family religion, and an observable raising of the whole moral tone of society".

The final chapter is entitled **Old and New, Past and Future**. Here Murray informs us how the new theology of revival (Finneyism) has had an ongoing influence. Among the consequences mentioned are: the demotion of Scripture from its central place, a loss of interest in doctrinal distinctives, the acceptance of a lay ministry separate from church office, a policy of silence on contentious matters and external acts being confused for an inward spiritual change. Murray traces the confusion that these have caused since the 1850's. Rather than seeing revival as a miracle of God's grace it has now come to be seen as the successful operation of manipulative methods. The book concludes with two appendices entitled *Revivalism in Britain* and *Revivals in the South*.

Murray raises in this book important questions about the nature of salvation and revival. Here is a book that all believers and church leaders will do well to study. It should send us on our knees to God, urging for a visitation of divine power. **Come, Lord Jesus, Come.**

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# Exegesis 18: Receiving the Holy Spirit

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**Paul Brown**

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*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:5*

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In a passage full of consolation and encouragement for believers, this verse stands out as particularly significant. At least two reasons make it suitable for special consideration; firstly the content is tightly packed<sup>1</sup>, and secondly it deals with a most important subject, the assurance, considered both objectively and subjectively, which Christians have for the hope they claim. It is also a verse which has important implications for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

## The Love of God

We begin with the phrase “the love of God”. Luther<sup>2</sup>, following Augustine, understood this to mean love for God, but Calvin<sup>3</sup>, while acknowledging this as a “devout sentiment”, says that this is “not what Paul means”. In line with the majority of commentators today he takes it to mean God’s love for us as the source of salvation. Several reasons can be given for understanding the phrase in this way.

Firstly, as Leon Morris indicates<sup>4</sup>, this is the way in which the phrase “the love of God” is usually used in the New Testament. The only probable exception to this is Luke 11:42, “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Paul’s use of the phrase in 8:38 is particularly significant, “For I am persuaded that . . . (nothing) . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ.” It is difficult to think that Paul would use the phrase in two different ways in such close proximity and with such a similarity of subject. Anders Nygren<sup>5</sup> expresses himself like this, “When we realise that he never uses *agape* (sic) to express man’s love to God, we shall not think that it is of man’s love that Paul speaks in this verse. *Agape*, the love which God showed us in Christ, is for Paul so tremendous a fact that he regularly refrained from using the same word to express love to God.”

Secondly, the way in which Paul’s thought develops up to this point almost certainly excludes any other option. Paul is giving the reason why hope does not put us to shame<sup>6</sup>. It is highly unlikely that he would be saying, “hope does not put us to shame, because we love God.” This would seem to base assurance on the shifting sands of our own love for God. It is true of course, and this is what Augustine and Luther pointed out, that this love is not rooted in the natural soil of the human heart but is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and is given to us by God himself. However, as soon as we have said this we are half-way to focusing on God and his gift, rather than on its expression in our love for God. John Murray’s words are surely correct, “What is it that gives solidity to this hope and guarantees its validity? It is the love of God to believers, a love that suffers no fluctuation or reverse. Hence the hope which it promises is as irreversible as the love itself.”<sup>7</sup>

Thirdly, the way in which the next verses develop confirm that this is the right interpretation because Paul goes on to speak of the historical manifestation of the love

of God in the death of his Son. "But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (v 8).

At this point we can briefly notice some of the **implications** of this.

- a) Paul grounds hope in the love of God. There is nothing more basic than this. The love of God is the ultimate source and motivation for salvation in its entirety. A passage which has some strikingly similar expressions is Titus 3:4-6, "But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Here salvation is also traced back to its origin in the "kindness and love of God our Saviour." The love which gave Jesus Christ to save us is the love that guarantees the fulfilment of the "hope of the glory of God."
- b) It is also the love of God that enables us to see that tribulations find a place in the purpose of God and are productive of good. Calvin says, "I do not refer this (the love of God poured out etc.) to the last phrase only, but to the whole of the two preceding verses." He adds beautifully, "Being thus shed abroad through every part of us, (the love of God) not only mitigates our sorrow in adversity, but like a sweet seasoning gives a loveliness to our tribulations."<sup>8</sup> We can, as it were, allow the love of God to shed its light back on verses 3 and 4. "We also glory in tribulations", because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; and we know "that tribulation produces perseverance" etc., because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.
- c) Between the objective truth of peace with God in v 1 and the subjective sense of the love of God in v 5, comes the phrase "and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This rejoicing is based on the status of peace with God which we have by justification but as it is a rejoicing in hope it also derives its certainty and impetus from the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

### **. . . has been poured out**

*. . . has been poured out in our hearts.* "Poured out" is probably the best translation of *ennechutai* as the verb when used literally is used of liquids. At the same time the AV translation "shed abroad" has taken on its own meaning from its use here. Presumably deriving from the use of "shed" as in "shed tears" or "shed blood" (see 3:15 where the same verb is used) its sense seems to be more akin to "shed light on a thing" and perhaps "shed abroad" suggests the love of God shining into the heart as the sun shines in its brightness and warmth all over the countryside. A sense of abundance, the overflowing nature of the love of God, arises from the use of the word "poured out".<sup>9</sup>

It is probable that Paul used this verb here because of its close association with the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> (cp Titus 3:6.) This follows the use of the same word in Acts 2:17, 33; 10:45; which in turn arises from the LXX of Joel 2:28. However, BAGD<sup>11</sup> points out that "generally what ever comes from above is connected with this verb" (it illustrates this with "grace", "mercy" and "wrath"). Attempts to read the words in such a way as to make the Holy Spirit the subject of "has been poured out" seem highly artificial.

Cranfield<sup>12</sup> notes that the verb "is used much more often in the LXX (and also as a matter of fact in the NT - nine occurrences in Rev 16) of the pouring out of God's wrath." Paul began his exposé of the sin of Gentiles and Jews in 1:18 with the words, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of



men. . .”, and wrath is also mentioned in 2:6,8; 3:5; 5:9. It is impossible to know whether Paul associated *ennechutai* with the wrath of God, and thus consciously used it here of the love of God by way of contrast. In view of its other associations this seems unlikely, yet this possibility does remind us that it is against the background of wrath revealed from heaven against man’s sin that God has poured out his love into our hearts.

Morris has an interesting note on the tense of the verb, “The perfect points to a continuing state after a past action, and Godet finds this the reason for the preposition *en* (“in”) rather than *eis* (“into”). This verb is usually followed by *eis* or *epi*; this is the sole use of *en* with it in the New Testament.”<sup>13</sup> Both tense and preposition seem to suggest that the love of God, having been poured out, continues residing in the heart.

It is the heart *kardia* in which the love of God has been poured. Cranfield says of the word, “Paul uses *kardia* to denote a man’s inward, hidden self as a thinking, willing and feeling subject”<sup>14</sup> and Barrett says, “‘Heart’ is one of Paul’s most important psychological terms, and has a wide range of use. . . it is the organ of thought (10:6), but also of feeling (9:2). It is essentially inward, hidden (2:29; 8:27).”<sup>15</sup> In its use here both the intellectual and emotional elements are important. The mind understands and grasps the truth that God loves us and the emotions are stirred and gripped by its reality. However, what is particularly important is that this takes place in **our hearts**. Believers are assured that God loves **them**. This is clearly something direct and personal. It is not a deduction.<sup>16</sup> Because the love of God has actually reached out into the heart and experience of believers, they know that God loves them.

## The Holy Spirit

. . . by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Unlike “poured out”, “given” is in the aorist tense and thus “indicates a single, decisive act”.<sup>17</sup> It might be argued that this is a reference to Pentecost; the Spirit has been given, once, decisively, and it is through his activity now in the Church and the believer that the love of God is poured out in the heart. (The same possibility arises in Titus 3:6 where the phrase “poured out on us abundantly (richly)” certainly suggests Pentecost, and is at least intended to evoke the richness of the Pentecostal experience into which believers have entered.) However, it seems much more natural to take this as the Spirit given directly to believers, and the position argued for here is that this is the Holy Spirit given and received, in conversion.

a) This fits in with the way in which Paul speaks of the Spirit being given and received.

In ch 8, which contains Paul’s most extensive and detailed teaching on the Spirit, he says in v 15, “you received the Spirit of adoption”, and in Gal 3:2,3 he says, “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?” 1 Cor 6:19 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, **whom you have from God**. . .”

b) It also accords with the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost itself; Acts 2:38,39, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”<sup>18</sup> While the promise of the Father had a historic, definitive fulfilment at Pentecost, new believers subsequent to that event enter into the reality of the promise themselves when they receive the gift of the Spirit upon repentance and faith in the name of Jesus Christ. (It would take us too far afield to try and relate this to baptism

also!<sup>19)</sup> This is seen in Acts in 5:32, 9:17, 10:44-48, 11:15-18, 15:8, 19:2.

- c) The same note is found in John's writings. In John 7:39 the author comments on Jesus' words, "But this he spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in him would receive." Other references include John 14:16,17; 1 John 3:24.

It is probable that many evangelicals, perhaps especially those of a Reformed persuasion, tend to emphasise regeneration at the expense of the gift of the Spirit. It is interesting to note, for example, that in Hoekema's *SAVED BY GRACE*,<sup>20</sup> while he has a long chapter on The Role of the Holy Spirit, and another on Regeneration, he has no section on receiving the Spirit at conversion. But there are important differences between regeneration and the gift of the Spirit. Regeneration is a **work** of the Spirit within human beings granting them new life and all that flows from that; it effects a change within **them**. But receiving the Spirit means receiving him as a **person** so that he permanently indwells the believer.<sup>21</sup> If with Hoekema we recognise that "regeneration has causal priority over other aspects of the process of salvation",<sup>22</sup> we suggest that regeneration leads to repentance and faith, which in turn leads to reception of the Spirit, as in Acts 2:38. While it is commonplace to affirm the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian, it is probable that this is often not adequately linked with receiving the Spirit, and so the effects of this for the Christian life are understated. This may be partially responsible for doctrines which tend to lay the emphasis on a reception of the Spirit subsequent to conversion. To lay too much emphasis on regeneration, which is a **work** of the Spirit, may tend to leave the door open for a later reception of the Spirit as a **person**.

It is interesting to note that we have a correlation in these verses between faith and justification, on one hand, and receiving the Spirit on the other. Verse 1 begins with justification by faith which brings us peace with God. Then the discussion moves on through rejoicing in hope, to rejoicing in tribulations also because these develop hope, and hope does not put to shame, because the love of God is poured out through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. The whole discussion is in a certain sense circular. Having been justified by faith certain consequences follow for us, and these are underwritten because the Holy Spirit was given to us. The logic of the passage demands that justification and receiving the Spirit belong together in the experience of conversion.

### **How are they related?**

At this point it could be asked how receiving the Holy Spirit relates to the love of God being outpoured in the heart and bringing a knowledge of the love of God? At least **four** answers could be given, all of which are probably involved together.

- a) The coming of the Holy Spirit is itself a manifestation of the love of God. He is a gift, and a very great gift too. It would be possible to conceive of salvation in terms of forgiveness or regeneration without the personal coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit at all. Moreover he is the Spirit of God and of Christ, and his coming establishes fellowship with the Father and the Son, John 14:16-23; 1 John 1:3.
- b) The gift of the Holy Spirit means that God who is love indwells the believer. All the attributes of God are made real by his presence through the Spirit.
- c) The Holy Spirit is the revealer of God's will and the teacher of God's people (Eph 7:17ff). This aspect needs to be considered further when looking at verses 6-8 in relation to verse 5.
- d) The concept seems close to the witness of the Spirit in 8:16. The witness is to an objective truth, "God loves me", and yet it is a subjective sense of the reality of that.

Before we go on to the next verses we will pause slightly and digress from the text to a **pastoral question** which it seems to raise. The question is this. If all believers receive the Spirit at conversion, and if through the Spirit the love of God is poured out in their heart, why is it that not all believers have a sense of that love, and all too often have only a tenuous hold on their hope?<sup>23</sup> This is a bigger and more crucial matter than can be tackled here. **Three comments** will be made.

- 1 Christians do not often think in terms of the Spirit being given to them. They think of receiving Christ, but not of receiving the Spirit. Of course to receive one is to receive the other. Hoekema says, "When one participates in Christ, therefore, he or she also participates in the Spirit."<sup>24</sup> However, this seems to reverse the order, and may tend to make the gift of the Spirit appear simply as an addendum to receiving Christ. Romans 8:9,10 says, "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. And if Christ be in you. . .". the order here suggests that receiving the Spirit means receiving Christ. The whole emphasis appears different. The Spirit when he comes brings Christ with him.
- 2 As a result of this Christians have no expectation or anticipation of what the gift of the Spirit will mean. There is a delicate relationship between teaching, expectation and experience which we ought not to overlook. Experience can be stunted, distorted or misinterpreted by inaccurate or unbalanced teaching.
- 3 The search for fruits of regeneration which can serve as a basis for assurance turns attention to trying to discern the Spirit's working, rather than receiving the witness which he brings by his presence. It is true that this type of contrast can easily be overdone, but the need to consider evidences in the life comes in more as a check on presumption rather than as a substitute for assurance based on the love of God.

### **How do we know?**

There is a further question that must be looked at in more detail: is Paul simply talking about an inward impression of the love of God? John Murray enlarges the question, "By what considerations do we know of this love of God, referred to in verse 5 as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit? This is not an irrelevant or irreverent question. It is the question of the process of revelation and of redemptive accomplishment by which this love of God has been demonstrated. It is the answer to this question that is provided by verse 6." He points to the opening "For" of verse 6, "This is the force of the conjunction 'for' with which the verse begins; it is explanatory or confirmatory."<sup>25</sup>

John Murray's discussion is a very valuable one as a corrective both to any tendency to take the love of God for granted, or on the other hand to an awareness of weakness and ungodliness leading us to doubt the possibility of God loving sinners.

Verse 8 especially focuses on the concrete and historical expression of the love of God in the death of Christ. It is fully consonant with verses like John 3:16, Romans 8:32 and 1 John 4:9,10 in the way it emphasises that the height and depth of God's love is seen in the giving of his Son to sacrificial death. Bringing verse 5 and verse 8 together we can deduce that what the Holy Spirit does in pouring out the love of God in the heart of believers is to make them vividly aware of the extent of that love in the death of Christ. In the conversion experience in which a sinner trusts in the crucified Saviour the Holy Spirit brings home to the heart the overwhelming nature of the love of God in not sparing his own Son.

We ought to note in passing that the emphasis here, as it is generally in Scripture, is on the love of the Father in the death of the Son.<sup>26</sup> This is not to minimise the love of Christ himself (Gal 2:20; Eph 5:25), but it does guard against any suggestion that in the transaction of the cross we see only the wrath of the Father and the love of the Son. It was love beyond understanding that provided the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. One or two features of verse 8 ought to be noticed. First of all the verb comes first in the sentence so that the emphasis falls on it, “**Demonstrates** his own love to us does God, in that...” The verb itself *sunistesin* seems in the context to go beyond the meaning of “commend” to “demonstrate, show”, or to “bring something out”,<sup>27</sup> see Rom 3:5; 2 Cor 7:11b - “in all things you demonstrated yourselves to be clear. . .”; Gal 2:18. The verb is in the present tense, or rather, the present continuous. The once-for-all death of Christ (*apethanen*, aorist) is an ongoing, perpetual demonstration of the love of God.<sup>28</sup> The death of Christ still, today, demonstrates the love of God to us; indeed in that death God brings his love out before us so that we can see it clearly. Further it is “his own” love that God demonstrates to us, as if Paul wished to leave his readers in no doubt that the origin of and motivation for the death of Christ is nothing less and nothing other than the love of God. Finally we must notice the crucial position of “in that while we were still sinners”. The love of God is not simply seen in that Christ died for us, but particularly in that **while we were still sinners** he died for us. This is fundamental for the assurance that is being given in the whole passage, and prepares for vv10,11. It is a sense of sin and unworthiness which seems to call assurance into question, but if God loved us and Christ died for us while we were still sinners, our hope is absolutely secure.

## Concluding Comments

- 1 Paul’s thinking, as his letters so often bear witness, is inextricably trinitarian. Here salvation is rooted in the love of the Father. It could be argued that it is the love of the triune God which is being referred to, and there is a sense in which it would be perfectly true to speak of this. Yet Paul seems here, as elsewhere, to be speaking of the economy of salvation in which each person of the Trinity has a distinctive part. Salvation is accomplished by the death of Christ, and it is the Holy Spirit who is the agent by which the love of God, who gave his Son to death, is poured out.
- 2 The link with verse 8 reminds us that it is the Holy Spirit’s particular ministry to glorify Christ and take of the things of Christ and declare them to God’s people, John 16:14,15. Paul’s writing here bears testimony to the fact that this was a part of the Holy Spirit’s ministry taken for granted among the early Christians.
- 3 Further, the Holy Spirit is the one who witnesses to objective truth and brings home the power and reality of it to the heart. It is not just a feeling which is poured out in the heart; it is a sense of the objective love of God, a love which is expressed concretely in the cross of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.
- 4 Going a step beyond this, the love of God, and the death of Christ, are expressed in words in preaching and in writing. Word and Spirit thus belong together. We do not stop when we reach Romans 5:5; in reading on the Holy Spirit enables us to view, receive and respond to that love which, in the death of Christ, God demonstrates to us. The love of God being poured out in the heart is not therefore an experience which bears no relation to the Word, it is one which is integrally related to the preaching and writing which speaks of that love and of its expression in the death of Christ.

## References

- 1 John Murray, THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, 1967: "One of the most condensed statements in the epistle." p 164
- 2 Martin Luther, COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, trans J Theodore Mueller, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1976, p 92
- 3 John Calvin, EPISTLES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS AND TO THE THESSALONIANS, trans Ross Mackenzie, The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1972, p 108
- 4 Leon Morris, THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, IVP/Eerdmans, Grand Rapids/Leicester, 1988, p 221
- 5 Anders Nygren, COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, Muhlenburg Press, Philadelphia., 1949, p 199
- 6 Both Robert Haldane, THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1958, and D Martyn Lloyd-Jones, ROMANS, EXPOSITION OF CHAPTER 5, ASSURANCE, Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1971, argue strongly that the first clause in the verse does not mean that hope will not be disappointed at the last, but rather that, in the present, hope does not put to shame or does not allow someone who has it to be ashamed. The present tense of the verb *kataischunei*, together with the fact that it is the love of God experienced in the present that keeps hope from being put to shame, suggest that this is correct. In this case we may have here an example of litotes; far from being abashed by tribulations and allowing them to count against our hope, we rather rejoice and exult in it because the love of God etc.
- 7 op cit, p 165. So also C E B Cranfield, THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, ICC, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, Vol 1, 1977; "A statement of the fact of God's love for us is a more cogent proof of the security of our hope than a statement of the fact of our love for him would be. . ." p 262
- 8 op cit, p 107, 108. Cranfield, op cit, p 262, adds after the quotation above, "(it would also be more suitable as an explanation of why we exult in our tribulations, if this clause were connected with v3a, rather than v5a)".
- 9 James Dunn, ROMANS 1-8, Word Biblical Commentary, 38A, Word, Dallas, 1988, speaks of "the vivid metaphor of a cloudburst on a parched countryside", p 253, while, more prosaically, Cranfield says, "The metaphor (poured out) may well have been chosen in order to express the idea of unstinting lavishness." op cit, p 263
- 10 Dunn, op cit, p 253: "...association with the Spirit in the present context... strongly suggests that the verb had already become fixed within Christian terminology as a reference to the founding event of Pentecost."
- 11 Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker; A GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND OTHER EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1979
- 12 op cit, p 263
- 13 op cit, p 221
- 14 op cit, p 118
- 15 C K Barrett, THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, Black's New Testament Commentaries, A & C Black, London, 1975; p 37

- 16 Dunn, op cit, p 252, "What is striking about this first reference to God's love in Romans is that Paul should speak of it in such vivid experiential terms - God's love not simply as something believed in on the basis of the gospel or the testimony of the cross (cf. even v8), not simply the certainty of God's love (Kuss), but God's love itself (Althaus) experienced in rich measure..."
- 17 Morris, op cit, p 221
- 18 Dunn says, "Luke probably intends Acts 2:38 to establish the pattern and norm for Christian conversion-initiation in his presentation of Christianity's beginnings. At the close of the first Christian sermon the leading apostle sets the precedent for the instruction of inquirers." BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1970; p 90
- 19 Ernst Kaesemann reflects the view of some others also when, referring to the Spirit being given, he says, "What is in mind is probably the baptismal event in which the Spirit is imparted, according to the common view of primitive Christianity." COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1980; p 135. It is hardly necessary to point out that there is no indication of this in the passage whatsoever and in the most primitive Christianity the gift of the Spirit was by no means tied to baptism, eg Acts 10:47.
- 20 Anthony A Hoekema, SAVED BY GRACE, Eerdmans/Paternoster, Grand Rapids/Exeter, 1989
- 21 cf Lloyd-Jones, op cit, p 92, "There is no receptacle in the natural man to receive the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is only the new nature that can receive Him. The work of regeneration is preparatory to the coming of the Spirit to dwell within us."
- 22 op cit, p 14
- 23 Lloyd-Jones emphasises that the Spirit is given to all believers, but maintains that not all believers have had the love of God poured out in their hearts, "All Christians have not had this experience, but it is open to all; and all Christians should have it." op cit, p 85. It is difficult to believe that the syntax here allows of such a distinction. Dunn says, "There is no question of distinguishing the initial experience of God's love, of which the perfect *ennechutai* speaks, from the initiating gift of the Holy Spirit. For Paul they are one." BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, p 139
- 24 op cit, p 29
- 25 op cit, p 166
- 26 Dunn, ROMANS, p 257; "It is important to note that Paul thinks of Christ's death as a demonstration of God's love (elsewhere particularly 3:25 and 2 Corinthians 5:19.)"
- 27 BAGD, LEXICON
- 28 Dunn, op cit, p 256; "the present tense complements the perfect of v 5 and probably reflects the perspective of the preacher who referred back to the death of Christ as a timeless proof of God's love."

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# The Church Growth Movement

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*Geoff Thomas*

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We are living at a time of steady decline in church attendance and in the impact the evangelical church is making on society in the Western World. A movement concerned with this fact, desiring to promote the growth of congregations, must be welcomed. Anyone who takes seriously the *Great Commission* and who studies the dynamic growth of the early church chronicled by Luke in the book of Acts is bound to be interested in this subject.

The Church Growth Movement is largely the history of one man and one institution, **Donald McGavran** and the School of World Mission and the attached Institute of Church Growth which is at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. McGavran died four years ago, well into his nineties. For the best understanding of his approach to the mission of the church his series of lectures given at Westminster Theological Seminary and published in 1988, entitled **EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM A THEOLOGICAL MANDATE**, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company) should be consulted. In part autobiographical they tell of his life as a missionary, his deliverance from modernism, the beginning of the Institute of Church Growth and how he came to his basic convictions. In the latter half of the 1970's those convictions reached the U K and swiftly became the staple of the lecturing in practical theology at most of the evangelical seminaries in the country. Scottish Baptist pastor, Tom Houston, introduced them into the Bible Society soon after his appointment there, so that in the U K, Bible Society and Church Growth Movement are virtually synonymous. The British Church Growth Movement, with its executive director, Mrs Monica Hill, was started in 1981. It produces the *Church Growth Digest*, a quarterly magazine, and it plans regional conferences. The MARC Europe Organisation promotes Church Growth principles by its publications. The emphasis on 'people movements' has influenced **OPERATION WORLD**, compiled by Patrick Johnstone and produced by OM. The book has become very influential; its 1993 edition ran to 330,000 copies. Part speciality almanac and part prayer-list it provides a tour of world-wide Christianity. The 660 page volume is an aspect of a campaign to establish churches in all people groups by the turn of the century. The key British books on the Church Growth Movement are Roy Poynter's **HOW DO CHURCHES GROW?** (MARC) and Eddie Gibbs' **I BELIEVE IN CHURCH GROWTH** (Hodder). Both those men were working for the Bible Society but then went to California to lecture at the Fuller Schools of World Missions and Church Growth.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

Presbyterian pastor William Smith of Pittsburgh has outlined the distinguishing principles of the Church Growth Movement as the following:

1. **a commitment to the Great Commission**, in the light of which liberals are criticised for losing sight of the urgency of the evangelistic mission of the church and for identifying evangelism too broadly. Evangelicals are criticised for their emphasis upon the cultural mandate, for putting the priority of taking care of sheep far above that of saving goats,

for settling for less than the Bible's requirements for the health of the church and for their unwillingness to look at what is actually happening (as opposed to what they imagine is happening) in their own congregations.

2. **an ecumenical spirit**, of a very broad nature, which embraces all kinds of Protestants as well as Roman Catholics. The CGM is not primarily concerned with doctrine: it asks, What is your doctrine doing? It wants to know if your church holds to enough of the essential elements of the biblical mission of the church. It is not sympathetic to the type of theology promulgated by Dr David Jenkins, nor of liberation theology. It is unimpressed with denominational schemes for uniting church groupings in one super-denomination. It wants to categorise people in terms of whether people are moving in the right direction or not.

3. **the social sciences**; the CGM holds the Bible in one hand and in the other such sciences as anthropology, psychology, sociology and their related disciplines such as management, communication and leaderships theories, all in order to help us understand people, know how they think and build up a church. Hence it has developed its own vocabulary and jargon: "mega-churches", "metropolitan regional churches", "awkward-sized churches", "receptivity", "resistance axis", "soil testing", "wet movement", "oikos evangelism" and "people groups."

4. **culture**; McGavran noted how the gospel moves along family and tribal lines (the "bridges of God"). In order to gain new converts social networks of new Christians are the most productive areas to work in. McGavran argues that the Great Commission itself requires this cultural approach - we are charged to disciple "all the peoples, or ethnic groups."

5. **the homogeneous unit**; people are best reached by people like themselves. So the emphasis is upon targeting people who are like the people already attending the church. CGM is strongly anti-racist and believes that every church should be open to every person, yet it recognises that every congregation is usually one homogeneous unit. One judges that the CGM would have done better to have simply observed that phenomenon as a matter of fact rather than try to elevate it into a principle.

6. **a business like approach to the work of the church**; the CGM encourages lucidity in the congregation's sense of mission, a rigorous use of statistical studies to know one's community and where are the winnable people, the congregation's meetings and structures, effective management especially in strong pastors (dubbed an 'internal change agent') and the mobilisation of members, setting the right priorities and use of resources and productive programmes. It encourages outside intervention of experts (dubbed an 'external change agent') when a church is sluggish.

## **Appreciation**

Os Guinness in *DINING WITH THE DEVIL* has evaluated the CGM and has written of its positive features in terms of its concern for renewal, how it displays the Christian genius for innovation and adaptation, the working models of growing churches which it illuminates, and that it has provided hope in despairing circumstances.

Bill Hull has mentioned other useful aspects: "common sense" advice concerning the way churches present themselves to their local communities; improving leadership qualities and communication; giving a more professional polish to church bulletins; providing insights into interesting options in outreach programmes (*POWER RELIGION*, p 142).



William Smith has listed other features:

1. **its commitment to evangelism**; CGM supporters really do believe that sinners are lost without Christ and that we have been given a mission by Christ to reach them.
2. **its commitment to discipleship**; “the goal is not decisions but disciples” is a phrase one hears continually in CGM circles.
3. **its commitment to the local church**; the CGM does believe that the church is needed to gather and disciple those it finds in evangelism.
4. **its searching questions**; do we want our churches to grow? Are we afraid or resentful of bigness? Are we willing to take a hard look at what is happening amongst us? Are we too tied to our own comfort in our traditional ways and attitudes?
5. **the practical help we can receive**; someone else has already done the things we have heard of. What are the pitfalls and guidelines? What are the common characteristics of churches that are growing? And those that are not growing? For example, the factor above everything else that brings a person along to church is an invitation from someone they know. Just that fact counterbalances a fatalistic attitude that thinks if people are meant to come along and become Christians they will come anyway.

## Criticism

Bill Hull, the director of church ministries for the Evangelical Free Church of America, was someone involved in the Movement for many years and continues to assist churches in strategies for growth. Yet in his essay, “*Is the Church Growth Movement Really Working?*” in *POWER RELIGION*, edited by Michael Horton (Scripture Press, £6.50), Bill Hull says that the CGM “has a sociological base, it is data-driven, and it worships at the altar of pragmatism. It esteems that which works above all and defines success in worldly and short-sighted terms. It offers models that cannot be reproduced and leaders who cannot be imitated. The principles of modern business are revered more than doctrine; the latter, in fact, often being perceived as a detriment or at least a distraction to church growth. Yet churches are supposed to be driven by scriptural teachings, not by the latest marketing surveys or consumer trends. In short, theology before sociology, please” (p 142). Bill Hull’s essay is worth the price of that book, but the whole is useful. Certainly McGavran insisted that a scientific approach to mission was essential. George Marsden, in his history of Fuller Seminary, *REFORMING FUNDAMENTALISM*, writes, “McGavran was frankly a technician of church growth.” It was no secret that the ageing Charles Fuller who founded Fuller Seminary was disappointed in McGavran’s appointment. Fuller regarded the warmth of the Holy Spirit, projecting toward each individual who heard his broadcasts, as the overwhelming key to his success. He had always dreamed of a school of missions and evangelism, and then McGavran was appointed and in 1965 came to the Fuller Conference to tell supporters about the new school. Charles Fuller listened as McGavran illustrated his talk with numerous charts and graphs. When he had finished Fuller got up and did not thank McGavran for his wonderful presentation, as his custom was, but asked the congregation if they would sing a verse of “*Heavenly Sunshine*” and then turn round and shake hands with their neighbours. This was not the inspirational approach to world evangelism Fuller had prayed for but he did not have the theology to diagnose what was wrong. It was something more than a lack of ‘warmth.’

*Christianity Today*, that pragmatic organ of the new evangelicalism, published an article on June 24, 1991 on this theme, “*Somehow Church Growth Principles Don’t Work*”. It

pointed out that after a decade of CGM promotion the 1980's was characterised as a period in which the percentage of American adults attending church remained the same, while Protestant church membership actually declined. The average American evangelical church witnessed 1.7 professions of faith in Christ per year for every 100 people who attended. The most significant fact about American evangelicalism is that people are moving from smaller churches to bigger ones in droves. In 1970 there were in America 100 churches with over 1,000 members. Twenty years later the number had rocketed to over 4,000. So big churches apply CGM principles and they grow at the expense of small churches. But statistical growth by evangelism, discipleship and outreach is not taking - and that is the standard by which CGM asks us to judge.

Why do pastors attend the CGM seminars? In Bill Hull's judgment it is overwhelmingly to break the 200 or 400 or whatever numerical barrier they themselves have erected in their church's attendance, to learn a new method (a quick fix), and to meet their ego needs. In these CGM conferences they meet a parade of role models who tell their success stories and then say, "You can do it!" That is just not true for most pastors. Those speakers, because of their personalities, rare leadership gifts, creative abilities, charisma and church locations might have done it, but others could not. You cannot transfer context, nor personality, nor gifts, nor a church's geography. If you try to copy a man you impersonate him rather than imitate him. You cannot transfer spirituality, and every pastor who has been truly blessed got to where he is through close experiential growing dealings with God. Richard Lovelace has pointed out that in the history of the church when God has sent revival there have been two elements invariably present, an awareness of God's holiness and the depth of our own sin.

When William Smith evaluates the CGM he judges that:-

1. **it lacks hermeneutical principle, exegetical precision and a theological base.** The handling of the Scriptures is consistently shallow, superficial and inadequate. One gets the impression that protagonists of CGM have arrived at certain conclusions which they are committed to and then they go to Scripture searching for an example or interpretation which will undergird it. For example, Peter Wagner interprets the reason Jesus sent his disciples first to the Jews as an example of targeting people likely to be responsive, rather than explaining that this period was an overlap of the old covenant with the new, and that God was, until AD 70, still dealing in a special way with the old covenant people: it was then "to the Jews first, and after to the Gentiles." Or again, the parable of the sower was not told, as Wagner suggests, in order to encourage the preachers to test the soil where he is likely to get the best response so that he is to sow his seed there but rather to explain the multiformity of responses to the word which is to be preached to all men.

Peter Wagner pleads that the CGM has its own peculiar methodology. He says, "I use a phenomenologically informed hermeneutical methodology." In other words he uses experience and the latest sociological judgments to evaluate the Bible. And to the extent he does that he is undermining the Bible. It is not just what you believe about the Bible that counts but how you handle it.

2. **it elevates evangelism over every task in the church.** The CGM absolutises evangelism making it control every other thing that the church does. The *Newsweek* magazine (December 17, 1991) published a Christmas cover story on American religion entitled, "*And the Children Shall Lead Them.*" It chronicles the growth of large

congregations and said, "The CGM experts judge a minister's accountability not by his faithfulness to the gospel, but whether, as Lyle Schuller, 'the people keep coming and giving.' By that measure the most successful churches are those that most resemble a suburban shopping mall." The article pointed out that another hindrance to a church growing is Christian doctrine, and that people want to hear what the church is for, not what it is against. So everything possible is done to make services not only attractive but non-threatening to unbelievers. That is too high a price to pay for what is called 'evangelism'. We are not prepared to take our focus off the living God or make the centre of our worship anything other than the glorifying of his name by those elements which he himself has told us to do. When the best of modern insights are in full swing there should always be a remainder, an irreducible character that is not affected by the sum of all that is cultural, natural, organisational and human.

**3. it so contextualises the gospel that the gospel itself becomes lost.** Conviction of sin, repentance, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as one's sole plea for mercy are the non-negotiable elements in God's way of peace. Of course, let us be culturally sensitive to how people in the home counties or in the highlands of Scotland evaluate and take a perspective on issues. Let us learn how to communicate the eternal truths in a fresh and relevant way. But if we become obsessed by what we think is contemporary communicative language then our slipping into trendiness will actually detract from the solemnity of the message and its simplicity. It is compassion and love for people that gives boldness in addressing them with an urgent lucidity. There is the additional danger that in the name of cultural sensitivity we actually jettison careful exegesis and obedience to the whole counsel of God.

Modernity poses the most insidious problem for the CGM because it appears to be no problem at all. When men are gripped by an awareness of the blessings and benefits of being citizens of the 1990's, with all the power and speed at their disposal in communicating and selling their messages, at that point the threat to historic revealed religion is formidable. Os Guinness illustrates thus: "One Christian advertising agent, who represented both the Coca-Cola Corporation and engineered the 'I Found It' campaign, stated the point brazenly: 'Back in Jerusalem where the church started, God performed a miracle there on the day of Pentecost. They didn't have the benefits of buttons and media, so God had to do a little supernatural work there. But today, with our technology, we have available to us the opportunity to create the same kind of interest in a secular society.'"<sup>1</sup> (*Table Talk*, March 1992, p 53) The very reverse is true: man can no more create a pentecostal-like interest in Jesus Christ than raise the dead.

**4. it has a pragmatism which can be manipulative.** What works for the growth of the church surely must be right, says CGM. It has observed that people attend meetings where their felt needs are met. They are responsive to what they judge their needs to be. But what of their needs as God judges them to be? Which arbiter of needs is the church going to serve? The pulpit may so concentrate on felt needs that it never gets around to presenting the gospel. It may be so fearful of offending sinners that popular presentations of psychiatry usurp the preaching of the Word. With felt needs programming, William Smith says, "we may well produce in the Western world a whole new generation of rice Christians."

Comparing the enthusiasm for religion at the end of the century with that displayed in the Great Awakening, the *Newsweek* article said, "the aim this time is support not salvation, help rather than holiness, a circle of spiritual equals rather than an authoritative

church or guide. A group affirmation of self is at the top of the agenda, which is why some of the least demanding churches are now in greatest demand... In their efforts to accommodate, many clergy have simply airbrushed sin out of their language. Like politicians they can only recognise 'mistakes' which congregations are urged to put behind them. Having substituted therapy for spiritual discernment, they appeal to a nurturing God who helps his (or her) people to cope. Heaven by this creed, is never having to say no to yourself and God, and never having to say you are sorry."

This *celebration* of oneself is a game which young people find fun. With Christian maturity *deliverance* from self by a loving Saviour becomes one's longing and thanksgiving.

**5. it lacks confidence in the Word of God and the ordinances.** Does any Christian believe that if you find a responsive people, come up with the right strategy, offer key facilities in your building, make your follow-up visits fast enough, provide a nursery and toilets, and organise relevant services that, as a result, people will turn from their sin in loathing and put their confidence in the finished work of Christ? The only people to believe that are Pelagians. It is not right strategy that makes churches grow. And if congregations are not growing the reasons are not that you are working with the wrong people nor that you are using the wrong strategy. What were the reasons the seven churches of Asia Minor of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 were in the states they were in? Could a CGM expert guarantee any one of those churches growth even though the Lord had spit one of them out of his mouth and had removed the candlestick from another?

The CGM fails to emphasise the link between obedience and blessing, when the Word and ordinances are given their divine place in a congregation. The CGM does not remind us that the church at Antioch grew because the hand of the Lord was with it. It emphasises the planting of Paul and the watering of Apollos but the fact that God gave the increase is ignored. The effective pastor of the CGM is little exhorted to buy theology and truth passionately. What is praised is his ability to delegate, interact, make decisions, be visible, practical, accountable and discerning. That may be the profile for the executive manager but is it the pastoral epistles' description of church leaders? One is reminded of the cynical comment of rock star Michael Been of *The Call*: "Everything that goes on in every major corporation goes on inside the church, except as a sideline the church teaches religion."

**6. it can demoralise faithful pastors.** The men most keen on CGM are confident young ministers of growing congregations who will also have their stories to tell. The pastor who remains faithfully at his post and pastors his people in a static or shrinking scene will find the CGM remedy devastating. The blame can almost always be laid at his feet - he does not want growth, does not know how to get it, is uninspirational and is a poor manager. While God, we are somehow assured, wants that congregation to grow numerically, the blockage in the way of growth is the pastor.

What would be the CGM's diagnosis? "You are working with a resistant population, so abandon the work"? Or, "You have the wrong strategy, change it"? Or, "The church has an inadequate man in leadership so get rid of him"? What if he has been prayerful, loves Jesus Christ more than anyone else in the world, cares for his people, has witnessed to the lost, wept with them that mourn, comforted the dying and encouraged the fearful, is he to be written off because he has not produced the numerically growing congregation that the young executives in the congregation want to be a part of? The ministerial casualties of this mentality are all over the country.

7. it is favourable to 'power evangelism' of signs and wonders. Critics of the CGM have said often enough that it is naturalistic, not relying on the sovereignty of the Spirit, with no doctrine of revival and no consciousness of the history of the church and her great awakenings. The CGM has listened and has responded to a large extent by embracing the theology and methodology of John Wimber and the Vineyard churches. Wimber has submitted a chapter in one of the latest CGM symposia to be edited by Peter Wagner, **CHURCH GROWTH, THE STATE OF THE ART**.

The book is a tract for the charismatic churches. Wagner says, "My initial findings indicate that across the board Power Evangelism is clearly resulting in the most vigorous church growth." In his essays Eddy Gibbs says, "What we need are power encounters in which the Word is confirmed with signs and wonders." F G May writes that the best method of activating the people of God in our day is anointed preaching, "backed up by supernatural manifestations of God's grace." He makes the customary claim that this kind of preaching has been found most often amongst pentecostals and charismatics and that therefore they are the fastest growing churches in the world. Wimber says that we need to undertake evangelism according to the model of the ministry Paul had in Corinth which was that, "The explanation of the Gospel comes with the Spirit's power through signs and wonders. It is a spontaneous Spirit-empowered presentation of the Gospel, usually preceded and under girded by supernatural demonstrations of God's presence." So if we want our churches to grow, the CGM encourages us to look to the pentecostal and charismatic churches. The phenomena we see in them, we are assured, are the result of the Holy Spirit's presence. It is not only the latter claim we have difficulty with: are such churches rapidly growing? In the U K **CHRISTIAN HANDBOOK 1992-1993** we discover that the Elim churches grew by 7,000 new members in the past five years, that is, they grew by 3.5 members per congregation per year. The Assemblies of God added 8,000 new members in the same five year period, that is, by 2.5 members per congregation per year. The Apostolic Church actually had 900 less members in the same five year period, everyone of its congregations declined by a member every year. If these figures are compared to the FIEC, it grew by 3,000 new members in five years, that is, by 1.5 members per congregation per year. So there was slightly faster growth in some of the pentecostal denominations than in an evangelical denomination.

Of course, this does not account for the House Church or Restorationist movement. What of this charismatic grouping in Britain? How quickly is it growing? In those first enthusiastic years of its early expansion they had more rapid growth, by 45,000 members in that same five year period, that is, by six members a year per church. Scarcely a revival, but certainly growth. But the price of that style of worship, plus the phenomena observed in those churches would be too costly for many evangelical Christians to pay. Certainly the extent of the growth of those pentecostal and charismatic churches in Britain has been greatly exaggerated.

The CGM has many useful lessons to teach us, just as long as we are guided by a knowledge of church history and theology, and by a commitment to a thorough faithful proclamation of the Scriptures. There can be no New Testament growth without that.

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*Rev Geoffrey Thomas is pastor of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth*

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# Fertility Treatment: An Expression of Evangelical Concern

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*In January 1994 the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority published a Public Consultation Document to consider issues relating to Donated Ovarian Tissue in Embryo Research and Assisted Conception (copies available from HFEA, Paxton House, 30 Artillery Lane, London E1 7LS). We are providing below the text of the response sent to the HFEA from evangelical churches.*

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This response to the Public Consultation Document is made on behalf of the 1.25 million Christians and 3,000 churches comprising the British Evangelical Council and the Evangelical Alliance. Whilst there is a range of views on some matters of detail represented among the churches in these two bodies, there is a common commitment to the authority of the Bible. This we accept because Jesus put his stamp of authority on the Old Testament and commissioned the writing of the New Testament. Thus the leaders of these bodies begin with the Biblical presupposition that human life begins at fertilisation and that it is morally indefensible to destroy such a life, whatever stage of development it has reached. Whilst respecting those who reach different conclusions about the commencement of a distinct personal life, we do speak here for the overwhelming majority of evangelicals in our constituency.

Even those who do not accept a Christian world-view recognise it has provided an unparalleled foundation for the development of good medical ethics and practice for many hundred of years. The legislative frame-work based on these Biblical principles is by no means invalidated by recent advances in technology.

We have a particular interest in these issues because they involve questions of the meaning, purpose and value of human life, along with the biological and social implications of childbearing, sexuality, marriage and family. In addition, some of us are involved, professionally and voluntarily, in counselling and providing practical care for women contemplating abortion. We too are concerned about childlessness because many within our own constituency and among our 'neighbours' are infertile.

## **This response is based on the following principles:**

1. A major plank in our Christian ethical platform is the nature of human life, so vastly unlike all other life-forms that we are described as 'created in the image of God' (Genesis 1:27). The application of this doctrine, when allied to the view that life begins at fertilisation, is that all human life must be cherished and protected and that human embryos, as living human beings, also demand our utmost respect and care. We are not cogs in a mechanistic universe, nor are we merely biological material. To treat any human being as if they were, is simply wrong.
2. We affirm (as has the Health Secretary recently) that it is not our 'right' to have children - they are gifts from God (Psalm 127:3). We recognise that infertility can cause deep distress for many couples and are concerned to give them all the compassionate support we can. Whilst commending those forms of infertility treatment which do not involve the use of human embryos, we reject the notion that any and every technological means should be used to enable a woman to bear a child. We fear that IVF is rapidly

becoming another step down the road of consumerism, where children are about to become the ultimate product in the 'human body shop'.

3. We uphold the sanctity of the marriage relationship with its potential for procreation and family life, and with its endless opportunities for love and service (Genesis 2:24). Procreation was intended as a fruit of that most profound monogamous and permanent relationship between a wife and her husband. To bring in other people's gametes, whether sperm or ova, immediately introduces a third-party into the relationship and inevitably produces what was never intended. Since we are uneasy about IVF for husband and wife, we are decidedly opposed to IVF with ova or sperm donation.

4. The Biblical accounts of such reproductive practices and the pact between Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16: 1-4), are nowhere commended to us, indeed they represent a catalogue of disastrous outcomes and broken human relationships. Furthermore, we know that such donors and recipients can pretend that they have not given or received. Can deceit, however, be a proper basis for childbearing? In addition, children so conceived are denied the possibility of knowing both biological parents. We do not believe this is in the best interests of the child.

5. Because of the above arguments, we view these 'new' issues with grave concern and some alarm. The bizarre cases, widely publicised earlier this year, whereby IVF treatment was given to post-menopausal women, or where ova of ethnic origin different from that of the mother were deliberately sought and used, only serve to reinforce our great unease about developments in this area.

6. The use of ova from aborted foetuses introduces additional ethical dilemmas. Ova can only be harvested after a fairly late (approximately 20 week) abortion and presumably there must be some attempts to keep the unborn girl temporarily alive to ensure that her ova remain in good condition. Donor consent is obviously impossible. Moreover her parents, by asking for her to be aborted, have relinquished any reasonable responsibility and all proper care for her. When the putative test-tube baby grows up and asks about her own mother she must be told that her grandmother aborted her!

**In this light we wish to challenge these presuppositions of the Document:**

a) whereas the Document implicitly accepts IVF as normal medical treatment, we question its universal use. It is not just the excessive use of hormones, the physical and emotional demands, the high costs, or the lack of success that concern us. Our principal objection is that we remain totally opposed to any procedures that threaten the integrity of the human embryo. It is our understanding that IVF, as practised in the UK, usually includes these procedures.

b) The Document states that : 'The HFE Act has resolved the earlier debate on research on human embryos', as if everybody now supports such research. This is not true.

We, and a large section of the general public, still maintain that the use of human embryos for destructive research purposes is unacceptable.

These issues highlight unwelcome trends in assisted reproduction. We do believe that moral slippery slopes exist. We note the legal changes made in 1967 which gave permission, under only limited circumstances, for abortion. That initial permission has become a current expectation, so women now expect abortion-on-demand. We fear a parallel with the HFE Act, which initially granted permission for the use of some assisted reproductive techniques to help a minority of infertile couples to have children. Now, novel addenda to these techniques are gradually, but continually, pushing back the

boundaries of public reserve, so that in the foreseeable future, unthinkable forms of IVF will become the means whereby every woman who wants a baby must have her expectations fulfilled.

We are not against research and scientific progress, but the assisted reproduction enterprise must be controlled by moral precepts, rather than by simple utility and cost-effectiveness. When these latter principles dominate, we all become less human. We would call for infertility treatments of a more ethical nature with less biological manipulation. We would call for more investigations into the cause of infertility resulting from a couple's sperm and ova. Studies into male infertility (apparently the cause of almost half of cases) demand additional research and resources. Adoption, which has honourable Biblical precedents, also requires better promotion among women considering abortion and among infertile couples.

**Above all, we are concerned to uphold the dignity and sanctity of all human life and are therefore firmly opposed to the practices which the public Consultation Document proposes.**

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*Guidelines subsequently issued by the HFEA banned human eggs from aborted foetuses being used in fertility treatment. The Chairman of the HFEA indicated, however, that their decision was largely driven by practical fears that appropriate processes are not yet perfected rather than by ethical principles. They have permitted the use of foetal ovaries for research purposes, arguing that this will improve future fertility treatment and prevent the passing-on of hereditary diseases. That permission was granted despite the fact that only 7% of respondents to the Consultation supported such procedures.*

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## **The Inscrutability of God**

'Don't try to justify God'. He needs no defence. We will save ourselves a lot of heartache if we can come to terms with the inscrutability of God. By this I mean that there is something about God's dealings with us that is mysterious and impenetrable. God does not always disclose to us the reasons why certain things happen. We often torture ourselves by asking the unanswerable, 'Why?' The truth is that we do not know why, and the sooner we come to terms with that the better. I do not mean to suggest that Christians should not do some heart-searching in the presence of God after a momentous event in their lives. There is always the need for inner reflection and evaluation. There are always lessons to learn. But I am referring to the unnecessary and ongoing torture that some people inflict upon themselves in an attempt to penetrate the inscrutability of the divine will when it is utterly impossible. There is absolutely nothing wrong with replying to someone who asks 'I simply don't know'.

Frank Retief  
**TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH**  
reflections on the St James Church  
massacre at Cape Town in 1993.



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# The Conflict for the Mind

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G Wyn Davies

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## The Deepening Conflict

In my *Contemporary Values and their Danger for Christians*,<sup>1</sup> I sought to outline the development and nature of the 'increasingly acute tension between the values commonly held in our society and those eternal values, deriving from the character of God, which are at the very heart of the Christian faith'. In doing so I was persuaded of the accuracy of Carl Henry's analysis of Western culture: based particularly on observation of the United States but equally true of Britain. In *THE TWILIGHT OF A GREAT CIVILIZATION*<sup>2</sup> he reproduced an essay written 18 years earlier entitled *The Barbarians are Coming* in which he warned that the widespread rejection of its Judeo-Christian foundations had opened the doors of Western society to a new barbarism. In 1988 he concluded that since the barbarians now openly and actively 'seek to reverse the inherited intellectual and moral heritage of the Bible, the Christian world-life view and the secular world-life view engage as never before in rival conflict for the mind, the conscience, the will, the spirit, the very selfhood of contemporary man'.<sup>3</sup>

Subsequently, in the light of the above analysis, I found the Reith Lectures of 1991 made very interesting - and disturbing - reading, since in these lectures, entitled *THE PERSISTENCE OF FAITH*, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth, Jonathan Sacks, 'discussed some of the problems of an age characterised by the apparent paradox of deepening secularisation on the one hand and resurgent religious extremism on the other'.<sup>4</sup> He concludes that 'the entire cast of mind in which biblical ideas found a home' has disappeared under the pressure of a science-led transformation of work and society and that 'the central religious assumption that there are moral absolutes which are given, not chosen, has been sent into cultural exile'. He therefore sees a secularised and materialistic Western society as being 'caught between two ages, one passing, the other not yet born, and the conflicting tendencies we witness - deepening secularisation on the one hand, new religious passions on the other - are evidence of that transition. The next chapter is impossible to predict'. In other words, 'the conflict for the mind', as Henry calls it, has entered into a new and intensive phase, the outcome of which is still to be determined.

On the face of it, since the above analysis was made, the dramatic collapse of Communism, reflecting the demise of Marxism as a credible intellectual theory, has substantially changed the balance of power in favour of Christianity and other religious faiths. Insofar as it has resulted in greater freedom of action, of speech and of worship in countries where they were previously forbidden - in practice if not in theory! - and even the Russian leader speaks publicly of the benefits of periodic church attendance, - this may be true and very welcome. However, I believe that to suggest this has invalidated the identification of the end of the 20th century as a particularly critical phase in the **unremitting battle for the mind** is to misunderstand the nature and range of the spiritual forces which are at work and the intensity of the present day conflict.

The New Testament warns us that the battle for the mind and hearts of men and women will continue throughout this age. The Lord Jesus Christ made that clear in such parables as those of the sower and of the tares in Matthew 13 - and spelled it out in uncompromising detail in his delineation of this age in Matthew 24. It is in the midst of a continuous history of varying degrees of persecution, suppression and false teaching, as well as social and natural disturbances, that 'this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations' (Matthew 24:14). Whilst the tactics employed and the ferocity of the battle varies, the battle itself is unceasing and the advances of the enemy are halted and reversed only through the proclamation and practice of revealed truth in the power of the Holy Spirit - manifesting the victory which Jesus Christ has already achieved over all such powers. Is not this why, when he commands his disciples to go and preach the gospel, the Lord makes clear that the only - but sufficient - hope for survival and success is his own powerful presence? 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye **therefore**, and teach all nations. . . and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world' (Matthew 28:18-20).

Many of us have lived our lives in Western societies which have benefited greatly from the Reformation and the revivals of the past, as well as the daily faithfulness of generations of Christians, which curbed the powers of confusion and darkness and brought to bear the influence of biblical principles on the economic, political and moral-cultural systems which form the structure of our societies. We have also witnessed with grief - and apprehension - the deliberate and continuing efforts to remove Christian beliefs and standards from a place of influence in our societies, in the knowledge that such rejection leads to the widespread licentious and violent barbarism which are identified in such passages as Romans 1:18f. as the inevitable consequence of rejecting God and his revealed truth.

It is not surprising therefore that in his recent assessment of democratic capitalism, Novak concludes that 'it is more likely to perish through loss of its indispensable ideas and morals than through weaknesses in its political system or its economic system. In its moral-cultural system lies its weakest link'.<sup>5</sup> As our societies consume their indispensable Christian foundations, 'the stresses of a culture without shared meanings are already mounting, and we have to count the human costs. We see them move from a morality of self-imposed restraint to one in which we increasingly rely on law to protect us from ourselves'.<sup>6</sup> It is not only the underground wells of a rain starved South-East England which are running dry: having cut off our moral and spiritual inheritance from its source of renewal, it too is in danger of exhaustion!

All this highlights the fundamental effect which ideas and thinking have on human well-being and illustrates the biblical pronouncement that we are what we think (Proverbs 23:7). It is not surprising, therefore, that the New Testament should emphasise how important it is that Christians should not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2). The mind is the arena where that battle takes place which tests out true loyalties and determines how as individuals and nations we live and relate to one another and to our God. In his paper *Ideas Have Legs*, Professor Wolters argues that 'ideas have legs in the sense that they are not the highfalutin ramblings of some ivory-tower academic, but are real spiritual forces that go somewhere, that are on the march in somebody's army, and have a widespread effect on our practical, everyday lives'.<sup>7</sup> He goes on to draw attention to Paul's warning to the Colossians: 'Have the roots of your being firmly planted in him, becoming increasingly confirmed

in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with thanksgiving. See to it that no one makes you captive by his so-called philosophy and vain deceit, based on human tradition, in line with the guiding principles of the world, but not in line with Christ' (Colossians 2:7,8). Paul is warning that pagan philosophies can enslave us and that their ideas are on the march in the service of spiritual powers, against whom we are to safeguard ourselves by communion with the Christ who frees, enlightens and keeps those who live and move and have their being - with thanksgiving - in him.

In order to be better able to understand, to stand firm in this conflict, let us, therefore, survey the battlefield in this post-Communist world. What is the nature of this spiritual crisis at the end of the 20th century: this transition between two ages 'one passing, the other not yet born' which Sacks identifies? Who are Henry's 'barbarians' and with what do they threaten us?

### **The Nature of the Transition**

In *Contemporary Values* I attempted to identify the dangers arising from a 'moral and spiritual ecology',<sup>8</sup> which is dominated by secular humanism. This showed that Christianity faces a deepening crisis in its traditional, Western strongholds - and this in itself would warrant Sacks calling the present time a 'transition between two ages'. However, it is not only Christianity which is now being challenged but both the *scientism* which has been its main protagonist since the Enlightenment and the democratic-capitalist socio-economic order which has, in part at least, risen from Christianity and has become for many a substitute for it.

Scientism assumes that the scientific method is uniquely the way to discover truth and that it is capable of providing us with a complete picture of reality, without any reference to God, whom it generally dismisses as a figment of unenlightened and immature minds. It views man as being 'in charge' and through scientific discovery and control to be capable of solving humanity's problems: progress is therefore to be measured by an advance towards creating a heaven on earth. This belief is now under attack from a number of directions. For example, some quantum physicists now spurn the intrinsic intelligibility of nature and take pride in advocating "the chaos behind the law" whilst others, such as the Nobel Prize winner Steven Weinberg, question whether scientific research is worthwhile: 'The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it seems pointless'.<sup>9</sup> Others question the results of scientific endeavour, because of the cost at which advances are achieved and the unprecedented danger in which they place the human race, both directly through the destructive potential of nuclear, biological and genetic discoveries and indirectly through the environmental damage which results from their exploitation. Furthermore, the New Age Movement claims - amongst other things - that we are approaching the end of science as we know it and that by entering into 'the higher dimensions of human experience' we can become partakers of a new science the principles of which we will intuitively know or feel to be right.<sup>10</sup> The New Age Movement seeks answers to the meaninglessness and the human and environmental consequences of scientism in Eastern mysticism, occultism and pre-Christian paganism.

However, in spite of these attacks, others have an optimistic vision of the future of science and the technology derived from it. For example, David Lyon writes that 'In the late twentieth century many believe we are entering a new phase in human society, based upon the astounding developments of information technology. Although nuclear and other technologies have profound social implications, only the idea of a society structured

around computers and telecommunications actually threatens to displace the familiar term 'industrial society'.<sup>11</sup> In this case the crisis is a different one but there is a crisis nevertheless, and it may be embodied in the question: who will guide these developments, and on what basis, to ensure that they result in the common good and not in feeding the greed and lust for power of the few whilst diminishing the freedom and dignity of many? From a Christian standpoint, it may be reasonably argued that these crises arise from the separation of science from its Christic roots. Cantore argues<sup>12</sup> that science arose only from Christianity because it 'was the only culture which succeeded in developing the humanistic presuppositions of science'. These included the 'transensible structure of nature and its intrinsic intelligibility' and the acceptance of 'the exploration of this intelligibility as both inherently rewarding and obligatory'. The separation of science from these roots lays it open to distortion - as took place through scientism, and threatens to take place again through New Age teaching - and to subversion through its use to exploit, injure and destroy rather than to protect, heal and enrich. The way science is thought of and utilised in the future depends on the outcome of the current debate in which Christians ought to play a vital part by making clear its essential, Christic roots and that the pursuit of science is intended to be a means of discovering the riches of creation and making available those riches for the benefit of creation as a whole, and of human beings in particular. The pursuit of science is one, honourable way in which men and women can fulfil the command of God that we should all be good stewards of the earth (Genesis 1:28f.). Ironically, it may well be left to Christians to rehabilitate science amongst both the Christian community and society generally, by making clear that it is a worthy calling, which faithfully undertaken, complements the proclamation of the gospel of the love and grace of God, by contributing to human physical and social well being.

Pessimistic forecasts of the future predict that the abandoning of its Christic roots, its distortion by New Age teaching and doubts about its 'worthwhileness' could lead science into a new Dark Age. Others see some of the powerful forces unleashed as a result of the collapse of communism as leading in the same direction. It is stating the obvious to say that freedom cannot be ring-fenced. We now know all too well that the events which led to freedom of action, expression and worship in the previously communist states have also led to freedom to express widespread, long suppressed national and ethnic rivalries and conflicts which are deeply felt, very complex and potentially very destructive. The break-up of Yugoslavia is a stark illustration of how 'the cohesion enforced over fifty years of communist government has come to an end in a whirlpool of devastation'.<sup>13</sup> However, what seems beyond dispute is that the break-up of the bi-polar-Soviet/American - and socio-economic system which has dominated the world for the second half of this century faces us with a difficult, dangerous and, probably, long period of transition before a 'new order' emerges. Some see a real danger of dialectical materialism being replaced by 'mail order catalogue materialism',<sup>14</sup> and world domination by the market economy through three competing regional power blocs based on the EEC (Germany in particular), Japan and the USA. In view of the undoubted success of market economies in raising the standard of living of a large number of people within their purview, and giving them unprecedented autonomy,<sup>15</sup> this may appear to many the most desirable outcome from both an economic and ethical standpoint. Others believe that 'there are clear signs that the old ways of thinking economy are not working' and that 'it is the first time in living memory that there seems to be no viable theory of

economy'.<sup>16</sup> Clear signs that the 'old ways of thinking economy are not working' in the traditional strongholds of the market economy include high levels of sustained unemployment, rising poverty and homelessness, difficulties in managing national budgets and international finance, third world debt and deprivation, global warming and ecological damage and the prevalence of corruption and violence. As already noted, responses to this socio-economic crisis have been varied. The collapse of communism and the economic and social chaos which has subsequently come to light is seen by many as the triumph of democratic capitalism. Some writers now argue that centralised socialist economies are by their very nature doomed to self-destruct. For example, Gray argues that 'Theoretically indefensible, market socialist institutions are in practice systematically unstable, tending to revert to central planning or to mutate into something resembling market capitalism'.<sup>17</sup> Others, such as Brian Griffiths,<sup>18</sup> argues that the strength of the democratic-capitalist system is that it is rooted in a Christian world-view. However, in the United States, the arguments between Christians have become bitter at times, with some aligning themselves with the (socialist) left - with liberation theologians at its extreme - and others aligning themselves with the (capitalist) right - with the theonomists or reconstructionists at its extreme. Both these extremes have in common a 'this-worldly' focus and an insistence that they have biblical authority for their positions and their proposals.

As Gay shows very clearly in his helpful study of evangelical debate over capitalism in the United States, 'while those on the right have tended to defend capitalism under the banner of liberty, those on the left have condemned it under the banner of social justice. Even the evangelical mainstream, so often associated with political and economic conservatism in America, has become troubled by the issue of capitalism, confused over the natures of liberty and justice, and increasingly torn between right and left on social and economic matters'.<sup>19</sup> Others maintain that whilst individual Christians should be encouraged to become actively involved in economic and social policy, the church as such ought not to become involved and that 'the identification of Christianity with any particular political-economic system represented a serious error'.<sup>20</sup>

Central to the crises in both scientific and socio-economic thinking is the world view which informs such thinking. I have previously argued<sup>21</sup> that the central temptation for men and women in every age since the initial temptation (Genesis 3:5) is to consider themselves 'as gods' and agree with Walsh and Middleton<sup>22</sup> in identifying as the climax of humanistic thought, and the unique characteristic of the modern, secular world view, that 'For the first time since the Renaissance we have in the West a whole civilization gradually coming to the belief and assertion that humanity itself is God - we need neither God nor images'. The implications of such a world view they summarise as follows: 'With mankind as god, and nature as the pre-existent stubborn matter we must subdue in order to bring forth our creation, there is even a secularised redemptive history and an eschatology of progress toward a final state of blessedness. The modern world view is a religion that has borrowed much from its Christian heritage but is itself nothing short of idolatry: man himself has become the idol.' This being so, the collapse of communism confronts us as Christians with a humanism which is every bit as idolatrous clothed in the tailored suits of capitalism as it was in the cloth caps of socialism. We can no longer pretend that barbarians were only bred in the Kremlin: violence, hatred, lust and wanton destruction roam our streets. Professing themselves to be wise, many of our own flesh and blood have lost a sound understanding of truth (Romans 1:22) and the barbarism of

God-forsaking hearts (Matthew 15:16f.) is unleashed and threatens the very foundations of our post-Christian Western civilization.

Sacks sees evidence that this secularising and brutalising of the dominant world view is not a 'one-way street'<sup>23</sup> in the rise of fundamentalism in Islam and Judaism as well as in Christianity and argues that the final outcome of the present conflict is, therefore, far from certain. This adds a further dimension to the transition which we now experience in that the conflict for the mind is not confined to a struggle between a secular and religious world view but also involves a struggle between different religious world views, each one claiming uniqueness and universal validity. Growth within Islam, Judaism and cults such as New Ageism - as well as Christianity - comes through those who hold a fundamentalist position, i.e., those who are convinced that their faith is uniquely the truth of God. Whilst they may therefore agree that secularism, and its off-spring the pluralistic society, is their main enemy, not only is it highly unlikely that they will agree on any major tenets of faith but it appears that increasing religious conflict is inevitable. One of the marks of false faiths, whether based on secular or religious world views - including a degenerate Christianity - is that the end justifies the means. Therefore, evangelical Christians have been - and are - experiencing loss of jobs and promotion, imprisonment, persecution, and murder in many parts of the world and there are no guarantees that the growing hostility to biblical faith and conduct in both Europe and the United States will not result in discipleship becoming as costly in these countries as it is now proving for many Christians in Africa, Asia and South America. Whether or not an idolatrous secularism gives way to (another) false religion, the conflict is likely to intensify and if we are to survive as Christians then not only have we to understand the nature of the battle in which we are engaged but also how to wield the weapons with which we have been provided to fight it.

## **Engaging in Battle**

I believe that if we are to engage effectively in this battle we need to remind ourselves that, in spite of all the changes we experience, there is a real sense in which nothing changes. The Bible teaches that this is true of two things which are of vital importance to us in playing our part in the present conflict. First, as we have already seen, our Lord makes it clear that the battle for the hearts and minds of men and women is a conflict which will not cease until he returns, and both he and later Paul make clear that it is not a battle against human beings but against evil spiritual powers: 'the rulers of the darkness of this world' (Ephesians 6:12). Failure to understand this, or perhaps more commonly, rejection of the Bible's identification of the current crises as being a phase in a continuing spiritual battle with real and powerful spiritual forces, leads much of the church to engage in irrelevant and ineffective attempts to recover its authority and dynamism as it attempts to impress and influence human beings rather than wrestle with 'the rulers of the darkness of this world'. The current preoccupation of much of the church with ecumenism, women's rights and other social and political issues, however legitimate they might be, diverts us from the spiritual conflict, of which these problems are but symptoms, and in which victory is only achieved when men and women are freed from 'the god of this world' who has 'blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them' and they and we learn to live in 'the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:4,6). In 10:3,4 of the same letter Paul reminds us that although we live in the world, we do not use mere human

weapons but spiritual weapons which have divine power to destroy the enemy's strongholds. In other words, victory in the present crisis, as in every other phase of this deepening conflict, cannot be achieved by trying new weapons of man's devising but by trusting the old ones which God has provided. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul calls the Christians to engage in the battle by being 'strong in the Lord and in the power of his might' and goes on to give detailed instructions regarding 'the whole armour of God' which they must wear in order that they might be able to 'stand' and to 'withstand in the evil day' (6:11f.).<sup>24</sup>

The second matter which the Bible teaches is the necessity of revival. As Arthur Wallis demonstrates in his classic book, *IN THE DAY OF THY POWER*,<sup>25</sup> the Bible reveals that 'God has always worked by means of revivals' and that it is the 'divine strategy, first to counteract spiritual decline, and then to create spiritual momentum'. A study of the scriptures and of the history of the church shows that revival is the sovereign work of God through which he has time and again rescued his people from defeat and annihilation and restored the honour of his Name and that of his Son. The depth of the crisis which we are experiencing at the end of the twentieth century is such that we must surely say once again with the Psalmist, 'it is time for the Lord to work, for they have made void thy law' (119:126). Whilst revival is the sovereign work of God, students of revival agree that there is no recorded revival which has not been preceded by prayer. It is when his people become so jealous for his Name and honour and are ready to break up their fallow ground and seek the Lord until he comes and rains righteousness upon them (Hosea 10:12) that God brings in the day of his power. Unless we learn to wield the weapon of prayer, we can expect no victories. The late Dr Lloyd-Jones put the issue in his own inimitable way: 'Here is the vital question. Have you seen the desperate need for prayer, the prayer of the whole Church? I shall see no hope until individual members of the Church are praying for revival, perhaps meeting in one another's homes, meeting in groups amongst friends, meeting together in churches, meeting anywhere you like, and praying with urgency and concentration for a shedding forth of the power of God. . . There is no hope until we do. But the moment we do, hope enters'.<sup>26</sup>

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## The First Duty

If you are really burdened by the times in which we live, if you are really grieving in your heart as you see the godlessness of the world, if you have a compassion in your hearts for men and women in the bondage of sin and Satan, your first duty is to pray for revival. When revival comes more can happen in a day than may happen in a century of the ordinary work of the Church. When He comes in power the stoutest hearts are broken, the mightiest intellects are broken down, and men and women cry out, asking for mercy and seeking to know the way of salvation. The first task, the first duty, of Christian people and of the Christian Church today is to pray 'with one accord' and plead for a repetition of Pentecost, a Holy Ghost revival, God again coming in authority and might and power into the midst of His people. The Holy Ghost is still at hand in all His power; so pray God to send Him. And when He comes we shall see things that will astound us and amaze the scoffing, unbelieving world that is outside.

*D M Lloyd-Jones*  
CHRISTIAN UNITY, p 81



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# Reformed Theology and Ecological Ethics: Part Two

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*Eryl Davies*

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*In Part One, previously published in Issue 32, Spring 1994, some definitions were discussed, together with the challenge of ecological ethics for Reformed Theology. A five-fold structure as a basis for a reformed ecological ethic was suggested, namely, one that is a) revealed, b) relational, c) responsible, d) redemptive and e) restorative. Only the first, a) revealed, was covered in Part One.*

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## **b) Relational**

Within the Holy Trinity of Divine Persons, there is 'an inherently necessary interior relationship'<sup>22</sup> existing between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The focus here, however, is on the relationship between God and creation. Given the contemporary fascination in the West over Eastern forms of monism and pantheism, the growing popularity of the Gaia hypothesis is inevitable. The scientific presentation of the Gaia hypothesis was pioneered by scientists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis. Lovelock claims that the 'biosphere is a self-regulating entity with the capacity to keep our planet healthy by controlling the chemical and physical environment'<sup>23</sup>. Margulis maintains that the mechanisms of Earth surface control 'involve interactions between approximately thirty million species of organisms'<sup>24</sup>. For many, Gaia is more than a scientific theory; it is also a religion which conceives of Gaia as the goddess of earth, a living, powerful creature who shares her divinity with the entire natural order.

By contrast, God's relationship to creation is revealed as being both intimate and distant. He remains transcendent, wholly other, yet immanent. Although we are not divine and are incapable of becoming a part of God yet the transcendent, infinite God is still near to us. Against this background, I want to detail two aspects of man's relationship with God which are relevant to ecological ethics.

Firstly, man is a created creature. Quoting a Western 'pop' song in the 1960's, Schaeffer referred to the earth as 'our first sister'<sup>25</sup> and thereby underlined the biblical fact of man's shared creatureliness. Concerning creation, all things, and man included, are equal in their origin. While not absorbed into or identified mystically with nature in any way, man is nevertheless an integral part of nature. One implication is that we should see ourselves not only as believers but also as creatures, dependent and having to relate to the whole created order. Our presence in creation needs to reflect our inter-relatedness with all other created things whether animate, inanimate or human. Perhaps our 'deepest danger is that we forget we are creatures, woven into the tapestry of creation...'<sup>26</sup>. Again, it involves using and relating to other created things with the appropriate respect and integrity. There are implications, too, for the unity of nature and grace. Any Platonic dichotomy between nature/grace, heaven/earth in which the material is regarded as unimportant must be rejected. Important reasons for rejecting the dichotomy are that God has revealed Himself in His created world, God the Son also became incarnate and His body was raised from the dead. Nature and grace, therefore, constitute a unity, not a

dichotomy. The material world has considerable value.

Secondly, man is a creature created in the image of God. Although man has a shared creatureliness, he is also unique as God's image bearer. This concept of the image of God is 'the watershed in our understanding of the ecological issues of our time'<sup>27</sup>. Ronald Sider expressed intense dismay when the WCC sponsored international conference on *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* in Seoul rejected his one-sentence addition to the document insisting that humans alone are created in the image of God<sup>28</sup>. The *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 preferred the idea of Gaia to that of man as God's image-bearer. Here is a crucial issue in contemporary ecological discussions. It is customary for theologians to describe this image as a 'relational image', that is, a relation between the Triune God and humans which is both corporate and moral. For man it means that he reflects God's likeness in possessing personality, self-consciousness, rationality, freedom, a moral nature and a spiritual dimension. Humans have priority within the created order. For John Drane, the image of God designates us as 'God's representatives' in the way we behave and relate to the world around<sup>29</sup>. Man knows instinctively what is right and wrong because the divine law is written on his heart (Romans 2:12-15). Conscience give evidence of man's universal sense of obligation to conform to God's will; man cannot be a-moral. The relational foundation of Christian ethics, therefore, centres on God's will and involves absolute standards common to the whole of humanity. Cornelius Van Til describes this as 'the point of contact. Deep down in his mind, every man knows that he is the creature of God and responsible to God'<sup>30</sup>. Ethics then has an objective basis. Nor are the laws of God arbitrary; rather, they express the holy, gracious character of God, who knows what is best for us and creation.

Man's Fall into sin is also relational for it concerns the spoiling of his relationship with God and, consequently, with humans and nature. The Fall was a disaster of cosmic proportions affecting the reproductive function (Genesis 3:16), crops, the balance of nature and human relationships; it also introduced physical, spiritual and eternal death. The image of God in man has been weakened and deliberately stifled but not eradicated. The voice of conscience still speaks to man even in the depths of sin; 'every man, at bottom, knows that he is a covenant-breaker'<sup>31</sup>. The ecological crisis cannot be divorced from the Fall and the fact of man's depraved nature. 'Of all the creatures on Earth', Pravin Kapur claims justifiably, 'man is the most destructive and the root of the ecological crisis is human economic greed'<sup>32</sup>. And this is not a lone voice. An environmental researcher, Loren Wilkinson, uncompromisingly affirms that 'our present woes are due rather to our sinful use of and relationship to the Earth than to any malfunction of the created order'<sup>33</sup> as a result of the Fall. Our environmental crisis is not in essence a material or educational problem but a moral, spiritual and relational one. Man in sin is the root problem of anthropocentrism, selfishness and exploitation.

*How does a reformed ecological ethic respond?* By an uncompromisingly biblical declaration of the Godhood of God, His divine law and works both within the church and society. If not in saving grace, then in common and restraining grace, people will be constrained to some extent to respect creation and to fear their Creator.

There is a further practical dimension to the relational aspect of ecological ethics. Urbanisation has had the effect of alienating people from the land and nature. There are now more people living in the city than in the countryside. Thirteen cities have populations of over 10 million and a minimum of twenty megacities are expected by 2000 AD. By this date, Seoul will have increased its population to 13 million, Tokyo to 28

million and Bombay to 18 million (13.3 million in 1992). City inhabitants gradually assume that food commodities like milk, flour, rice, fruit and meat originate in a supermarket without reference to the land. Urbanisation should be considered more seriously by Christians. There are city churches in Korea, for example, which encourage pastors and congregations to stay in the villages by providing practical support. This is good for the purpose of church growth and it also reduces the process of urbanization. Again, can city people be exposed in various ways to the countryside and learn of their dependence upon God and creation for the preservation of their lives? Here is an urgent relational problem. Ultimately, the major relational problem is man's broken relationship with God in which he justly incurs the divine wrath. While man's first sin implicated creation, man's continued sin and greed now degrade and endanger the created world.

### c) Responsible

Man is responsible. The biblical doctrine of God and his works in creation and providence establish the fact. The divine revelation too, general and special, makes man inexcusable (Romans 1:19-21). Man is, therefore, under an obligation to glorify and obey God by caring for creation. But are key biblical texts like Genesis 1:26 and 28, texts 'of compound horror which will guarantee that the relationship of man to nature can only be destruction...?' And is 'God's affirmation about man's dominion a declaration of war on nature?'<sup>34</sup> Certainly not. However, these texts have been misused to encourage a ruthless approach to nature. What is the significance of these texts? Genesis 1:26, 28 have been called 'the charter',<sup>35</sup> a 'trust deed',<sup>36</sup> 'commission',<sup>37</sup> and a 'creation mandate'.<sup>38</sup> The verses have strategic significance, informing us that humans are 'endowed with a double uniqueness',<sup>39</sup> namely, as God's image bearer exercising dominion over the earth and its inhabitants. This is man's 'intermediate position between God and nature'.<sup>40</sup> Schaeffer justifiably called for a 'fresh understanding of man's dominion over nature',<sup>41</sup> while others like Chris Wright insist the concept has been misunderstood<sup>42</sup>.

The Hebrew words translated 'subdue' and 'dominion' can imply, etymologically, violence and power. Both liberal and evangelical scholars agree, however, that the governing hermeneutical principle here is the context, not etymology. Bruce Nicholls observes that 'dominion over nature is directly related to being created in the image of God',<sup>43</sup> and comes immediately after it. This means man does not have 'a free hand' with regard to nature; rather, he must honour the purposes of the Creator. 'God delegates to humankind', writes Nicholls, 'the responsibilities of God's providential care of nature. Thus to be truly human means to be accountable for the stewardship of creation'.<sup>44</sup> Man has a 'co-operative', 'delegated' dominion<sup>45</sup> involving competent stewardship of creation and all natural resources; his responsibility is to protect not pollute, to preserve not destroy or endanger creation. This is confirmed in Genesis 2:15 where an obligation to preserve the Garden is placed on man. He must 'till' (work, serve) and 'keep' (care, preserve) it as a duty. In other words, 'mankind is the keeper of the environment'.<sup>46</sup> Since the Fall, however, man has used his 'dominion' in a callous, selfish manner without regard to the wishes of the Creator. Schaeffer compares this to the way in which man's rule over the woman has often degenerated to one of abuse, selfishness and cruelty.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, man's stewardship and trusteeship of nature is a principle which secular ethicists and *Greens* increasingly support. Chris Park estimates that stewardship is now 'one of the most common of shared interests',<sup>48</sup> amongst theologians, philosophers and

green thinkers. There is growing agreement that man must use the earth more responsibly and leave it in a better condition for future generations. Sadly, believers tend to shy away from environmental initiatives or imagine they themselves have an exclusive concern for creation. In common grace, unbelievers can also have integrity, wisdom, an appreciation of creation and a strong sense of justice. In Luther's social ethic the three offices of the family, government and church express the rule of God in society. The foundational order is the family which Luther describes as 'a school for character'; it is here the child learns to respect authority, people and creation, where he learns how to make decisions and integrate into society, etc. This is where the outworking of an ecological ethic begins, with the personal life-style of family members. Honouring biblical principles yet avoiding legalism, the parents opt for lead-free petrol, recycling of materials, conserving energy, greater use of public transport, animal-care, organically grown food and a moderate rather than excessive life-style. There will be concern also for 1.3 billion people who face a serious shortage of safe drinking water and the same number who are permanently hungry. In small but significant ways, steps are taken by the family to adjust their values and life-styles in order to contribute positively to the preserving of God's creation. Here is responsible stewardship, incumbent upon us all.

With Luther we must view earthly government as 'a glorious ordinance of God and a splendid gift of God'<sup>49</sup>. Most governments can be influenced by public opinion. They must be informed of our ecological concerns then encouraged to take effective action. Pollution control, greater recycling resources, investment in public transport, environmental research, preservation of endangered species, maximum investment in overseas aid and development are areas where we can support effective forms of government action. Developing countries are frequently under pressure to generate foreign exchange to repay loans and to finance development. Frequently there is no choice but to increase production of timber, minerals and agricultural exports beyond sustainable levels. Governments urgently need to encourage debt reduction schemes and reduce the pressure on resources in debt-laden countries. A world treaty on climate, with firm commitments by governments to reduce extensively carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, is also desperately needed. Legitimate democratic measures can be taken by us to influence governments in these areas of concern.

An important aspect of stewardship now recognised within political, social circles is that of *sustainable development*. For the UK Government, this involves 'a moral duty to look after our planet and to hand it on in good order to future generations. . . not sacrificing tomorrow's prospects for a largely illusory gain today'<sup>50</sup>. Reputable organisations like the World Conservation Union, the UN Environment Programme and the World Wide Fund for Nature call for 'a new ethic, the ethic of sustainable living' to be implemented and embraced with a 'deeply-held commitment'<sup>51</sup>. An excellent ethical analysis of the principle is provided by Neil W Summerton<sup>52</sup>. There are normative sub-principles which are ways of achieving sustainable development. These include the precautionary, preventionary principles and the principle that the polluter/user pays. Interestingly, these sub-principles, including extensive democratic participation, free exchange of information, integration of the environmental dimension into policy making, international co-operation and the avoidance of war because of its environmental impact, are included in the 1991 Maastricht treaty and warrant reflection and support from Christians.

There are, too, wider questions about environmental disasters. Who is responsible for the nitrogen gases poured into the atmosphere from factories? What of pollutants blown

by the wind into other countries? Have we contributed to the extensive desertification of Africa over the past two decades? Is the international community prepared to assume responsibility for caring unselfishly for the environment? These questions require a commitment from all nations to preserve and improve the environment.

#### **d) Redemptive**

‘Though creation is a foundation truth, it is not the crown of the Christian faith’<sup>53</sup>. Although foundational, creation is only one of the divine works. Providence, too, is a divine work but the ‘crown’ is redemption. The Creator-God chose to redeem in Christ a vast number of human beings from the power, punishment and pollution of sin. Devised in eternity, this was accomplished at Calvary in the substitutionary sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God. This redemption is applied personally and irresistibly to the elect by the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is a supernatural work, effecting a radical change in sinners who are brought to faith in, and union with, the Lord Jesus Christ. An on-going work of sanctification in believers is guaranteed by divine omnipotence/resources thus ensuring that they live as new persons in society according to His revealed will. Gradually, they are transformed into the likeness of Christ.

For this reason, the Bible divides humanity into two groups, namely, believers and unbelievers; those who, by God’s grace, endeavour to obey and honour God and those who continue as unbelievers to rebel against the Creator-God. In this sense, while there is only one human race, it is legitimate to speak of two humanities, the one a new, redeemed God-centred humanity, the other a humanity which remains alienated from God and opposed to His authority. This distinction is unpopular in our post-modern society. There is now an exclusive emphasis on the unity of mankind before God in order to encourage religious pluralism<sup>54</sup>.

How does this relate to an ecological ethic? Firstly, we must not distance the Redeemer from the Creator. The One who redeems also created and now actively sustains and cares for His creation. Redemption, too, was accomplished in God’s created world. Secondly, redemption deals with the long-standing problem of humanity since the Fall, namely, man’s sin and depraved nature. Ultimately, the environmental crisis is spiritual in nature, not merely political, economic or educational. Man, in his selfish greed and disregard of the Creator’s purpose, needs to be transformed by regeneration and reconciled to God through Christ. Goals like ‘sustainable development’, ‘global sustainability’ and ‘harmony’ with humanity or between humanity and nature will only be partly achieved by a redeemed humanity and then only under the powerful blessing of God. Society will not be reformed until individuals are re-made in Christ.

Thirdly, believers have the opportunity to demonstrate practically new values and attitudes by caring for creation as good stewards. Calvin Dewitt exhorts Christians to make their homes as well as churches ‘Creation Awareness Centres’<sup>55</sup> while Rowland Moss claims the local church should be a ‘colony of heaven’<sup>56</sup>. For Schaeffer, the church ought to be a ‘pilot plant’; ‘through individual attitudes and the Christian community’s attitude, to exhibit that in this present life man can exercise dominion over nature without being destructive’<sup>57</sup>. Underlying this ethic for Christians is the constraining love of Christ, the dynamism of the Holy Spirit and the sanctifying influences of the Word which enable them to deny self, to love their neighbour and to care unselfishly for God’s world.

### e) Restorative

'God has much more in mind and at stake in nature than a backdrop for man's comfort and convenience', writes Carl Henry, 'or even a stage for the drama of human salvation'<sup>58</sup>. God's ultimate purpose involves redemption of the cosmos which man implicated in the Fall. There is hope for the future. Notice, however, that until the parousia of Christ, Christians can actively involve themselves in a 'substantial'<sup>59</sup>, but not yet perfect, healing process of the environment. 'God's calling to the Christian now, and to the Christian community, in the area of nature', . . . Schaeffer affirms, 'is that we should exhibit a substantial healing here and now, between man and nature and nature and itself, as far as Christians can bring it to pass'<sup>60</sup>. One aspect of this substantial healing is extremely relevant to our subject. In a penetrating study, William Dyrness considers the relationship between environmental ethics and the covenant of Hosea 2<sup>61</sup>. There is, he claims, an important link between our care for the earth and our worship of whatever God or gods we serve. Dyrness argues that contemporary holistic (Gaia) religious ideas/environmental ethics reiterate major themes of Canaanite religion against which Hosea spoke. Israel was attracted to syncretism and worship of the Canaanite Baal cult; she thus became unfaithful to the Lord despite a covenant relationship and the Lord's earlier blessings of fertility etc. God then promised judgment (2:9) because Israel failed to recognise the true source of the gifts of the earth and even used the gifts to serve Baal. These gifts would then be removed as signs of His judgment. Dyrness sees the answer provided exclusively in 2:16-20, namely, the new covenant God proposes to make with the created order. This new covenant focuses on a more intimate relationship with God in which He is no longer called 'my Baal' but *ISHI*, that is, 'my husband'. Arising from this new relationship to God, there will be a new and fruitful relationship with the created order (vs 18,21-23). God's power over creation is highlighted here and also contrasted with the weakness and capriciousness of Baal's lordship. In his conclusion, Dyrness acknowledges that both Canaanite and contemporary Gaia views sense that the environmental problem is a religious one, yet 'neither understands how completely ecological disaster focuses on human rebellion against the Creator'<sup>62</sup>. Here is part of the significance of the appeal in 2:2; when the church turns to God in repentance and obedience there are enormous benefits resulting for the created order. An estranged humanity, and even a backslidden church, will find itself increasingly alienated from its environment.

### Conclusion

These two articles have been introductory and exploratory rather than exhaustive or definitive as some aspects of the subject need to be developed and some questions need to be addressed. I have concentrated on providing a biblical, practical structure for reformed ecological ethics. Ecology comes within the sphere of the universal lordship of Christ. Christian ecological ethics must conform to the revealed will of the Lord and build upon as well as complement personal, family and church ethics.

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# Book Reviews

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## **Love Your Unborn Neighbour**

*Introd, S Foster*

*SPUC, 1994, 176 pp, £5.95*

This is a well written, beautifully illustrated, 'reader friendly', book of eleven chapters. The authors are SPUC Evangelicals, a division of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children formed in 1991 and a member organisation of the Evangelical Alliance.

'This book is primarily a plea from evangelicals to evangelicals although it will be of interest to many others'. They 'ask those who accept the authority of the Bible, who love God and long to obey God to look at what is happening to unborn children in our country'. The book should elicit a response from the Lord's own people and the author of this review was helped to clarify his own position on screening tests during pregnancy.

Each page of the book has a wide margin useful for notes or comments and there are also phrases highlighted in colour. For example, in the preface there are little phrases like 'right faith must issue in right conduct', 'our struggle is not against flesh and blood', 'defence of the unborn is a requirement not an option' and 'Christians in this country are deeply implicated in the guilt of our society'. It is the hope of the authors that 'the eyes of Christians will be opened to the truth, appalling as it is, and that the Church will repent of its disobedience.'

### **Ch 1 The Church and the unborn child.**

The authors state that all they want to say about the unborn child and the stand the believer must take is based upon the scriptures and the witness of the Christian community from its earliest days until the present day.

The importance of the sanctity of human life, the mention of unborn children in the Bible including our Lord in His incarnation, the three themes of creation, continuity and communion found in Psalm 139 and the interpretation of Exodus 21:22-25 are brought together in the conclusion that God made all human beings in His image and likeness. This leads to the assertion that abortion is contrary to His revealed will and that 'the prophetic voice of the people of God must speak out in God's name to this generation'.

### **Ch 2 You knit me together.**

This chapter seeks to show that each person is unique, loved and absolutely priceless in the eyes of our maker - Almighty God. The reader should be stirred again to realise the wonder of our creation by following human life month by month in its development from fertilization and up to the fifth month and then on to birth. It is shown that such development within a mother's womb is overseen and directed by a loving God and that the image of God in a human person is moving, growing, creative. From these arguments they take the view that the taking of human life is, therefore, prohibited.

It concludes with the statement that 'God sent Jesus to earth as a zygote, embryo, foetus, child and man. He did not by-pass the early stages of human life as holy, sacred and of the greatest value'. This last sentence raises the difficulty of the genetic nature of Jesus, which is perhaps best left as an incomprehensible mystery.

### **Ch 3 Arguments for abortion.**

Commonly heard arguments for abortion are discussed and to each one the test of truth is applied. Such arguments that are mentioned are 'a woman has the right to control her own fertility', 'abortion is a



woman's right to choose', 'back street abortion would be a greater evil than a controlled legal situation' and 'abortion is a necessary evil until some social problems, such as poor housing and overburdened mothers, have been overcome'. The 'world is overpopulated and without abortion it would be even worse'.

Some of the theological arguments which have particularly influenced the thinking of evangelical Christians on abortion are considered.

#### **Ch 4 The hard cases.**

Situations are discussed where the mother's life is at risk from her pregnancy, from abortion and cancer, ectopic pregnancy and rape, with an interesting and illuminating account of the American Supreme Court's judgement in the *Roe v Wade* case which changed America's abortion laws resulting in a ruling that abortion must be available to all women as a constitutional right. There is also space given to the recent constitutional issue of abortion in Ireland.

Perhaps more could have been said about the decision-making of doctors in this chapter, especially those who literally agonize to come to a right decision in the 'hard case'.

#### **Ch 5 Abortion and the Law.**

A review of English Law from 1250 to the present day shows that the unborn child has enjoyed the protection of the law since ancient times. It reveals how the 1967 Abortion Act was passed by 167 votes to 83 in a half empty House of Commons after an all night sitting. The fight back against abortion is documented. The issue of the creation and use of human embryos culminating in the Human Fertilization and Embryology Act of 1990 is then traced.

#### **Ch 6 Abortion and the Doctors.**

This chapter mainly deals with the technical aspects of abortion and the methods commonly used in Britain. The section on prostaglandins needs to be

updated as prostaglandin vaginal pessaries are now widely used to induce a late abortion and most medical authorities would believe injecting urea or saline into the amniotic sac to be contra-indicated as maternal deaths have followed such procedures.

In my professional experience I have seen complications arising from both early and late abortions and I entirely agree with the authors when they state that abortion is not the simple safe procedure which many women have been led to believe it to be. Again I wish more could have been said about doctors' attitudes towards their patients coming to seek help and the value of perhaps encouraging a mother to continue with her pregnancy. Doctors are not just technicians!

#### **Ch 7 Research on humans.**

The authors in this chapter make clear their position and feel that all the alarming developments of modern state science such as *in vitro fertilization* have brought us close to the Brave New World. The idea of IVF raises 'profound ethical questions which no previous society had to face'. What is the moral and legal status of these embryos? Who did they belong to? Did they have rights?

The authors argue cogently for the position that from the point of fertilization the embryo is a human being but I personally feel unable to reach the same conclusion, believing that the Scriptures only teach about life within the womb. As a practising gynaecologist who has delivered a few 'IVF babies' I believe that IVF is a relevant treatment for the infertile couple, provided they are counselled well prior to treatment and where safeguards are built in so that only a certain number of embryos are used and none is discarded.

#### **Ch 8 Handicapped Children.**

With the issue of Down's syndrome screening very much in the forefront of discussion by health authorities, obstetrical

departments, doctors, midwives, geneticists and, most importantly, mothers this excellent chapter is most helpful in clarifying attitudes towards screening in pregnancy and I believe Christians need to speak out on this issue.

The section ends by showing that Biblical standards are shocking and radical and that it is those who are most vulnerable who need our protection and are deserving of our respect.

#### **Ch 9 Abortion's other victims.**

This moving chapter emphasises the needs of those mothers who have undergone abortion and need special help especially when they may be suffering from 'post abortion syndrome'. This entity is then described in its ten features and those seeking to pastor or counsel such mothers would be much helped reading this section of the book.

At the end of the chapter the address of British Victims of Abortion is given. This is a group within which there is much pain and suffering but also much love and care.

#### **Ch 10 Christian responsibility in public affairs.**

This seeks to show how Christians can be salt and light in our present society.

#### **Ch 11 Our guilty silence**

The Church is challenged that our present silence is as remarkable as the strange silence of the Church in Germany during the atrocities of the Nazi era. There is a good appendix with a widespread bibliography, notes on each chapter and over 130 Scripture references.

This book is very warmly recommended to every theological student and those called to minister and pastor Churches and any serious Christian considering the abortion issue.

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## **Beyond Canberra**

*ed. B J Nichols & B R Ro*

*Regnum Books, 1993, 144pp £12.50*

Subtitled *Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues*, this symposium brings together 14 reflections on the 7th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held at Canberra in 1991. The overall theme was COME HOLY SPIRIT, RENEW THE WHOLE CREATION but a major evangelical disappointment was the scant attention given to discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion and the renewal of the churches.

Most contributors reflect the overall perspective of the Lausanne Movement and there were fringe meetings at the Assembly of a group of over 100 people 'with evangelical concerns'. Chapter 3 of this book gives a full text of the 'Open Letter' signed by 60 of this group at the close of the Assembly including the challenge: 'Evangelicals need to take a more active part in ecumenical events, both evangelicals who are part of member churches and those who are outside.' Of interest to UK readers is the fact that four signatories were from the Baptist Union here and another is listed as a Roman Catholic!

Since the Second Vatican Council co-operation between WCC and the Roman Catholic Church has increased dramatically, as the following statistics recognise. 'According to declarations by Archbishop Edward Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, these years have seen the notable growth in confidence between the two institutions, and this has led to new forms of mutual co-operation. At present, twelve of the 120 members of the WCC Faith and Order Commission and one of the tutors of the Bossey Ecumenical

Institute are appointed by the Vatican. Seven Roman Catholic consultants attend the annual meetings and one is a member of the staff of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and about one quarter of the WCC Geneva staff are Roman Catholics' (pp 34-5).

Throughout the Assembly one major programme of activity was held in the women's tent, *Womanspace*. Evangelicals were keen to commend the part women played at Canberra and the questions this raises for the church at large. 'Women were visible and active participants in the full programme of the assembly including worship (both preaching and administering the eucharist); section work, plenary sessions, business and committee actions as well as the educational offerings of the visitors' programme. The assembly was enriched by the participation of these many gifted women. This challenges the evangelical movement to reassess its theological understanding of women's spiritual giftedness and to take care that it does not unwittingly quench the activity of the Holy Spirit' (p 70).

Dominating the book, as it did the Assembly itself, is the furore over syncretism following the keynote address by Chung Hyun-Kyung, 'a combination of Korean-style liberation theology and North American feminist theology learned at New York's Union Theological Seminary, where she had finished her doctorate a few months before' (p 32). It was, in fact, the Greek Orthodox delegation which reacted most strongly of all to this denial of the uniqueness of Christ. Their concerns are reproduced here in full (chapter 5) and include sentiments also echoed by evangelicals present, 'The biblical faith must not be changed. . . Pneumatology is inseparable from Christology or from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity confessed by the church on the basis of divine revelation'.

What Rolf Hille calls her 'Spirit and Soil Theology' raises the burning issue for the WCC of the limits of legitimate pluralism within a body committed to Christianity. Roaring applause from countless delegates showed that 'she obviously caught the mood of many participants and brought the issues to a head' (p 66). Whilst Hille recognises that this 'suits the taste of the natural man' he himself sees it as 'an undeniable sign of the seduction of the last days' (p 68).

The book reflects the urgent question being asked by evangelicals 'to what extent the task of sharing faith in Jesus Christ with non-Christians has a place in the WCC agenda' (p 27). Despite the WCC world mission conference at San Antonio in 1989 their Commission had no part in the programme of the 7th Assembly. It also reminds us that the ongoing questions about hermeneutics are at the root of many contemporary issues of applying the faith on a global scale (p 9).

One German Lutheran contributes a chapter expressing gratitude that the WCC has given new impetus to 'the quest for visible unity among the separated churches.' Whether he speaks for his counterparts in the UK will be up to them to say but he is clear that, 'Since its founding in 1846 the Evangelical Alliance has been committed to unity in truth and love and wishes to do its share to help the ecumenical movement move closer to its goal' (pp 46-7).

This is not a gripping book but I'm glad I made it to the closing chapter by Peter Kuzmic of Croatia to find the aphorism he quotes which is sure to travel far. It is by Donald Gee, a Pentecostal pioneer, 'The Word alone will make you dry up, the Spirit alone will make you blow up. The Word and Spirit together will make you grow up' (p 143).

Alan Gibson

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