

# FOUNDATIONS

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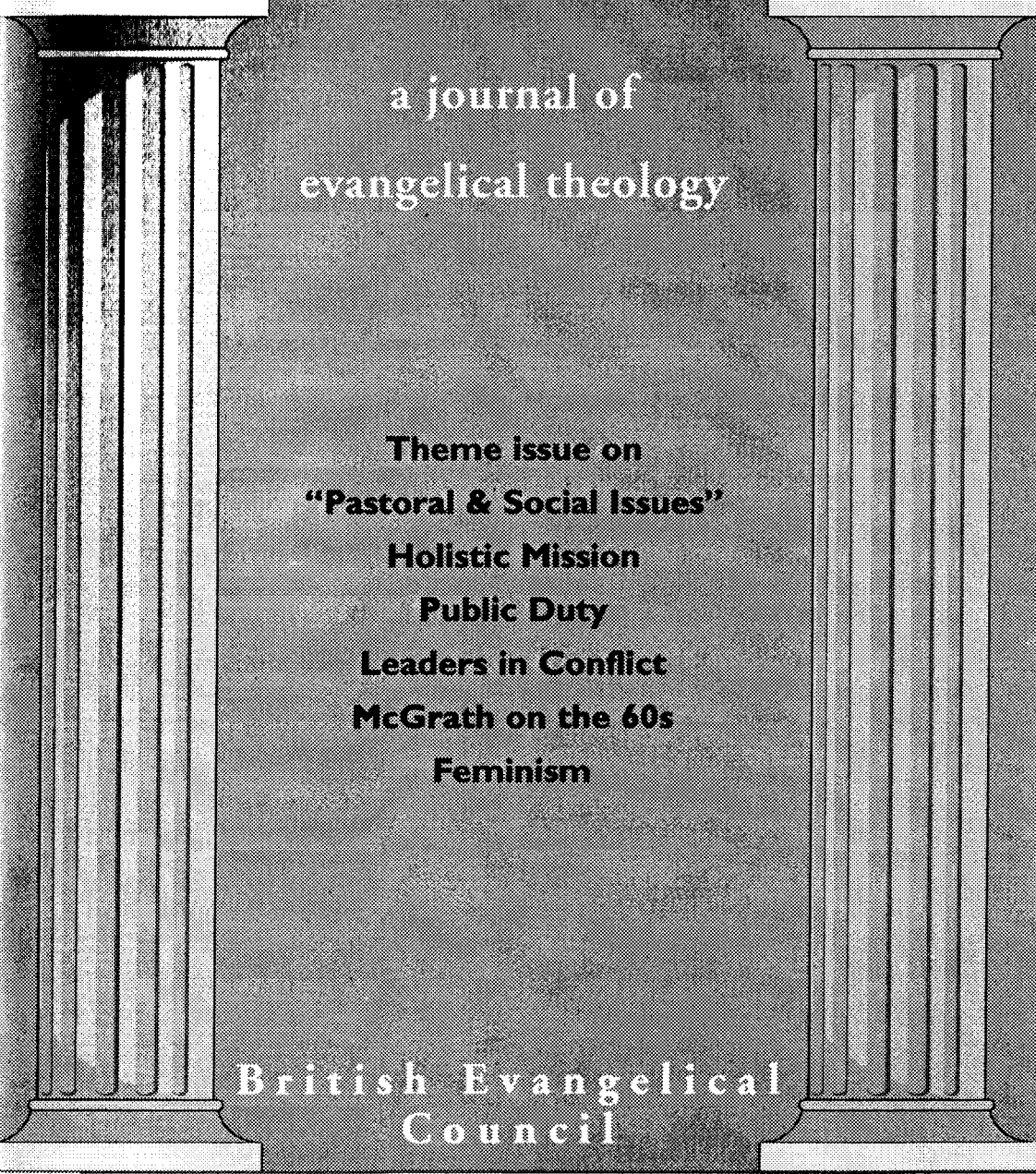
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# FOUNDATIONS

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# FOUNDATIONS

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

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## Editor's Notes

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When I began planning this issue it was intended to focus on the social implications of the gospel. But although several of the articles and reviews touch on the original theme, others range more broadly.

If anyone was concerned for the social and cultural implications of the gospel it was the great Dutch theologian, churchman and statesman **Abraham Kuyper** (1837-1920). This year is the centenary of Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* delivered on the Stone Foundation at Princeton Theological Seminary. Anyone who has read those lectures cannot but be impressed by the scope and depth of Kuyper's cultural and social vision. Kuyper was a colossus of a man who fitted into one life what several other great men would have been satisfied with. He was a Dutch Reformed pastor who founded two Christian newspapers (which he edited), a Calvinist university, a Christian political party, a denomination and a Christian school system, as well as writing a number of theological and devotional books and becoming prime minister of the Netherlands. Kuyper was convinced that Calvinistic Christianity must not be confined to the church, but rather had to become a culturally formative influence in every sphere of life. One of his best-known sayings is that "There is not a single inch of the whole terrain of our human existence over which Christ ... does not proclaim, 'Mine!'" His influence has been immense, not only in the Netherlands but more recently in the thinking of people such as Francis Schaeffer, Hans Rookmaaker, Rousas Rushdooney, Cornelius van Til and many others.

In *Creating a Christian Worldview* (Paternoster, 1998) **Peter S Heslam** gives us an excellent commentary on the lectures. He begins by putting Kuyper in his historical and theological context. There is some very interesting material here on Kuyper's relationship with BB Warfield and the differences between them on apologetics and science. The two theologians respectively represent the presuppositionalist and evidentialist strands in Reformed thinking and yet they had a warm regard for each other. Heslam then moves on to examining each of the six lectures. The book is very stimulating and full of good things. What is striking is how Kuyper saw Calvinism as not only a theological system, but also a life-system or world-view (the subject of the first lecture) that stood in antithesis to its contemporary rivals – enlightenment modernism, pantheism and evolutionism. Here it is fascinating to see how Kuyper's critique anticipated what many Christians are saying today with the onset of postmodernism. After his conversion Kuyper was tempted and burned by the higher-life movement which, after a breakdown, he rejected for a robust confessional Calvinism that was not ashamed to stake its claims in the public square. In subsequent lectures he dealt with religion, politics, science (by which he meant knowledge in its widest sense), art and the future. In these lectures some of Kuyper's great themes – sphere sovereignty, common grace, antithesis – reappear as he sought to put flesh on his great vision of a Calvinistic culture. Always in the background was the spectre of the French Revolution, which to Kuyper was the epitome of autonomous man's attempt to throw off the rule of God.

In terms of social theology Kuyper falls within the Christian Democratic tradition in European politics. This tradition has never taken root in Great Britain or North America.

Heslam does not really explore why this has been the case. In part it has to be due to the pervasive influence of Protestantism in the Anglo-Saxon world and the absence of the strong anti-clericalism that so much affected continental political Liberalism. In Britain evangelicals have adopted an accomodationist approach to politics, education and many other fields, whereas in Holland Calvinists have traditionally sought to establish separate confessional institutions. In some measure this was necessary simply because of the fragmented nature of Dutch society. In his thinking about the pluriformity of society and the role of common grace Kuyper provided a theoretical foundation for this development that was worked out practically in his political involvement. No one could ever accuse Kuyper of being an ivory tower theologian.

Although some of Kuyper's writings are available in English there is much that is not and therefore it is a pleasure to read *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Paternoster, 1998), edited by Professor James Bratt of Calvin College, Michigan. The book contains a small selection from Kuyper's voluminous writings covering a wide range of his interests, including his remarkable personal memoir *Confidentially* (1873) in which he writes of his conversion (in part through an Anglo-Catholic novel by Charlotte Yonge given to him by his fiancée!). The pieces are infused with the passion and clarity that helps us understand why Kuyper had such an immense and devoted following among ordinary people. I found two pieces particularly enjoyable. Kuyper's 1891 address to the annual convention of the Antirevolutionary Party, *Maranatha*, summarises his political theology as it interacted with new political opportunities and choices. Perhaps the most remarkable piece is an address the following year entitled *The Blurring of the Boundaries*. Here Kuyper critiques contemporary European culture by using the concept of pantheism.

It seems to me that Christians today need to recover this big vision for the world. In many ways our task is more difficult since the church in Europe is much weaker than in Kuyper's day, society more complex and the Christian foundations of our culture more eroded. Nevertheless we must work to recapture the cultural high ground. If we don't, Christianity will be relegated to the margins and to an inner spiritual domain and we will see our culture becoming increasingly godless. We will also be much weaker in the face of a religion with a very comprehensive worldview, namely Islam. Of course a well thought out and worked out Christian worldview is not everything. But we can also learn from Kuyper as a man of action as well as a thinker. In his day Kuyper saw the need for Christians to separate themselves organisationally from the surrounding culture in order to establish strong institutions that would in turn transform society. Can we not learn something here? For example, has not the time come for the establishment of alternative Christian institutions of higher education, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, so that Christian thinking can be developed? Or is there not a place for developing a system of Christian schools?

But Kuyper understood that developing a Christian worldview and strategy was not enough. He spent much effort in writing articles and books that would nurture devotion and promote godliness. As a young minister he was powerfully influenced towards vital confessional orthodoxy by the pious Reformed people of his parish. He never lost his concern for vital godliness, but equally he refused to confine this spirituality to the heart or the church. For Kuyper, Jesus was King of every sphere of life in his world and the Christian's duty is to work to see that Kingship acknowledged.

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# Holistic Mission

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John MacPherson

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Some years ago a small town called Moyobamba and some surrounding villages on the edge of the Amazon rain forest in Peru were shaken by an earthquake. About 20 people lost their lives – a small number by earthquake standards – but there was extensive destruction of property, plunging many poor people into utter destitution. The churches lacked resources to help, but felt something had to be done.

About that time one of our sons, employed as an economist with BP, was feeling strongly that God was calling him to leave his comfortable, well-paid job, and offer himself in service to the needy in Christ's name. The upshot was that he joined forces with a small Peruvian mission to head up a programme of house building for earthquake victims in Moyobamba. The name of the mission was Misión Integral Urbano-Rural, known by its initials as MISIUR. I suppose you can hardly get anything wider than Integral Urban-Rural Mission – many and varied are the activities that can be covered by that umbrella. In actual fact its projects range from teaching people living in deplorably cramped conditions in shanty towns how to grow small vegetables in containers not much bigger than shoe-boxes, to cattle breeding programmes in the jungle, to training courses in basic Christian doctrine for untrained lay pastors, to the provision of simple housing for pastors living in mere shacks without even the basic amenities.

The housing project received help from various relief agencies and churches. Within two years, 130 families were housed, most of them recommended by a committee of local pastors. Meanwhile, a Peruvian doctor, an elder in the Presbyterian church, had left his Government post and was heading up a successful community health programme, the Luke Society. He invited our son to join his team to assist in meeting obvious needs expressed by local churches, especially in the areas of theological and organisational training for church leaders. A Christian bookshop was also established to serve local churches and contribute to evangelistic outreach.

I have recounted all of this to illustrate what is in view when we talk of **holistic** mission. The term “integral” or “integrated” mission is one I would prefer to “holistic”, a word stemming from the philosophical theory, “holism”, which teaches that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

For our purpose, it is the belief that “authentic mission is a comprehensive activity which embraces evangelism and social action and refuses to let them be divorced.” (John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*).

We do, however, need to define what we mean by the word “church” in our title. No-one here would deny that individual Christians, members of the church of Christ, are called to love their neighbours as themselves, and that this expresses itself in an endless variety of practical ways. But the question which I presume is being asked is this: Should the church as an organized body, whether local or regional, under the direction of its duly appointed officers, engage in holistic mission, either directly, or indirectly through a mission agency? Or should the church, *qua* church, limit itself to preaching the message of the gospel and to the planting and teaching of new churches,

leaving social activities, for example, education, health, agriculture or human rights to the efforts of individual Christians who are not called to be preachers of the Word?

## Priorities in Mission

When our Lord sent his disciples out as missionaries to the world, they were charged to preach the gospel to every creature. He also directed them to baptize all new disciples and to teach them to observe everything he had commanded them. Obedience to their Lord would mean wholehearted commitment to every aspect of that great commission, without downgrading any part of it. Yet years later, the Apostle Paul could state categorically:

“Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). Baptism was not unimportant to Paul, but it had a lower priority than preaching the gospel.

Most telling of all is our Lord’s question: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26) Face to face with eternity, with the realities of heaven and hell, it is not enough for a man that medical missionaries have increased his life expectancy or that agricultural missionaries have improved his crop yields. Most of all he needs to ask the question, “What must I do to be saved?” and hear the answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

I intend to argue in favour of the church engaging in holistic mission, but never at the expense of diluting or sidelining the preaching of the gospel. There is a clear priority and it must be observed.

There are some who advocate, from an Evangelical and indeed a Reformed standpoint, a much greater involvement of the church in social concerns, who are unhappy with this talk of priorities. Timothy Keller, for example, in *Ministries of Mercy* says: “It is common to speak of ‘the priority of the spiritual’, but is that a biblical idea?” He speaks of God as the creator of both material and immaterial, and of God’s intention to redeem both our bodies and our spirits. “How then”, he asks, “can we speak about the ‘physical’ as being less important than the ‘spiritual’?” I agree wholeheartedly with Keller’s insistence that “word and deed are inextricably united and inseparable” and that “our goal ... is the bringing of all life and creation under the lordship of Christ.” But while the verbal proclamation of the good news of salvation must never be divorced from the church’s important and divinely commanded ministries of mercy, yet the primacy of preaching and evangelising dare not be lost sight of.

It seems to me that by employing a different terminology, Keller goes on to concede this point, while fighting shy of the idea of priorities. He says:

We must nonetheless recognise that, from one perspective, the ministry of the Word is the most radical ministry ... Our alienation from God, our condition of being in a state of condemnation, is the root from which all our miseries flow. Psychological brokenness, social injustice and even physical disintegration are due to and flow out of our warfare with God. Thus, the more radical ministry to the condition of man is to proclaim the word of faith. There is no more fundamental means to cut the root of sin and death than the verbal proclamation of the Gospel.

So call it what you will – our priority, our most radical ministry, “our chief concern” (Manila Manifesto 1989 LCWE) – the preaching of the gospel must be the primary component of all mission. Advocates of holistic mission should expect to be weighed

in the balance and found wanting, if this is not true of all the varied activities they undertake.

## **Biblical Evidence for Holistic Mission**

### **(a) Old Testament**

It is true that, as the Westminster Confession says, God gave Israel, “as a body politic, sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.” But it is precisely the spirit of this “general equity”, expressed in Mosaic laws and constantly appealed to by psalmists and prophets, that gives us a picture of the kind of society God wants, and how his people ought to live, both as individuals and as a corporate body.

And what picture are we given? We see the eternal and the temporal intermingling, the spiritual and the material moving side by side without any sense of contradiction or incongruity. Late payment of wages and discrimination against the handicapped are condemned equally with profaning the name of the Lord, not observing the sabbath or not reverencing God’s sanctuary (Lev. 19). A host of laws on behalf of the poor and needy, widows, orphans and foreigners insist that to fail to love them in practical ways is to “show contempt to their Maker” (Prov. 17:5).

Of course, we all agree that such a spirit should characterise every believer, but the laws, the exhortations and the rebukes of the Old Testament are not just addressed to individual believers, but to the church of God, albeit the church under a different external administration. It is to the church of his day that Isaiah speaks, a church meticulously observing its religious duties:

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked to clothe him and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rearguard (Isa. 58:6-8).

No dichotomy is allowed between spiritual and material. This is the church being called by God to engage in holistic mission.

### **(b) The Life and Teaching of Jesus**

We are all acutely aware of how difficult it can be to find the right balance in our church’s witness in the community or country. Here, for example, is a church which opens its hall to provide crèche facilities, but finds as the years pass that all it seems to be doing is serve as a dumping ground for neglected children, depriving it of time and personnel for its main task of preaching the gospel. On the other hand, here is a church situated near a dangerous road junction where local children have been injured, but which refuses to be involved in petitions from local residents to the council because it doesn’t consider agitating for road safety to be any part of its biblical remit. As a result it loses all credibility in the community as a caring body of people.

Where is balance to be found? None can deny that in the Lord Jesus Christ there is perfect balance between word and deed, combining as he did the infallible wisdom of

God with personal experience of human need. Mark tells us that “he went around teaching” (Mk 6:6), while Luke states that “he went around doing good and healing” (Acts 10:38). In his teaching he made abundantly clear what is primary and what is secondary – “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” But at the same time, it was when he was teaching a man about eternal life that he challenged him through the parable of the Good Samaritan to face up to his social responsibility.

With regard to Jesus’ deeds, it is important to remember that his miracles were signs, pointing to something far greater than feeding multitudes or calming storms. Jesus, in fact, criticises those whose only concern was with the loaves and fishes. But it is also true that they were expressions of his compassion – we read of his heart going out to the widow of Nain, and of his being moved by the plight of the tired, hungry crowds. In all of this he has left us an example that we should follow in his steps (1 Pet. 2:23), a clear call to holistic mission.

### **(c) The New Testament Church**

Of crucial importance in this context is the institution of the diaconate in Acts 6. On the one hand, the priority of “prayer and the ministry of the Word” is clearly established, but on the other hand, not only is the importance of food distribution recognised: it is recognised as a ministry of the church, and decisions, appointments and organisation are all in the hands of the church. The men chosen are to be as godly as the apostles, “full of the Spirit and wisdom” – secondary duties are not to be committed to second-rate Christians. If this is not the church engaging in holistic mission, what is?

Other New Testament references flesh out this picture. In Acts 10 the famine relief sent from Antioch to Jerusalem was provided by individual disciples, “each according to his ability”, but the whole business was inspired and carried out by the church, through its appointed prophets, apostles and elders. Paul gives Timothy advice about those who should and should not be put on the church list of widows, “so that the church can help those widows who are really in need” (1 Tim. 5). And while John’s reference to having material possessions and seeing our brother in need, yet having no pity on him, should prick our individual consciences, it is very much within the corporate context of the church family that John lays down his challenges. Therefore, he says, “let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

## **Reasons for Holistic Mission**

So far I have only looked at factual examples of holistic mission in the Scriptures. I would like now to consider some fundamental Christian teachings and suggest that they necessarily imply a wide view of what the church’s mission is.

### **(a) The nature of man**

#### **(i) Man is a unity of body and soul**

It is true that our bodies have been formed from the dust, and will at death crumble again to dust. In that respect the welfare of our never-dying souls is infinitely more important, and only the gospel of grace can meet the needs of our souls. But God has

deigned to breathe into these bodies his breath of life, the Son of God took to himself a human body, and one day God will reconstitute our decomposed bodies into glorified bodies of which our Lord's is the pattern and the guarantee.

We are not disembodied souls, nor should we deal with other people as though they were. As we preach the gospel we must be acutely aware of the physical, mental and emotional dimensions of our hearers, so as not to present spiritual truth in a vacuum. This is put starkly by James when he asks: "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed', but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" (James 2:15-16) It seems illogical to me that we should urge Christians as individuals to get involved with feeding the hungry or housing the homeless, but draw back from urging these same Christians when they come together as the church to get involved on a wider scale in these same activities.

At this point let me interject some possibly subjective observations. We who have been brought up in post-Second World War Britain are the social products of the Welfare State. Things are changing, but when I was young in the late forties and fifties, the church's role in social welfare largely disappeared. We didn't need to care for widows and orphans in the way the Bible describes, since the State cared for them. Congregational benevolent funds fell into disuse, educational bursaries were no longer required, medical missions gave way to the NHS. Indeed, the church's involvement in such things was often seen as interference by the Welfare State. There was much that was positive in all of this, as grinding poverty was gradually eliminated from our land, and as opportunities were made available to the many which had formerly been the preserve of the few. But it meant that we became less familiar with the kind of situation that in most countries of the world and in most periods of history faces the Christian church – poverty, ill health, inequality, the abuse of human rights. There were exceptions, of course, but the general picture is, I think, accurate.

After my childhood and youth spent under the Welfare State, I lived for over 20 years in a country with none of these social benefits. As Peru's population exploded and its social infrastructure crumbled, the terrible realities of poverty stared us in the face every single day. Clearly you helped when you could as an individual, but in the church you were also made aware of how James's or Amos's or Isaiah's words screamed at you every time you preached or listened to the gospel. Holistic mission was not an option but an imperative, and churches found themselves combining their worship and preaching with using their premises for free or subsidised medical services, employment agencies, training workshops or feeding centres. Fractured people needed to be made whole, and part of the answer lay in the church's taking seriously the biblical call to holistic mission.

This may well bring us into messy and complicated areas, as we listen to the denunciations levelled by an Isaiah or an Amos against oppressive rulers and twisted judges. Denunciation on our part may prove to be insufficient; relief for the victims may only be available in the short term. Should the church not do something more so that the oppressors do not oppress?

Tim Chester in *Awakening to a World of Need* quotes an African example that perfectly illustrates the point. A church became concerned about injured workers from a nearby factory for whom no suitable transport was available to take them to hospital.

The church bought an ambulance and provided a very valuable humanitarian service as part of its Christian witness. As time went on, however, the church began to ask why so many factory workers were being injured. This led them to report the matter to the relevant government department, and push for safety inspectors to be sent in. This was done, forcing the employers to take better care of their workers. As a result the number of injured workers dwindled to a trickle, the church sold the ambulance and funds were made available to meet other needs. Taking the Word of God seriously was what led the church into the field of human rights and political pressure.

## **(ii) God has endowed us with different abilities for different tasks**

Among the gifts distributed by the ascended Christ to enable the church to carry out her mission are some which are clearly supernatural or miraculous, eg, speaking in tongues or healings. Others seem to be ordinary abilities, harnessed for divine service through the ministry of the Holy Spirit – serving, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, helping or administering (Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12). Within the church there ought to be scope for the exercise of these and many other gifts, as the church ministers to the bewildering variety of human needs and reaches out in evangelism to a lost world. This is not to devalue the ministry of the Word or to deny that some are specifically called by God and set apart by the church to be preachers and evangelists. But it is to recognise that the church's mission is wider than the verbal proclamation of the good news – crucial though that is. "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you", was Christ's charge to his disciples, and his ministry was one of both word and deed. His disciples – all of them to the end of time – were commanded to teach new converts everything he had commanded them, including the command of the Jericho road, "Go and do likewise". This gives the biblical picture of the church as a body, every member actively using his or her God-given gifts, ministering differently but harmoniously. All are sent, all are empowered.

## **(b) The nature of the earth**

When God created the world, he pronounced it all to be very good. He gave man rule over the earth, and placed him in Eden "to work it and care for it". Man sinned and the earth was cursed but did not thereby pass out of God's control. It is still the case that "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live therein" (Ps. 24:1) The God of creation is also the God of providence, and expects us to have the same concerned attitude to his handiwork that he has. The earth is not what it was originally intended to be, indeed "the creation has been subjected to frustration" and groans with the pain of that subjection, but one day "it will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-23). True, "the earth and everything in it will be burned up", but out of the ashes God will create "new heavens and a new earth".

All this means that the church must have a concern for the well-being of the earth as well as all its inhabitants. Not in the spirit of New Ageism or of a materialistic ecology, but yes with the conviction that there is nothing incongruous in preaching the Gospel of eternal salvation and at the same time doing everything we can to promote the proper care of the world we live in and the many needy people who inhabit it.

On a simple level this could mean that a local church, as part of its witness to the community, could decide to beautify and care for a waste plot near its building, given that the council, strapped for cash, neglects it. On a wider scale, it could mean, that a group of churches in the Brazilian rain forest, appalled by the destruction of the environment and of local tribes' ancestral ways of life by unscrupulous loggers and gold prospectors, not only speaks up but enters the fray in the field of human rights and political action. At the same time it will preach the gospel fervently to Indians, loggers, gold diggers, civil rights activists and politicians alike.

## **(c) The nature of God**

### **(i) Sovereignty**

The world and everyone and everything in it lies under the curse of God. No amount of human effort, even by redeemed men and women, will free the world or humanity from their bondage to sin. Satan, in fact, is the prince of this world with wide-ranging powers.

But none of that means that God has abdicated control over the world he has made. "He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth" (Dan. 4:35), and he has taught us to pray, "Your will be done on earth as in heaven." The church cannot usher in the Kingdom of God, where God's undisputed rule holds sway in a world of righteousness and peace, but the church does have the right to plant the banner of the Cross in every square inch of alien territory and declare, "This is God's". The King has come, he has made clear the laws of his kingdom and his subjects must obey them and urge others to do so too. That kingdom is not co-extensive with the church, for God's sovereign rule is not limited to a community of people, even redeemed people. "The miraculous signs that attested Jesus' deity and authenticated the witness of those who transmitted the gospel to the church are not continued, for their purpose is fulfilled. But the pattern of the kingdom that was revealed through those signs must continue in the church ... Kingdom evangelism is therefore holistic as it transmits by word and deed the promise of Christ for soul and body as well as the demand of Christ for body and soul." (E Clowney in *The Pastor-Evangelist*, ed. Roger Greenway)

### **(ii) Compassion**

Our Lord knew, none better, the awful pain of eternal separation from God. Therefore his compassion went out to those who continued in spiritual bondage, even as his anger blazed simultaneously against those who kept them there. The religious leaders who refused to enter heaven and wouldn't let anyone else enter either, who caused little ones to stumble on the way to God – these he denounced with the severest of woes and the heaviest of millstones.

But God's compassion must never be spiritualised away when the Scriptures show it directed to the victims of physical and social abuse. The afflicted, the needy and the oppressed in Psalm 72; the hungry, the oppressed, the prisoners, the blind, the bowed down, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows in Psalm 146; they are all real people with palpable needs in the here and now, and our necessary concern for their souls must be matched by the kind of compassion God has for their bodies and other needs.

## **Dangers in Holistic Mission**

That there are very real dangers in holistic mission is undeniable, with respect both to those who undertake it and those who benefit from it.

### **(a) Wrong Priorities**

For the church, the danger is that of sidelining and eventually even replacing the gospel. This may happen from the best of motives. A church or missionary team may find itself surrounded by the kind of people James describes, “without clothes and daily food”. They are too preoccupied with the struggle for existence to listen to talk of the bread of life, and so the missionaries get involved, rightly, in emergency food and shelter relief. But then they realise that this is only a short-term solution, and the people need to be taught how to provide for their own needs. Thus involvement in relief leads on to involvement in a variety of development programmes. In carrying these out, however, they run up against the vested interests of the rich and powerful, and find themselves forced into the political sphere as they denounce injustice and oppressive structures.

It can happen that a church which in all these activities has been seeking to act in obedience to God’s Word and actuated by the love of Christ gradually reaches the point where the preaching of the gospel and the concern for souls occupies less and less of its time, its energy and its budget. The best has been nudged out by the good.

But something more sinister can also happen. In its concern to meet physical needs, the church begins to wonder whether spiritual needs are so important after all. Are people really bound by sin and Satan? Aren’t the chains that need to be broken those of bondage to poverty and unemployment and discrimination and a host of other very tangible ills? Lack of confidence in the preaching of the Word becomes a failure to accept the message of the Word and even hostility to its basic tenets. Salvation becomes an earthly shalom; liberation is transmuted into the overthrow of oppressive political and economic structures.

Faced by such a betrayal of the gospel, it is very easy to sweep aside all social involvement, and concentrate our endeavours, as the church, on the fundamental task of preaching the gospel of grace. Others won’t or don’t, so we must. But I believe that such a response is deeply flawed. It falls into the trap, evident in many other areas of Christian belief and practice, of avoiding one extreme by embracing the other. The church that over-emphasises diaconal work to the neglect of people’s spiritual needs should not react by eliminating the diaconate. Elders for prayer and the ministry of the Word and deacons for ministries of mercy are both divinely ordained and expected to operate harmoniously within the structures of every church.

### **(b) Wrong Appetites**

For those to whom the church ministers holistically, the danger is that they seek the material benefits and reject the spiritual ones. “Rice Christians” may fill the pews of churches set up by mission hospitals and schools. But, of course, the danger of rice Christians is not new. To the crowds who thronged him after he had fed the 5,000, Jesus said: “You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.” He condemned their attitude, urging them: “Do not

work for the food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.” (John 6:26-27) He did not give up, however, on doing them good, since that miracle was followed by an extensive programme of healings and, significantly, by another spectacular provision of the food that spoils, when he fed the 4,000.

The command of God demands holistic mission. The love of Christ in our hearts demands holistic mission. The need of suffering humanity demands holistic mission. Of course, there are risks involved, and we must seek to minimise them. Those who want only the loaves and fishes must be made aware that loaves and fishes are not enough. We must also sternly reject the slightest suggestion that material benefits could serve as inducements to conversion or church membership. We must furthermore harness wisely our limited resources, and that may well mean refusing to undertake some social service programmes. We must be ready to give up social activities when it is clear they are no longer required or are an obstacle to the gospel, however much kudos the church may have gained in the community because of them. But the church must never cease to follow in the steps of her Master who went about preaching and doing good.

## **Examples of Church Related Holistic Mission**

I doubt if the reformed church in these islands has ever combined more successfully the diaconal and evangelistic aspects of its ministry than in the early decades of the Free Church of Scotland, founded in 1843. Actually we need to look earlier than 1843, to the work and vision of Thomas Chalmers. No-one who has read, for example, *The St Andrew's Seven*, can doubt the fervour of Chalmers' evangelistic and missionary zeal. As Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of St Andrews, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the evangelisation of all classes of people in the town, and was also the mentor and inspirer of godly young men who went out in sacrificial missionary service to India, notable among them Dr Alexander Duff.

But it was this same Chalmers who in Glasgow, while preaching to packed churches, initiated what has come to be called the “**St John's Experiment**”. Appalled by the squalid poverty in which many of his parishioners lived, he organised teams of church workers to visit them, assess their needs, establish networks of self-help, provide material benefits where necessary, while at the same time pushing ahead with the building of churches in the poorer districts, more accessible to the people.

After the Disruption, in spite of his massive responsibilities in leading the fledgling denomination and as Principal of the theological college, Chalmers looked around for some other area of home mission. He chose the West Port, notorious for vice, drunkenness and prostitution: it was, in fact, the territory of the infamous body-snatchers, Burke and Hare. Dividing the area into 20 districts, Chalmers organised volunteer church workers to visit, offering free schooling to the children and prayer and Scripture reading with the families. Many were the rebuffs, but Chalmers, aged 65, persevered. Every Saturday morning he met with the workers for reports and prayer. Eventually they felt they could hold their first service, in a hay loft. Chalmers preached to a few children and old women, but refused to be discouraged. Holistic mission continued, though with the gospel in the forefront. In less than three years a church was built, and in February 1847 Chalmers wrote to a friend in New York: “I wish to communicate what is to me the most joyful event of my life ... last Sabbath. I

conducted the first communion service in the new West Port church. 132 people took part in the Lord's Supper, 100 of them West Port residents." Three months later Chalmers passed in his sleep into the presence of the Lord.

Chalmers may be the best-known of the early Free Church leaders, but a host of others demonstrate the same conviction that the ministry of word and deed go hand in hand. Do any of you bank with the Trustee Savings Bank? Did you know that it was founded by a Church of Scotland, later Free Church, minister? Dr Henry Duncan of Ruthwell in south-west Scotland used to encourage his flock, many of them poor, to save for times of illness and unemployment. But their income was so low and their needs so great that money stored in a tin on the mantelpiece or in a box under the bed never remained there for long. Duncan instituted a savings bank for people whose meagre income was scoffed at by ordinary banks, teaching them how even tiny sums mounted up, and how if they left their money long enough, wonder of wonders, it would gain them interest. The minister himself was banker, secretary, accountant and publicist rolled into one, at the same time as he faithfully preached the gospel, wrote tracts and strongly supported the infant Bible Societies. So successful was the bank that others were formed all over the country, and Duncan's promotion of the scheme among philanthropists and parliamentarians in London led to the first Act of Parliament to encourage, facilitate and regulate such banks. Duncan pioneered many other social welfare schemes, but he was no advocate of a social gospel. His death came suddenly as he was fervently leading a prayer meeting in the house of one of his elders.

An interesting example of what was called in those days, "the twofold ministry of the church" occurred in 1846. Throughout Scotland many people had left the Established Church, but their new congregations often lacked ministerial oversight. Remote areas were hard hit, so the Free Church commissioned a schooner, the **Breadalbane**, to take ministers for several weeks at a time to the isolated west highlands and islands. This was the "spiritual" ministry, but soon the "temporal" forced itself on the Church's notice. 1846 was the year of the great potato famine when thousands died in Ireland and tens of thousands were forced to emigrate to America. When news of the famine in rural Scotland reached the Free Church leaders in Edinburgh, they immediately set in train a public collection which raised almost at once the extraordinary sum of £15,000 (perhaps £225,000 today). But they did more. Word was sent to the ministers on the Breadalbane to assess the needs of the people. As soon as the results were known, food supplies were distributed by the ship. To quote a contemporary source: "Many a day the sight of the Breadalbane had been a cordial to the hearts of the poor people hungering for the bread that perisheth as well as for that which endureth unto everlasting life." As a result of these efforts it is reckoned that not one person died in Scotland through the famine – the contrast with Ireland could not be more melancholy.

Finally let me refer to Dr Thomas Guthrie. Recently arrived in Edinburgh from a pleasant country parish, he stood despondently one day looking down at the **Cowgate** with its dingy tenements, "its windows innocent of glass, or stuffed with old hats or dirty rags", its squalid inhabitants "standing sullen and silent, with hunger and ill-usage in their saddened looks." Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned round and saw Dr Chalmers, who, Guthrie tells us, with his broad Luther-like face glowing

with enthusiasm waved his arm to exclaim: “A beautiful field, sir; a very fine field of operation.”

Guthrie accepted the challenge and threw himself into the work of church extension in the poorest parts of Edinburgh. He soon realised that along with the preaching of the gospel, there had to be a concerted attack on ignorance and poverty. The result was the establishment of ragged schools for what we now call street children, all of them church-related and operating in times of spiritual revival.

Two moving incidents in Guthrie’s life show how he held in balance what they called the spiritual and the temporal, or what we would describe as holistic mission. The first stems from the tense days of the Ten Year Conflict between Church and State before the Disruption. Guthrie had gone to preach in a parish church in Strathbogie (NE Scotland), when he was handed an interdict from the Court of Session forbidding him to do so. To quote Guthrie: “The interdict forbade me, under penalty of the Calton Jail, to preach in the parish churches of Strathbogie. I said, ‘The parish churches are stone and lime and belong to the State; I will not intrude there’. It forbade me to preach the Gospel in the schoolhouses. I said, ‘The schoolhouses are stone and lime and belong to the State; I will not intrude there’. It forbade me to preach in the churchyard. I said, ‘The dust of the dead is the State’s; I will not intrude there’. But when the Lords of Session forbade me to preach my Master’s blessed Gospel and offer salvation to sinners anywhere in that district under the arch of heaven I put the interdict under my feet, and I preached the Gospel.”

The other incident occurred many years later in Edinburgh. Guthrie’s heart was torn by the suffering of hungry, uneducated and often ill-treated children, and he would often be found visiting them and trying to persuade them to attend the church’s ragged schools. On one occasion he asked some boys, “Would you go to school if, besides your learning, you were to get breakfast, dinner and supper there?” It would have done any man’s heart good to have seen the flash of joy that broke from the eyes of one of them, the flush of pleasure on his cheek as, on hearing of three sure meals a day, the boy leapt to his feet and exclaimed, “Ay, will I, sir, and bring the hail land too” and then as if afraid I might withdraw so large and munificent an offer he exclaimed, “I’ll come but for my dinner, sir!”

When the Edinburgh city fathers, on Guthrie’s death, set up a statue in his honour in Princes Street Gardens with a ragged child in his embrace, they were doubtless acknowledging much more his humanitarian efforts than his fervent and eloquent preaching of the gospel. It was true that the world may misunderstand, lauding our humanitarian efforts while rejecting the gospel we preach; fellow-Christians may be fearful of the temporal elbowing out the spiritual, but Duncan and Chalmers, James and John, Amos and Micah, and supremely our Lord himself set the pattern of word and deed as essential components of a gospel witness. The church must engage in holistic mission in obedience to the command of her great Head: “Love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself.” And “what God has joined together, let man not separate”.

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# The Preacher and Public Duty

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Geraint Fielder

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**T**he Congregationalist Dr RW Dale of Birmingham was a man of truth and action, exemplifying the sense of public duty in Victorian England.

## Background

By the time Dale was at the height of his ministry in the 1870s, the decisive change in English life had come about, the secular spirit had begun to invade the middle classes. PT Forsyth, Dale's spiritual heir, reminds us that the middle classes had risen and secured their position under the influences of Calvinism. That meant they regarded man as there for obedience to God, rather than God being there for the service of man. The erosion of this dimension in our national life led to the marginalising of evangelical influence in Britain.

Two strands of unbelief contributed to middle class opinion being decisively secularised:

1. The first could be called *a secular sense of history*. It was not science itself but science interpreted as history that upset the orthodox view of the world. Geology claimed the earth existed æons before man and therefore disproved the creation/flood story of the Bible. What scientists claimed to do was to offer a picture of history, not only in the past, before man was supposed to have existed, but in the future. Auguste Comte, the high priest of rationalism, argued that truth evolved and it was evolving away from Christianity. Thoughtful Victorians were being bombarded by claims that the facts of Christianity as described in the Bible might not be true. Dale began his ministry in these early days of historical criticism of the Bible and geological conflict with Genesis. It left its mark on him.

2. The second followed the line that *much of Christian dogma was immoral* (eg Francis Newman). Some of the truths that lay at the root of the biblical view of God and man: original sin, predestination, atonement, eternal punishment etc., men like John Stuart Mill, described with such terms as "horrifying". The rationalists lapped this up, though strangely they recognized the moral fruit that Christian faith had produced. They had to. Evangelicalism was, even by the crudest of Benthamite principles, seen to be useful. People could see that it was daily changing the face of England – making people more sober, more respectable and more humanitarian.

The rationalists never seem to have seen their own dilemma here, that they admired the fruits of something whose roots they laboured to destroy. The atmosphere behind the 19th century rejection was that there was a higher belief than Christianity. These moral unbelievers said, "Let us be good for good's sake, not for God's". "A man" the agnostics argued "can be moral and yet not acknowledge Christian doctrine". And so, they claimed, can a society and nation. Without the apparent scientific base provided by evolutionism their arguments would have cut no intellectual ice.

Furthermore, a high moral seriousness ran through the Victorian era, almost to the

end. If matters of faith led to conflict, there was still consensus in the area of morals. This gives us the clue to one of the major emphases of Dale's life. If there were these strands of unbelief which Dale tried to battle against intellectually, there was also a strain of moral enthusiasm, which affected the whole temper of the times, with which Dale felt he could cooperate. He identified with many of the political and social aspirations and exertions of the day. There was a moral focus in the public mind. The Nonconformist conscience was its most intense expression, but not its isolated representative. The bond could join High Churchman but Liberal party leader Mr Gladstone to his nonconformist followers – Dale is an example. But the consensus was wider still. Unbelievers shared in this moral solemnity. John S Mill and his utilitarian friends believed earnestly, so we are told, in the importance of being earnest (Wilde 1895). This accumulation of a Christian and moral consensus can be traced back to William Wilberforce's publication in 1797 of *A Practical View of Real Christianity*.

Shaftesbury worked wholeheartedly with reforming unbelievers. Edwin Chadwick was a utilitarian, entirely single-minded in his hatred of dirt, disease and selfish obstruction. Shaftesbury's motivation in joining completely with him in his attempts to eliminate it he expressed like this:

If Saint Paul, calling our bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit, said that they must not be contaminated by sin, we also say that our bodies, the same temples of the Holy Spirit, ought not to be contaminated by preventable disease, degraded by avoidable filth, and disabled by unnecessary suffering.

In RW Dale, as “an unworldly man of the world” and an “advocate of Christian worldliness” we see the same passion as we see in Wilberforce and Shaftesbury.

While revolutions raged on the Continent, Victorian England progressed by peaceful reforms. The religious background which formed such leaders as Bright, Shaftesbury and Gladstone produced the acceptance of common moral ideals which is the basis of the Victorian solution. Elie Halevy reminds us that the spiritual energy accumulated by a century of intense Christian effort came to the surface. The Victorian Age was able to apply the accumulated reserves of its Christian tradition to its social problems. But, it failed to preserve those resources. The world of ideas changed. The culture lost its spiritual strengths. The moral consensus disintegrated.

At this point of crisis the ideas changed. Protestantism was attacked, not only from without by unbelief, but also from within. Not only was the Scripture mangled by men, but the Scripture's view of God was miniaturised. Dale was both pressurised by this background and stood out against it as Mr Valiant for Truth.

He had wide ranging interests, eg the social responsibilities of Christian citizenship, his attempt to grapple with higher critical questions, his commitment to the Liberal Party as the trustee of the Nonconformist Conscience, his preaching power and commitment to his own congregation, his failure to hold to an inerrant scripture, and his attempts to cope with and help his congregation with the avalanche of unbelief that came with the evolutionary popularisers.

## **His Early Life**

Dr RW Dale was born in 1829 and in 1853 he began his ministry at Carrs Lane, Birmingham, the same year as Gladstone presented his first budget, and Charles

Spurgeon began preaching in the Exeter Hall. He died in 1895, the year that the Niagara Bible Conference defined the fundamentals.

## **I His Conversion**

He was converted within the context of Congregationalism. Today it is something of a hole in the corner affair. Not so in Dale's day and for long before. Many such sailed as Pilgrim Fathers. Congregationalism shares with the Baptists the glory surrounding the name of John Bunyan, and has as much claim as anyone to John Milton. Oliver Cromwell the great Independent is writ large in the history of England. John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge, John Howard and David Livingstone, and preachers like William Jay. In the later 19th century the name of RW Dale had the stature to live in such company as thinker, theologian and public figure.

At 14, showing something of the bent of his mind, Dale was engrossed in Butler's Analogy. About 13, "a sermon suggested thoughts about God and my relation to Him which awakened anxieties which lasted for many months". He turned to John Angel James' *Anxious Enquirer* and read it on his knees in keen distress about his personal salvation. But still assurance was withheld. "Was his belief of the right kind?" he asked himself. "I began to think that perhaps my belief was powerless because it was the result of education and not independent enquiry. Under this impression I turned, in my boyish simplicity, to Paley's *Evidences*, hoping that when I had verified for myself the historical foundations of Christian truth, my belief would rest on a right basis ... This set me off on metaphysical adventures which yielded no discoveries of the kind I wanted. At last, how I cannot tell, all became clear. I ceased thinking of myself and of my faith and thought only of Christ, and then I wondered that I should have been perplexed for even a single hour." The living Christ was his stay.

## **2 His Early Ministry**

He trained at the University of London, where he gained a first in Philosophy and the gold medal for his MA. "Germanism" as he called it early became a trial to him. As a student of 22, he lost his hold on the doctrine of scripture, although he never faltered in his belief in the supernatural, or in preaching the great doctrines of the faith. He became assistant to John Angel James at Carr's Lane and then succeeded him. It was to be a life-long pastorate.

His early ministry is the unhappy and confused part of his life as he tried to cope with the secular offensive we referred to at the beginning. He faced this battle twenty years or so before most Nonconformists. It is part of the stature of Dale that he realized so quickly in the 1850s that he was living at a turning of the tide. To all appearances the tide of Christianity was still coming strongly in. But he felt a decisive undertow of unbelief and anti supernaturalism. For Dale, the battle had to do with the very truth or falsity of the faith and its future. He searched about for a rock to stand on to save him being swept away. He retreated from verbal inspiration and took, as his last line of defence, the historical trustworthiness of the Four Gospels' testimony to Jesus as Son of God and Saviour.

His struggles over authority were not helped by the tensions he produced in his congregation, long used to the warm-hearted Calvinism of JA James. "Dale ceased to

be a Calvinist without ever becoming an Arminian”, says AM Fairbairn. When he came to expound Romans 5 he denied that Paul taught the imputation of Adam’s sin. But he certainly should not be seen as accepting a low view of sin. He was appalled by sin. His preaching burns against it. “For myself”, said Dale, “I stand by the ancient faith, and believe the indifference with which the forgiveness of sins is regarded in these times is no evidence of the progress of religious thought but a result of the decline of faith in the living God.” “Man is bad, not only because he voluntarily says and does wicked things, but because he himself is wicked, his very life is corrupt.” “The race itself is fallen – not merely individual men; and from this fall the race needs redemption.”

But he was heading for crisis. As a young minister he had no relaxations. Walking was his only exercise and that too often left the mind in the study while the body was out abroad. He began to feel he was no use. He spoke of hours of despondency, assailed by shadowy fears that his intellectual powers might before long, lose their clearness and vigour. And all the while he was hurling himself into his ever widening work load. His lectures at the Independent College, later Mansfield College, Oxford, were on English literature, logic, philosophy and homiletics.

He launched, in 1855, into open air evangelism, preaching in the open air four nights a week. “I enjoy it amazingly”, he said and the local press noticed that most of the men who attended these open airs were not church-goers. Up to 2,000 gathered round the cabinet maker’s cart which served as the speaker’s platform.

The subjects that recur during his first two years’ preaching were regeneration, justification, sanctification, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the deity of Christ, judgement to come, faith. But very soon there are indications too that his equally life long emphasis on Christian duties come out in practical sermons on justice, kindness, industry, courage, contentment and so on.

As he became more familiar with his people, he saw the urgency of speaking to them where they were. He set himself to gain a thorough knowledge of the details and methods of the workings of shop, office, factory and business. He astonished people who consulted him as minister on his practical knowhow.

Human life, as I know it, is the life of Birmingham manufacturers, merchants and tradesmen and of working people who work in iron and brass and tin, who make pens and guns and jewellery, hardware of all sorts and beautiful things in silver and gold. I think of the troubles and temptations which come to them in their trade.

The discovery that some resented sermons on what they called “weights and measures”, made him even more determined to speak on these matters. When some people were excluded from the church because of business irregularities it deepened his desire to drive home to the conscience that faith and fraud are incompatible. The only way to prevent corruption in society were men who concentrated the hours of business as fully as the hours of prayer, and who carried on their secular calling as the servants of Christ.

By the time he was 30 he suffered serious collapse. Three months break restored him. But was he going to be able to carry on as before?

## **His Widening Ministry**

1. In 1862, Dale embarked on a controversy which launched him permanently into the British public eye. The year 1862 marked the bicentenary of the Great Ejection. The

Evangelical Alliance, which James had been instrumental in founding, wanted it to have no controversial application, for EA was sensitive to the growing impetus of the disestablishment movement. An Anglican Evangelical Vicar in Birmingham, though recognizing the folly of 1662, thought the bicentenary idea would hardly further unity.

But it went ahead and Dale's address at the Birmingham Town Hall was sensational. Many of the seats had to be removed to allow people to stand shoulder to shoulder. Hundreds were turned away. More than once Dale brought the audience to their feet in excitement. He always drove home his nails so hard he sometimes split the wood. For example, he said that the truest fulfilment of the bicentenary would be for the eight to ten thousand evangelical clergy who agreed with the 2,000 over baptismal regeneration should come out. A pamphlet of what he said ran right throughout the country.

2. When Carr's Lane Chapel was closed for building alteration, Dale moved his congregation to the Birmingham Town Hall. Men and women came who never darkened a church door. Many years later, Cardinal Newman, regretting his own and other people's failures to reach people, referred with thankfulness to the hold Dale had upon the city and the force with which he preached the gospel. These services gave an example of that. This is his final call to his hearers:—

Once more, and for the last time, in the presence of Him who became man for us sinners and for our salvation, who died, the just for the unjust, rose again to be the Prince and Saviour of men, I implore you not to neglect the critical duties which determine your present relation to God and your future eternal destiny. Many of you, I know, will never come to hear me preach again. This, this is my final message to you – God became man and died on the cross that he might rescue you and me from sin and wretchedness. To be ungrateful for His love, to reject his mercy, is wilfully to put away from you a life of communion with God on this side of death, and immortality and holiness and glory in the world that is to come.

3. In 1869, Dale was elected President of the Congregational Union – at 39 the youngest to hold the office. He was now at the height of his powers. Exhaustion and uncertainty were behind him. His presidential address was entitled *Christ and the Controversies of Christendom*. "Preach Christ", he urged, "Let him speak for himself". It was the only answer, 1. to the resurgence of Rome, 2. to the devaluation of man inherent in the positivism of Comte, 3. to the rising discontent in the working classes, 4. to the way that the revolt against revelation had led to a contemptuous rejection of the supernatural. It was a spirited assault on the destructive tendencies of the German critics. Yet, even though he had satisfied himself thoroughly, with the help of Westcott and Lightfoot, on the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels, his stand was not on the verbal authority of the Bible, but on the living Christ and his work in the believer. His transformation in personal certainty is so radical that it must have a key. Surely it lies in what Dale tells us happened one Easter morning around that time. Half-way through his preparation the thought of the risen Lord broke in upon him as it had never done before. It was an experience that sent him out into the world reinvigorated within. I quote him:

Christ is alive, I said to myself. Then I paused – alive? Then I paused again – alive! Can that really be true? Living as really as I myself am? I got up and walked about. I repeated,

“Christ is living – Christ is living”. At first it seemed strange and hardly true. But at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory. Yes, Christ is living! It was for me a new discovery. I thought that all along I had believed it. But not until that moment did I feel sure about it. And then I said, “My people shall know it. I shall preach about it again and again until they believe it as I believe it now”.

4. The Moody Mission of 1875. For a while Dale saw what he had always longed to see – men and women pressing into the kingdom, not as solitary souls, but by scores and hundreds. Up to 200 were admitted into Carr’s Lane in that period, 75% standing well. In 1873/74 Dale’s articles in *The Congregationalist* had been on Revival, and how the power of the Spirit of God had been manifested in striking ways, bringing new epochs in the life of the Church. He was confident God would move again. But when a movement of the Spirit did come, causing those increased numbers of conversions, it was not Revival and not what Dale expected, for Mr Moody was not at all the kind of man for whom he had been looking! But he came deeply to value him. After a few nights he was amazed and delighted. 12,000 a night crowded the Bingley Hall Dale wrote:

Moody’s address was simple, direct, kindly, hopeful, a touch of humour, a touch of pathos, lit up with a story or two that filled most eyes with tears. There was nothing very remarkable about it. Yet it told. It told ... There was sunlight in it. I told Mr Moody that the work was most plainly of God, for I could see no relation between him and what he had done. Mr Moody laughed cheerily and said he would be very sorry if ever it were otherwise.

When Moody was abused and misrepresented, Dale met scorn with scorn and fought with his whole heart in the conflict, taking issue among others with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

5. Dale was, above all, a thinker and a theologian – he produced 18 large books. In 1875 he began to deliver in London his Congregational Union lectures on the Atonement. It is what Dale is mainly remembered by.

John Stott quotes his work on nine occasions in *The Cross of Christ* and says:

RW Dale’s great book *The Atonement* was written in order to prove that Christ’s death on the cross was objective before it could be subjective, and that “unless the Sacrifice is conceived under objective forms, the subjective power will be lost”.

One indication of the relevance of what Dale had to say on this to his generation was the fact that 23 editions appeared in less than thirty years. Stott also shows the influence Dale’s book had on the young Martyn Lloyd-Jones in 1929. Lloyd-Jones was preaching the new birth but had been challenged that “the work of Christ” appeared to have little place in his preaching. So he asked the proprietor of a second hand book shop for the two standard books on the Atonement. The man produced Dale and Denney. After locking himself away to study them, Lloyd-Jones emerged claiming to have found the real heart of the gospel. It changed the focus of his preaching.

So, Dale’s heart and preaching were full of the living Christ and his cross and he deeply grasped the link between the NT doctrine of atonement, justification by faith and the believer’s joy. Nothing showed this more clearly than his observations on Moody’s second visit to Britain in 1883/84 which happened to be around the time of the 400th anniversary of Luther’s birth.

Has it ever occurred to you that justification by faith has lost its great place among us? Depend upon it, Luther was right in insisting upon its supreme importance. It lies in immediate and vital contact with the atonement. I should like to tell you of something much in my thought – during the recent Luther celebrations. Nine years ago people said Mr Moody did not preach repentance, he taught men that they were saved by believing. During his present visit, no such criticism has been made. He's insisted very much on repentance and on it in the sense in which the word is now used by evangelical as well as other divines – as though it were a doing of penance, a self-torture, a putting on of a spiritual hair shirt instead of a *metanoia*. Now observe the effect of this. Crowds went into the enquiry room as before. But the results have been inconsiderable. I have seen none of the shining faces that used to come to me. In 1875 I received about 200 converts. As yet, I have not received a dozen. In 1875 Moody preached in a manner which produced the effect produced by Luther. And received similar criticism. Why? He exulted in the free grace of God. His preaching of grace led men to repentance, to a complete change in life. His joy was contagious. Men leapt out of darkness into light and lived the Christian life afterward. But “do penance” preaching has had no such results. I wrote to Moody about it and he said it had set him thinking. In parting with the Lutheran truth concerning justification by faith, you part with the springs of gladness.

## **The Ministry of Christian Worldliness**

In an enormous cascade of energy which spanned 30 years Dale lived a paradox – an unworldly man of the world, playing a distinguished part in its great movements, yet utterly untouched by the taint of its spirit.

The MP for Birmingham was John Bright who first took Dale to the Commons in 1862. He sat under the spell of Gladstone's pleasant tenor voice and was amused by the rough boyish wit of Sir Robert Peel.

Early in 1864 Birmingham put on a special tribute to Bright in the Town Hall. The speech fell to Dale and he dealt with one theme – the responsibilities of Christian Citizenship. “Of all secular affairs, politics, rightly considered, are amongst the most unworldly and, as such, a man devoted to political life ought to be seeking no personal or private good. The true political spirit is the mind that was in Christ Jesus, ‘Who looked not unto his own things but also on the things of others’.” “I can never listen to RW Dale without thinking of the church militant,” John Bright said, “There is an ardent conviction about him, whether he's preaching the gospel or whether he is declaring his convictions in the political sphere.”

Dale never meddled in the rough work of election contests, but he never kept secret his Liberal party loyalties. When the Reform Bill of 1867 was being contested, and the theme “we must educate our masters”, ie the working classes began to emerge, it was Dale who was asked to deliver the first of their special series of lectures in Birmingham.

Three years of preparatory debate before the controversial Education Bill of 1870 saw him live in the thick of the action. No government could conceive a means of setting up a national education system that would offend neither dissenters nor establishment. Dale was on the Royal Commission as the nonconformist representative for the working of the Education Act. It involved enormous work, twice a week for eighteen months.

So active was Dale in the education debate that some wanted him to stand for parliament. But he would not listen, then or ever. The House of Commons was

incompatible with the pastorate and would have been a step down from the pulpit. But the education debate did not leave Dale where it found him. "You see what a power you are", said one of the education commissioners.

The value his own civic community put on him emerged when he had a call to a pastorate in London. The city of Birmingham united to put a restraint upon him, an effort, described by the *Birmingham Post* as without precedent. A letter signed by all the leading men of the city urged him, on public grounds, to remain. "All who care for the intellectual, moral and political life of Birmingham share our apprehension." Especially did they ask Dale to retain his public interest.

His church also urged him to stay, you'll be glad to know! They expressed their appreciation of the spiritual strength and joy in Christ that his ministry gave them with great force.

He stayed, and became even more involved in municipal life. People would sometimes say to him: "There are no politics in heaven". "In heaven" he said, "there is no poverty, no crime, which unjust laws help to create." He refused to accept that religious devotion could excuse neglect of public duty. God's commandments cover the whole of our life. When a prominent Roman Catholic said to him, "When, Mr Dale, are you going to look after your soul?" he replied, "I have given my soul to Christ to look after".

Civic righteousness became a passion. When he pulled off his coat to speak in the Town Hall, it was a sure sign of what was coming. If the meeting was tempestuous, he ploughed along with the steady rush of an Atlantic liner shouldering its way through blustering seas. He would fight night after night, formidable as an antagonist, for major housing reconstruction, for slum clearance, public health, free libraries, art galleries, speaking on all with an exact knowledge. "There was nowhere", says the *Birmingham Daily Post*, "that his vigorous personality was not manifested. There was hardly any part of our public life which he did not touch, and in touching, elevate, strengthen, and brighten." Dale himself said, in his Yale lectures on preaching:

For men to claim the right to neglect their duties to the state, on the ground of piety, while they insist on the state protecting their homes, their property and protecting from disturbances even their religious meetings in which their exquisitely delicate and valetudinarian spirituality is developed, is gross unrighteousness.

This dictum expresses the rule of his public life. If it was clearly for the public good, he felt it was his Christian duty to support it.

It may not surprise you that one of the factors that led to Dale's withdrawal from the secular arena was the intractable issue of Ireland. The resignation of Joseph Chamberlain, Dale's own MP, from Gladstone's cabinet over the Prime Minister's plans for Irish Home Rule was a sign of what would eventually split the Liberal party.

## Ministry in the Light of Heaven

Here then is Dale, an unworldly man active in the world of men. How did he continue as a spiritual, Biblical man in the pulpit?

In his last years, a haunting feeling arose that he had given too much attention to political and social affairs. He writes to the acting Governor of South Australia in 1894: "It is a cowardly thing perhaps, but, as the shadows lengthen, I am glad to be wholly out of politics. It is late to have made the discovery, but there is something startling in

the sudden extinction of the fires that burnt during the Commonwealth. 20 years after Cromwell, the first vigour and zeal were almost gone. 20 years still, they had quite vanished. The question assailed me, whether the explanation did not lie, in part, in the premature attempt to apply to the political order the laws of a diviner kingdom, and to do it by direct political action."

When the Free Church Council was formed in 1892 as a kind of church pressure group on moral, political and social issues, Dale stood against it from the first. He was always convinced that the Church was a spiritual institution and social and political reforms were not the object of the Church's activity. "I look back some twenty years. I remember a successful movement for reform in Birmingham. The individual men who took part in that movement had certainly learned the principles, and derived their spirit, largely from the nonconformist churches in the town. I do not believe however, that if the nonconformist *churches* of Birmingham had been organized to secure such results in municipal reform, their efforts would have been in any way effective, as the efforts of their individual members were as Christian citizens in the community." This theme of motivating Christians to be salt and light as citizens he never qualified. We can learn a lot from him.

We would be entirely mistaken, however, if we thought these years were spent in passive regret. Far from it. They were marked by a reinflamed longing for the salvation of men. In 1891, when he was 61, he took a cottage in north Wales and there he would read his Bible, book by book, with minute care, noting the truths it seemed to him he had dwelt too lightly on. Preaching, he now felt, should be perhaps his sole work. His failure to reach men as he had seen Moody reach them, weighed upon him.

I have been thinking much about my preaching. It has a fatal defect. I fear that the truth occupies too large a place in my thought, and that I have been too little occupied with the actual persons to be restored to God. This comes from a moral and spiritual condition which involves serious guilt. God forgive me. It is want of conformity in me to the mind of Christ, a hardness of heart which must be subdued and melted by the grace and truth of God, if the remaining years will have a different character from those that have gone before.

A member of the congregation, at the close of an hour's sermon preached in a most painful stillness, a sermon on the awfulness of sin and the glory in Christ, protested: "If Dr Dale continues to preach like that I shall not come. I cannot stand it. It goes through me." "Ah yes", said Dale. "but it was more awful to me. It is hard to preach like that, but it must be done."

Then he had a heart condition and was brought close to death. At first:

I was too weak to find direct consolation in the eternal springs of joy ... But God was there. When I became stronger, the sense of justification has given me great bliss. The great words "as far as the east is from the west, so far hast thou removed my transgression from me" gave me more than peace. At times they filled me with light ... Had great peace last night in a vivid sense that redemption began on Christ's side, not mine. That my safety was the fulfilment of His work.

His letters show his yearning to convey the gospel of the grace of God. "Forsyth said a good thing the other day. He said the time had come to bring back the word grace into our preaching." "The trouble is," said Dale, "the impressions of God's transcendent

grace, which have come to me during the past few months, are not to be translated into words. I feel like a dumb man ... If God would but touch my lips!"

George Barber, his assistant, speaks of their prayer times together in the last three years of his ministry. "How earnestly he would pray that God would save the unsaved. He would make me almost oppressed with a burden to save sinners. No one could have listened to such prayers and not have felt that to save men was the height of all Dr Dale's life and work."

He died on Wednesday, 13 March 1895. On his desk lay a sheet with its last sentence broken off in the middle. It states the principle by which he lived; its incompleteness suggests the mystery of the great hope he had entered. Its theme has bearing on our subject:

"UNWORLDLINESS" does not consist in the rigid observance of any external rules of conduct, but in the spirit and temper, and in the way of living created by the vision of God, by constant fellowship with Him, by a personal and vivid experience of the greatness of Christ's redemption, by the settled purpose to do the will of God always, in all things, at all costs, and by the power of the great hope – the full assurance – that, after our mortal years are spent, there is a larger, fuller, richer life in ...

Always a philosopher, it was the mystery of pain that he pondered as death approached. But there was much more!! Peter Taylor Forsyth tells us that in his last illness Dale said that it never came home to him before, as it did in his extreme pain that Christ was not only his Saviour but his King, who had he right to exact anything and everything from him in His silent discretion.

## His Ministry Assessed

What, in the end, disturbs us about Dale is that in the heat of conflict over the reliability of the scriptures, he moved his ground and sought verification of Christian truth in our experience of Christ rather than in an inerrant scripture. In his search for ultimate authority he gave up far more than he need have, and therefore rescued less than he might have. In *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, published in 1890, though the volume is a tough-minded and confident demonstration of the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels, it is not the Four Gospels as such that form the basis of his confidence, but the believer's experience of "the living Christ, who ever since his resurrection has been saving and ruling men." (Final page, LCFG) The foundation for authority on which he settles was what Forsyth later called "the infallibility of the gospel", what God in Christ accomplished for sinners.

But Dale's view of authority and experience must be kept in perspective. What helped him out of his earlier crippling uncertainty were the following considerations:

1. That the power of the true preacher of the Christian gospel is the power of the truth and of the Spirit of God. The Christian preacher has never had to rely on the authority of scholars to bring home the reality and glory of Christ's redemption. The apostles were witnesses of Christ and their testimony has come down to us and we have experienced the same salvation. Like the apostles, the Christian believer is grounded firmly in Christ.

2. That when the historical trustworthiness of the records is assailed by scholars using all their ingenuity to destroy their authority, we have no option but to respond with scholarship. We believe that the story of Christ, which the church received from

the apostles, has been held fast to ever since. However, when assailants compel us to discuss questions of literature and history, those questions must be determined by literary and historical evidence.

3. That this controversy does not touch the faith of Christian men in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of men and the Way to God. Faith in Christ does not ask for the protection of friendly scholarship; and the assaults of hostile scholarship do not reach it. It needs neither Tacitus nor Pliny, Justin Martyr, nor Irenaeus. It is in actual possession of the salvation which Christ has achieved for mankind. By means of this argument Dale made the problems raised by higher criticism subordinate issues.

4. But, the assault of unbelief is a serious one and the Christian scholar discharges an honourable service. It is within his province to show that our Lord's earthly history is not, the deliberate invention of imagination, but is the story which was told by the elect friends of Christ, whom he trusted to make his gospel known to all nations and that it was after this manner that the Son of God lived among men."

5. It is also noteworthy that what our age means by experiences would have been foreign to Dale. Everything Dale conveys is a massive objectivity. "The poles between which his life ever moved," says Fairbairn "were the awful majesty and attractiveness of God and his own unworthiness of the God who so irresistibly attracted him".

The Bishop of Winchester wrote of Dale's section in his book *Christian Doctrine* where he asks "For whom does the word God stand? I doubt if there is another man living who could have written that passage – nor many dead."

Furthermore his view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin explains the emphasis on the objective atonement as the grounds of the sinner's forgiveness. When he speaks of experience this is the way he puts it: "The Christian life is originated and sustained in activity by the actual experience of the objective reality of God's righteousness and grace and the power and glory of Christ as redeemer."

## Conclusions

1. If the decisive change that came over the middle class was the secular spirit of unbelief, the decisive change that came over protestantism in the 19th century was the subjective spirit of liberalism, with its anthropocentric idea of God as tributary to man. That view of God was not the living and true God Dale preached about and obeyed and knew in experience. God was not, to Dale, man's first asset and benefactor, the offerer of experiences. Man was God's first subject and servant.

2. Dale's deficient doctrine of Scripture is a parallel with those Victorians who retained the moral consensus but rejected the gospel. The next generation found it was impossible to keep the moral fruit without the gospel root. Dale's position on Scripture underlines the fact, that, if we are to retain the objective truths of the gospel for which he so signally fought, we must also fight for the authority of the Scripture where God has preserved those very truths for the running generations.

No gospel, in the end, no moral dynamic

No authoritative Scripture, in the end, no objective gospel.

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# The Pastor has left ...

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*Peter Seccombe*

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**A**ll too often one hears of ministers leaving independent churches in unhappy circumstances. Occasionally they have been dismissed; more frequently they have felt compelled to resign because they have no longer had the support of their fellow leaders or other influential members of the congregation. Either way the men and their families are deeply hurt, if not rendered homeless and unemployed. Justice and compassion may seem sadly lacking.

In facing this issue those of us who are ourselves ministers all too readily focus entirely on the misdeeds and low spiritual state of congregations. We must remember however that we carry a heavy responsibility for the condition of the churches. We must also bear in mind that, as in most relationship problems, we often hear only one side of the story and that, only rarely, is the fault entirely on one side.

Of course, unhappy relationships between pastors and people are by no means restricted to independency! Whilst this article is concerned directly with that part of the evangelical constituency at least some of the perspectives and principles have wider application.

## **I. Getting Things In Perspective**

There is a danger of becoming paranoid about this particular problem, especially when we or our friends are embroiled in it. But we should remember that:

- a) Many independent ministers remain in one pastorate, more or less happily, for a very considerable period of time. This is probably much more the case than in most other kinds of churches. Moreover, enquiries to leaders of two church groupings have led to the response that, across the board, a situation which led to an impasse between church and minister is not that frequent.
- b) In a fallen world and in churches of half sanctified saints we should expect that both Christian ministry and human relationships will be difficult.
- c) There is nothing essentially new about this. The apostle Paul experienced rejection by Christian people and I shall refer later to his relationships with the Corinthian church. Or we could think of Jonathan Edwards, revered by us today but rejected by his own church after 23 years. Likewise his son, Jonathan Edwards junior was dismissed after 26 years in a pastorate!
- d) We must not assume that difficulties are never of the minister's making. I fear that some ministers discussions sound like those of a professional association or even trade union!

## **2. Some Contributory Factors**

A number of factors contribute to the situation that I have outlined – and may help to explain why these situations now occur more frequently than in the past if that indeed is the case. I will divide these factors under two headings:–

### a) The characteristics of the times in which we live

- i. It seems to me that in the country at large we have a **leadership crisis**. That is not intended to be a political statement! What I mean is that, on the one hand, there is a reluctance by people to be led and, on the other hand, an unwillingness to take the lead and/or an inability to do so in a way that draws and maintains support. If this is a right diagnosis then it is inevitably reflected in our church life. So we have the extremes of heavy shepherding (not restricted to charismatic churches) and such *laissez faire* leadership that it is scarcely leadership at all. I wonder whether ministers and elders are given enough help, particularly at an early stage in their ministry or preparation for it, in understanding how to exercise a godly and Biblical leadership? Those of us in the “Reformed camp” have tended to shy away from teaching the “how to ...” in all kinds of areas in the Christian life (eg evangelism, Bible reading, parenting etc.). Maybe we need to do more of this, however, in relation to leadership. I wonder also whether evidence of proven gifts of leadership are given high enough priority in the appointment of ministers and elders.
- ii. A feature of our times is **mobility**. For example few of us have to be in a pastorate for very long before there is a majority of the congregation who had nothing to do with our appointment (although presumably they did take us into account when they chose to attend or become a member of our church!). Moreover this mobility does not encourage a sense of loyalty whether to the church as a whole, to other members or to the minister; nor does it encourage stable and deep relationships. It is also related to the next matter.
- iii. There is an enormous **diversity in evangelicalism** – far more I suspect than thirty years ago. This means that there is significantly more scope for disagreement amongst people who are avowedly evangelical. The disagreements may relate to doctrinal emphases, worship styles, congregational organisation etc. Because of the large degree of mobility most of us have people coming to our churches from an ethos very different from that of our own church. It may not be until they have been in the church for some time that they realise the depth of the difference, or its ramifications. Moreover, the fact that there is, in all likelihood, another evangelical church not too far away means that they can easily down tools and pull up sticks or, more to the point, threaten to do, so thereby exerting considerable pressure on the church leadership.
- iv. Most of us would probably feel that we live in a day of **small things**. We do not see large numbers of conversions nor feel that our churches are on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel. Such times engender dissatisfaction in Christians (in a sense quite rightly so) and all too often the minister becomes the scapegoat. If only he was different things would happen!

### b) Features of Independency

Apart from the fact that, by definition, independent churches can remove their ministers, it seems to me that there are a number of other factors in our kind of churches which may predispose towards a breakdown in the relationship between minister and people.

- i. **Independent churches tend to attract independent people – including some strongly independent people!** They have strong views and want to have their say, if not their way. Wilful sheep may be more difficult to handle than wayward sheep! They may of course also have more potential for being useful Christians if their strong mindedness can be channelled in the right directions and humbled to accept proper restraints.
- ii. **Congregational church government is often misunderstood as ecclesiastical democracy:** one man/woman one vote with everyone having equal say. This seems to me far removed from any concept in the New Testament and also from the outlook of the Congregational fathers.
- iii. **Conservative churches tend to attract conservative people.** I mean people who are not merely conservative in their doctrinal views but people who are temperamentally conservative. In almost every area of life they prefer the old to the new and are strongly resistant to change. But Biblical leadership can never be satisfied with merely maintaining the status quo. There are always going to be things in our churches, as well as in people, which need to be changed. There are new opportunities to be taken; new challenges to which we must respond. But there are people in our churches who will always feel threatened by changes, some by changes of even the most trivial kind.
- iv. **The way ministers are appointed within independency makes it fairly easy for inappropriate appointments to be made.** By this I mean both that a man with inadequate gifts and/or training can be called to a pastorate and also that an inappropriate match may be made between a particular man and a particular church. Once the honeymoon period is over some begin to regret the appointment and see it as a big mistake.
- v. **The increased emphasis on the plurality of eldership in independent churches over the last thirty years has in some places contributed to the kind of situations we are considering.** Personally, I am very committed to the principle of the plurality of elders and deeply thankful for my own experience of its outworking. However I can see that it can all too easily lead to difficulties. Elders who seldom preach and are not paid by the church share neither the high profile nor the vulnerability of the minister. Yet they may regard themselves as permanent fixtures and the true guardians of the church's well being. One or two may become resentful of the influence that the minister has. They may themselves have a significant "power base" in the congregation, including perhaps a number of relatives. For the most part they will have no training in Biblical leadership. If they are in positions of leadership in the world they may import ideas learnt there into the way they view their eldership role.

From some features of our current scene I want now to draw some lessons from an ancient one: The church of Corinth and its relationship with the apostle Paul.

### **3. Leadership in Conflict Situations: A Case Study**

There is not space here to plot, in any detail, the causes of the strained relationship between the Corinthians (or at least some of them) and the apostle; but that a strained relationship developed is beyond doubt. We get the first hint of it perhaps in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians where Paul describes the party spirit that had

developed in the church. Various groups were aligning themselves with various leaders, Paul among them, and the super-spirituals were professing allegiance only to Christ. Underlying this party spirit was pride, that root sin which continues to permeate so much of the thinking and behaviour even of Christians. 2 Cor. 2:5-11 & 7:12 speak of the wrong doing of one individual either against another church member at Corinth or perhaps against the apostle himself. If the former, it is an example of the way in which a private grievance can quickly engulf a whole church. This may in turn be linked to the arrival in Corinth of Christian leaders who either claimed to be, or were regarded by some of the Corinthians as, “super apostles”; Paul identifies them as pseudo apostles – men who appear to have superior and perhaps spectacular gifts. Compared with them and, especially at a distance, Paul appeared rather inferior.

Paul was no plastic person nor a disembodied head! It is clear from the Corinthian correspondence that he was deeply hurt by the whole situation. What lessons can we draw from his response to it? I suggest the following at least:

**a) Christian leadership must involve both forbearance and confrontation.** Paul is clearly very reticent about provoking a crisis and about confrontation. 2 Cor. 1:23, 2:4 explain that he has not returned to Corinth, as previously promised, in order to spare them and not cause them grief. In 2 Cor 10:1 he appeals to them “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” – a meekness and gentleness which had been mistaken by some of the Corinthians as timidity. Christian leaders should not be bruisers! We must be patient and peaceable. Such is a mark of the wisdom that comes from heaven (James 3:17,18). Our Lord Jesus himself of course provides us with the supreme example of meekness and gentleness; see Matt. 12:14f. He is the true pattern for every servant of the Lord.

There are, however, times when confrontation is essential. 2 Cor. 7:8-16 makes this clear. It refers to the so called “severe letter” that Paul had written. Paul says that after he had written and, presumably, sent it, he regretted doing so. He feared its impact would be negative. But in fact it had the desired effect and had led to godly sorrow and real repentance. This was vital for the healing of the relationship between him and the Corinthians.

Some of us perhaps create problems for ourselves and our churches by being too impatient and too quickly confrontational. Others of us store up trouble for later on by simply allowing a situation to steadily deteriorate and attitudes on both sides to harden rather than confronting wrong attitudes, words and actions with gentleness and firmness. Christian leaders must demonstrate both the weakness of Christ and the power of Christ (2 Cor. 13:1-4). On the one hand we must be willing to be misunderstood and misused and to bear it with meekness; on the other hand we must be willing to deal firmly with sin. We must also distinguish between matters that are trivial and to which we can turn a blind eye or a deaf ear and those which are major and cannot be overlooked. Spurgeon said that his deaf ear was often the more useful of the two!

**b) Leadership must be motivated by a deep love for God’s people and must express that love repeatedly.** No doubt 1 Cor. 13 was written to pinpoint a grave deficiency in the church at Corinth. Yet Paul addresses them as “my dear brothers” (1 Cor. 15:58) and closes his first letter by sending “my love to all of you in Christ

Jesus” (1 Cor. 16:24). In 2 Cor. 2:4 he can say “you know the depth of my love for you”. Further he can say in 2 Cor. 7:3: “you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you”. These expressions of deep love for the Corinthians were not hollow. He did not at the same time go around telling others what a terrible lot the Corinthians were and how badly they were behaving. Rather he boasted about them to his colleague Titus and no doubt to others (2 Cor. 7:14). And all this at the time when, humanly speaking, he must have felt utterly exasperated with them! I wonder whether our people are assured that we really do love them? Christian leaders are surely to be exemplary Christians rather than exceptional ones. Not least should we be examples of that Christian love which Jesus said is to be the distinctive badge of his disciples and which characteristically is directed towards those who do not deserve it.

- c) **Leadership must be characterised by humble and sacrificial service.** In the upper room Jesus said that “the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves”. This speaks both of our estimate of ourselves and our service to others. The supreme example is our Lord himself “who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many”. That example is mirrored by the apostle. He proclaimed himself a slave of the Christians to whom he ministered (2 Cor. 4:5). He made no pretension to be anything other than, in himself, weak. He gratefully recognised that the function of his “thorn in the flesh” was to remind him of that weakness. It is clear that he is reluctant in the extreme to bring to the fore either his elevated experiences of Christ or the depths of his sufferings for Christ. He has been willing to serve the Corinthians without financial reward from them (2 Cor. 11:7-10). Just as the Lord Jesus gave his life that we might live so the apostle says “death is at work in us but life is at work in you” (2 Cor. 4:12).
- d) **Leadership must model true and wholehearted forgiveness.** This is linked to the love for the believers at Corinth to which I have already referred. But note 2 Cor. 2:10: “if you forgive anyone I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven – if there was anything to forgive – I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake”. 2 Cor. 7 breathes the same spirit – Paul’s great joy that the relationship is repaired. We have to admit that it is just as easy for ministers as for others to hold grudges and to view people whom we feel have wronged us in the past with resentment and distrust. We must go out of the way to demonstrate that we really do forgive people and to win back those who, for whatever reason, have become alienated from us. In this world, if any relationships are going to survive, repeated forgiveness will be essential – as our Lord taught in Matthew 18. As Christian ministers we must model that in our own relationships. We must teach forgiveness by practising it.
- e) **Leadership must aim at Christ’s glory in the spiritual progress of his people.** In 2 Cor. 11:2 Paul says “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ”. Paul’s supreme concern was not his relationship with the Corinthians but theirs to Christ. It is easy to say that this is our concern too but, in reality, for it to be otherwise.

This last point has a bearing on the question of whether, when difficulties arise between a pastor and the congregation, he should leave or stay. Sometimes leaving may be the easiest way out for the pastor; but what will it do for the congregation? Will it leave deep spiritual problems unresolved? Will it leave part of Christ's flock without a leader? What about those Christians, perhaps newly converted or rather on the edge of things, who may be left confused and bewildered? On the other hand, sometimes to stay will only cause further deterioration in the situation. The church may divide, causing dishonour to the name of Christ in the locality and the long term weakening of the cause of the gospel in that place. The minister may feel he has a right to stay and that truth and justice are on his side. But the supreme consideration has to be the good of the church of Jesus Christ and his own honour and glory.

## **4. Some Final Reflections**

### **a) Appointment of Ministers**

I think this is a potential weakness within independency. It astonishes me that sometimes churches call a minister without seeking, or at any rate taking any notice of, the opinion of other Christian leaders who know him well or of his previous church. Surely this is unwise and even a little arrogant! I am not arguing for "accredited lists" (how could I when I do not appear on one myself?) for the mere appearance of the name on such lists may not tell us very much about the man. But I am urging that churches be discouraged from judging by initial appearances and that, where there are known to have been difficulties in the past, these should be discussed openly and thoroughly not only with the man himself but with the other parties. The same is true with regard to past difficulties in churches; prospective pastors would be wise to seek as much information as possible, without of course prejudging the issue.

It also seems to me that, at the time of appointment, there must be very thorough discussion between the candidate for the vacant pastorate and the existing leaders of the church. This should not only cover doctrinal matters and the church's stance on various issues such as the ecumenical movement etc. but also the way the church reaches decisions and the intended relationship between pastor and elders and/or deacons. There ought also to be a clear understanding, of which the whole church membership should be aware, as to how the appointment would be terminated. Surely the church should not be less stringent in these matters than the world. It should be clear from the start whether, in the event of difficulties, the minister for example will require a 75% majority in order to stay or whether the church will require a 75% majority to ask him to go!

### **b) Plurality of Eldership**

This can be an enormous strength. It has been so in my own experience. However the relationship between a minister and his fellow elders (and I may say their wives as well!) is clearly vital. We should work hard at developing a relationship of mutual confidence and deep spiritual fellowship in which differences of opinion can be openly discussed without threatening the relationship. The same applies of course to our relationship with deacons and other leaders within the church.

Ideally at least, we should aim at some variety within the eldership. The eldership should not be restricted to stereotypes of the minister! Of course we need whole hearted agreement on the things that matter most. But it ought to be evident that there are differences of personality and temperament within the eldership and even, within the parameters allowed by the church's position, some minor differences in outlook and emphases. It should be clearly agreed by every elder that they will never allow differences between them to be exploited. But the kind of variation which I am trying to describe will help the eldership to hold the confidence of the whole congregation and prevent a gulf opening up between the membership and the eldership which can be so detrimental. Let me quote Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "as Christians we must all do the same essential things but we do them in different ways". Then with regard to preachers in particular: "he can use one man to make the message appeal to a certain type, while another person could not be used in that respect. Different presentations appeal to different people and rightly so and God makes use of all" (Spiritual Depression p. 96). What the Doctor applies more narrowly to preachers has application surely to wider aspects of leadership.

Particularly for those of us who have been in one pastorate for many years, to be able to share our ministry with other men, preferably full time assistants or associates can be enormously helpful. It will help to keep us fresh and alleviate some of the pressures which accumulate with the years. The congregation will also appreciate a little variety from the pulpit! All of us can get into a rut and pull the church into it as well! And we should note that some ministers do not survive, not because of opposition from their churches, but due to sheer exhaustion, mental, physical or spiritual.

### **c) Seeking help outside the church in times of difficulties**

Some have suggested that Presbyterianism has distinct advantages over independency, not least in relation to the particular matter we have been considering. Perhaps so. But the fact of the matter is that none of us can exercise a ministry amongst a congregation which has lost its confidence in us. One of the great strengths of independency is that it recognises the unique nature of the relationship between minister and congregation, a relationship which must be freely chosen and in no way imposed. By the same token it can only be maintained by the willing consent of both parties. This is not to say, however, that the seeking of advice from other Christian leaders (whether ministers of local evangelical churches or leaders of church groupings) should not be encouraged. Indeed it is highly desirable. Particularly if it is done at an early stage it may help either minister or congregation to get matters into a better perspective. At the very least it may help matters to be dealt with in a way that is seen to be just and loving. I would certainly want to argue against an over strict and doctrinaire view of independency which proudly refuses any advice from outside. That is manifestly unbiblical. But seeking advice and listening to it is very different from control by some outside body or individual.

In this connection it is worth noting a statement in the Savoy Declaration:

In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of doctrine or in administrations, wherein either the churches in general are concerned, or any one church in their peace, union, and edification, or any member or members of any church are injured in, or by any proceeding in censures, not agreeable to truth and order: it is according to the mind of Christ, that many churches holding communion together, do by their messengers meet in a synod or council, to consider and give their advice in, or about that matter in difference to be reported to all the churches concerned. Howbeit, these synods so assembled are not entrusted with any church power, properly so called, or with any jurisdiction over the churches themselves, to exercise any censures, either over any churches or persons, or to impose their determinations on the churches or officers.

The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689 has a similar statement.

Perhaps it is appropriate to note one particular kind of outside interference which is not uncommon but which is normally unhelpful: that of a previous minister. It is understandable that members of a church, in a time of difficulty with their present pastor, might turn for advice to a previous one whom they loved and esteemed. It seems to me that, at the very least, he should not encourage this and be most careful in the way he responds. Certainly he should never take the initiative in commenting to church members on the shortcomings of their current minister and be extremely reticent about endorsing theirs.

We minister as very imperfect saints amongst equally imperfect saints. There may also be in our churches people who have risen to positions of considerable influence who may be unregenerate. So despite our best endeavours and all the wisdom that we can muster, not to mention our prayers, we may find ourselves sadly having to leave a church to which we believe God had called us. What then? We must surely beware of the pitfall of long term bitterness and an unforgiving spirit which may effectively destroy any future ministry we might otherwise have. And our great comfort should surely be this: our Lord Jesus himself was despised and rejected by men. We sometimes deserve that; he certainly did not. But he is our great high priest and is able to both sympathise with us and strengthen us in our time of deep trouble. Moreover we can rejoice that all things do indeed work together for good to those who love God and whom he has called to be his own. As part of the outworking of that we may expect that a sense of rejection by the Lord's people will lead us into closer fellowship with our Lord himself.

On trial before the Sanhedrin our Lord said "from now on the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the almighty God" (Luke 22:69). These words reflect the confidence of our Lord Jesus that his Father would vindicate him. That is what enabled him to be largely silent before his tormentors. He committed himself, says Peter, to him that judges justly (1 Peter 2:23). So must we, remembering always that it is God's verdict on us in eternity that is important – rather than what others think of us in the here and now.

*Based on an address first given to the Westminster Fellowship in 1994*

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# Rewriting the 1960s: Is Dr McGrath Right?

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Stephen Clark

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Some people write history, while others rewrite it. Alister McGrath is certainly in the latter category when, in two recent and important publications,<sup>1</sup> he deals with the division in the 1960s between the late Dr Lloyd-Jones and other evangelicals, notably John Stott and Jim Packer. The importance of that division lies in the legacy which was thereby bequeathed to, and inherited by, today's evangelicals. Evidently Dr McGrath believes that the pathway pursued by Lloyd-Jones led into something of an evangelical wilderness, whereas the path which Packer and others followed has led into a large place full of promise. Nor is Dr McGrath alone: not a few men who supported Lloyd-Jones' stance have, in more recent years, appeared to argue that a different situation calls for a fresh appraisal and a departure from the path which Lloyd-Jones pursued. In one sense, they are right. Who in his right mind wants to be forever locked into the disputes of the 1960s? The situation has changed beyond all recognition, and men can hardly be surprised at being accused of living in the past if they fail to address the situation as it is today. But it does not follow that because a situation has changed that the principles to be applied have changed. And it is at that point that Dr McGrath's revisionism comes through: for although he has evidently studied the issue, it seems that he has failed to understand what it was with which Lloyd-Jones was really concerned. Before discarding principles, it is surely the path of wisdom to be crystal clear in our understanding of what those principles were.

The purpose of this article is to attempt to remove misconceptions and misunderstandings and to go on to consider the relevance of Lloyd-Jones' concern to an understanding of the present situation and the way in which the principles he articulated *then* might be applied *today*. Before I am accused of harking back to a bygone era and being imprisoned in a past dispute in which nobody is any longer interested, it may be worth pondering the fact that evidently Dr McGrath thinks the issue to be important, else he would not devote so much space to it. Dr McGrath can hardly be accused of living in a time warp, yet he considers this matter to merit consideration. If a strong case is not to go by default, it is important to challenge those areas in which Dr McGrath is *demonstrably* inaccurate. Only then might the relevance of Lloyd-Jones' case be properly considered.

**It may be as well to stress what Lloyd-Jones was not doing.** First, it needs to be said that he was *not* arguing for a gathered view of the church as over against a territorial or national view of the church. Dr McGrath, like a host of others, seems to think that Lloyd-Jones' radical Welsh nonconformity got the better of him and led him to make a particular view of the church a hallmark of evangelicalism. This inevitably made him view the Anglicans as the fly in the evangelical ointment. Dr McGrath evidently thinks that this is the nub of the issue when he writes: "Yet separatism still has its appeal: as Packer remarks, there are still those who claim that 'all true evangelicals are committed to Baptist or Congregationalist church principles'."<sup>2</sup> But this was not the issue. Certainly, Lloyd-Jones was a nonconformist who held a gathered view of the church and who thought that the territorial view was mistaken. But he had,

for years, worked with and alongside Anglican evangelicals *and continued to do so after 1966, and after his parting of the ways from Jim Packer over "Growing Into Union"*. His letters to David Samuel towards the end of 1966 and in 1970<sup>3</sup> – the first in the aftermath of his address at the National Association of Evangelicals in October 1966, and the second after the publication of *Growing Into Union* – demonstrate very clearly that nonconformity was not the issue. As we shall see, there were – and still are – evangelical Anglicans in basic agreement with much that Lloyd-Jones had to say in the controversy that became public in 1966. In the 1940s Lloyd-Jones wrote to Leslie Land in terms which indicated that Land might find a greater sphere of usefulness in the Anglican ministry than in the nonconformist churches.<sup>4</sup> At the very time when Lloyd-Jones was maintaining links with some evangelical Anglicans, he was expressing his unease with parts of evangelical nonconformity and, as his letter of October 1973 to Alan Francis<sup>5</sup> indicates, there were evangelical nonconformist chapels – within Wales! – where he was declining to preach. The controversy was manifestly not nonconformist v. Anglican, still less Celt v. Anglo Saxon, and it is a pity that those who should know better continue to misrepresent it thus.<sup>6</sup>

A superficially more plausible analysis is that Lloyd-Jones was campaigning for separation or secession from mainline denominations. But this is a simplistic misinterpretation. Lloyd-Jones continued to chair the discussion at the Bala Ministers' Conference of the Evangelical Movement of Wales until illness made this impossible. Members of that Conference include(d) highly esteemed ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Moreover, in the late seventies Lloyd-Jones chaired discussions and spoke at the Conference when it was addressed by a minister of the Church of Scotland.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Lloyd-Jones' letter of March 1969 to Eric Alexander,<sup>8</sup> in which he urged Alexander to give serious consideration to filling the pastorate at Westminster Chapel, should put beyond all dispute the fact that the issue was not a simple question of one's denominational affiliation. As Iain Murray comments on this letter: "... Lloyd-Jones ... was to maintain fellowship with ministers in the Church of England and the Church of Scotland provided they did not support ecumenism".<sup>9</sup> It may be thought that the letter to Alan Francis and other public statements made by Lloyd-Jones about secession reveal an inconsistency of practice. We shall return to this point; suffice it to say at this point that it may not have been inconsistency but a refusal to allow a simplistic reduction of everything to the sole categories of black and white.

Still less was Lloyd-Jones calling for a "pure church" of the kind beloved by ecclesiastical perfectionists. His stance has regularly been ridiculed by erecting such an idea and then demolishing it by an appeal to the obvious imperfections of the New Testament churches. But such criticism is really a sleight of hand. Even the Savoy Declaration, which sets out the "gathered church" view as well as it has ever been set out, states: "The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error ..."<sup>10</sup> Has Dr McGrath forgotten that Article 19 of the 39 Articles states: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached ..."? Article 26 agrees with the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration when it states, "Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good ..." Admittedly, it goes on to state that while the wicked may gain the

chief authority in the ministry, their ministry may still be used because it is in Christ's name. However, this was to allay the scruples of faithful believers rather than to countenance some kind of ecclesiastical free-for-all, for this Article concludes: "Nevertheless it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences: and finally being found guilty, by just judgement be deposed." And let it be noted that this Article is not countenancing the preaching of heresy, for that cannot be done in Christ's name and is hardly consistent with Article 19's insistence that "the pure Word of God [be] preached". Rather, it may be dealing with a Judas type figure, who is sound in teaching but vicious in life. Perhaps critics of Lloyd-Jones' stance – Dr McGrath included – should have reserved their fire power for the real target which Lloyd-Jones erected. Such a target might prove a little too close for comfort and would certainly be far more resilient than the man of straw which has been put up for target practice. There is a world of difference between the way the New Testament treats believers who are living below their profession and the way it deals with teachers who systematically undermine the faith of God's elect. A reading of the following verses establishes this point beyond dispute: Matt. 15:14; Rom. 16:17-19; 2 Cor. 11:1-15; Gal. 1:8,9; 1 Tim. 1:6,7,19,20; 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Titus 1:10,11; 2 John 7-11.

This last observation leads to the final misconception which requires clarification. Lloyd-Jones was not calling for a repeat of the isolationism and bitterness which had characterised the split in early twentieth century, American fundamentalism. Dr McGrath thus represents the position. But, firstly, Lloyd-Jones was no isolationist, and was involved in lengthy discussions with liberals and Roman Catholics over theological issues.<sup>11</sup> This extended dialogue confirmed his initial views which were gathered from extensive study of the issues. Secondly, whereas fundamentalism was a somewhat eccentric, stunted, and historically short-sighted phenomenon, Lloyd-Jones was, as Dr McGrath himself acknowledges, instrumental in re-opening deeper spiritual wells by going back to the Reformers, the Puritans, and the Methodists. Dr McGrath quotes an incident where he claims that Lloyd-Jones was too set in his own thinking to reconsider Calvin's teaching in the Institutes which, Professor Basil Hall alleged – and presumably Dr McGrath agrees – presented a very different view of the Church from that of Lloyd-Jones.<sup>12</sup> While there were significant differences between Lloyd-Jones' ecclesiology and that of Calvin, the impression conveyed by Dr McGrath is that Lloyd-Jones was prejudiced, rather than informed, with respect to the implications of Calvin's understanding of the doctrine of the Church. However, the following quotations from Calvin indicate that Lloyd-Jones' teaching was significantly nearer to that of Calvin than was Hall's:

... as soon as falsehood has forced its way into the citadel of religion, as soon as the sum of necessary doctrine is inverted, and the use of the sacraments is destroyed, the death of the Church undoubtedly ensues ... if the Church is founded on the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, by which believers are enjoined to place their salvation in Christ alone, then if that doctrine is destroyed, how can the Church continue to stand? The Church must necessarily fall whenever that sum of religion which alone can sustain it has given way ... it is certain that there is no Church where lying and falsehood have usurped the ascendancy."<sup>13</sup>

When Calvin states that there is no salvation out of the Church,<sup>14</sup> we must balance that with his observation that we must not submit to a false Church.<sup>15</sup> His strictures against seceding from the Church are in the context of splinter groups not separating over fundamental doctrines but over lesser things. Though the Roman Catholic Church was trinitarian, Calvin states that it was not a true Church<sup>16</sup> and explains that there is no Church where the Word of God does not appear.<sup>17</sup> Not every church which claims to be one is such and, as Lloyd-Jones pointed out in a letter to Philip Hughes,<sup>18</sup> that Calvin himself was not in the Roman Catholic Church meant that his negative comments on separation must not be interpreted out of context so as to suggest that Calvin would always disapprove of secession. Dr McGrath ought to ponder whether Lloyd-Jones and those who agree with him stand more in line with Calvin, some of the Puritans, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, and CH Spurgeon, than with American fundamentalists. It may be that what Lloyd-Jones was contending for will not then be viewed as such an eccentric blip.

**What then was his concern?** I shall advance the thesis that while the *formal* area of concern was the doctrine of the Church, the issue of *substance* which lay behind it was the primacy and uniqueness of the gospel. The doctrine of the Church came to the fore because, for practical purposes, it was at this point that evangelicals were in danger of succumbing to theological latitudinarianism and pluralism within the professing church. Although Dr McGrath accuses Lloyd-Jones of changing the tacit understanding by which evangelicals had hitherto co-operated, the truth of the matter is that changes in the wider church scene had led some evangelicals to change their attitude to those who were not evangelicals, and this inevitably entailed a change in their attitude to evangelicalism itself. It was because other evangelicals were changing in this respect that Lloyd-Jones changed in his attitude and behaviour towards them. The evidence for this is overwhelming. For example, as Dr McGrath observes, the 1967 Keele Conference was not an evangelical Anglican response to Lloyd-Jones' call of 1966, but had been planned for some time and set out a coherent policy or programme of evangelical action. Central to that programme was the fact that there Anglican evangelicals publicly repented of their tendency to withdraw from the wider church and committed themselves to conscientious involvement in the wider church. Keele represented not only a different approach from that advocated by Lloyd-Jones but also from a tendency which had characterised earlier Anglican evangelicals. What was the change and what brought it about? The answer to this question brings us to the heart of Lloyd-Jones' concern.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Protestants in England were divided over their vision of what the church in this country should be. 1662 was a defining year, in that many who had stayed within the National Church were ejected because of their refusal to conform to the Prayer Book. Some stayed within the National Church. In the eighteenth century evangelical life in England and Wales was undoubtedly most vigorous amongst those in the Anglican fold who experienced God's reviving power rather than in the nonconformist bodies. The evangelical leaders within the Church of England were *committed* to the 39 Articles of the Church's belief, and this was certainly the case in the nineteenth century as well. Thus, although Anglicanism was a broad church which accommodated many non-evangelical clergy – as many Puritans had warned that it would – the evangelical leaders claimed that they were the true Anglicans

by holding to the Church's belief. Men like Simeon epitomised this attitude and when, in the nineteenth century, Tractarianism started to make advances, evangelicals in the Church of England raised their voices in protest. By the earlier part of this century, liberalism had made huge inroads into most of the Protestant denominations of this country, the Church of England included. This led to an increasing tendency amongst evangelicals to think in terms of movements, associations, and extra-church groupings, and to neglect the doctrine of the Church. From an early date, Lloyd-Jones's diagnosis of the situation differed radically from this "para church" approach. Thus, in 1935, the Welsh Representative on the IVF Executive Committee indicated the likely difficulty of getting Lloyd-Jones to speak for IVF because he "was a 'high-churchman' in the Presbyterian sense".<sup>19</sup> What this meant was that while Lloyd-Jones was committed to the gospel and fellowship based upon it, he did not believe that it was right to adopt a cavalier attitude to ecclesiology, as many evangelicals of that period tended to do. He most certainly was not guilty of the kind of pietism which had, as the leaders at Keele acknowledged, characterised many evangelicals of that time.

In the 1960s, all this was to change. Evangelicals who had not taken too keen an interest in the doctrine of the Church began to do so. One of the ironic, if not amusing, features of this new-found concern was the facile and mistaken assumption that all evangelicals had been guilty of paying insufficient attention to this doctrine. Thus, at the 1966 National Assembly of Evangelicals, in his paper on Church Order, Julian Charley quoted from Calvin to suggest that the high view of the Church held by the Reformers was in stark contrast to the tendency of evangelicals to ignore the Church.<sup>20</sup> The irony was that Charley's paper presented an alternative view to that which had been presented the previous evening by Lloyd-Jones. Of all the evangelical leaders of that generation, none had worked more earnestly for serious study of the Reformers than Lloyd-Jones. It was precisely because of this emphasis and his concern to see *church* life, rather than *para church* life reformed and revitalised that he had been out of step with the prevailing ethos in evangelicalism. How far Charley was from a right understanding is revealed by his reference to the fact that Charles Hodge had evidently a low view of the Church because his *Systematic Theology* contained no section on the Church.<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, so important was Hodge's view of the Church that he produced a special volume on it.<sup>22</sup> This lack of historical and theological perspective on the part of those behind the Keele Conference meant that their new involvement in their Church was bought at a very heavy price. The benefit to be gained from this involvement was the opportunity to influence their Church for the gospel; the price which was exacted was that *within their denomination* – as distinct from their individual congregations – the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the evangelical understanding of the gospel was surrendered. In saying this I do not mean that evangelicals ceased to believe in the uniqueness of the gospel, nor that they did not emphasise this in their preaching. However, the public relations exercises, the courtesies and protocol required by their greater involvement in their church inevitably led to the perception that differences of understanding of the gospel were not truly fundamental. Inviting Archbishop Michael Ramsey to speak at the Keele Conference was a piece of good public relations, but it was inconsistent with evangelical principles and a departure from evangelical practice. Ramsey had been critical of evangelicalism and had wedded a Catholic view of the gospel and the Church to a liberal belief

concerning Scripture, yet he was invited to speak at this gathering.<sup>23</sup> One wonders how men such as Packer and Stott would have viewed it if the OICCU had invited the Archbishop to be the speaker at its triennial mission, or if the then IVF had asked him to speak at its Swanwick Conference on the doctrine of Scripture! Influence was to be gained by evangelicals within the Church by making concessions. Now this was a very different approach from that followed by men such as the eighteenth century leaders and Charles Simeon and Lloyd-Jones was surely not making mischief by calling attention to this.

It is preposterous for Packer to appeal to the example of Whitefield in support of the kind of approach which was adopted by those who agreed with Keele.<sup>24</sup> The words of Whitefield quoted by Dr McGrath are in the context of not allowing denominational differences to be a barrier to fellowship and co-operation amongst believers. But Whitefield was at pains to say: "God knows that I have been faithful in bearing a testimony against what I think is corrupt in the [Anglican] church".<sup>25</sup> Whitefield could be very outspoken in his criticisms of the clergy of his day. He certainly would not have had preaching with him someone who held a Deist view of miracles, a Catholic view of Scripture, and a moralist view of salvation. But inviting Ramsey to speak at Keele was to begin to go down that road. Lloyd-Jones still co-operated with those who behaved as Whitefield had done. Yet was Whitefield's stance which was now being abandoned by many evangelicals. Instead of their abandonment of pietism being the signal that they were now to fight for the gospel within their church and call upon adherence to its Articles, the leaders at Keele proclaimed that abandonment of pietism would entail greater co-operation with fellow churchmen who were not only not evangelical but who had been critical of the evangelical claim that liberal and Catholic understandings of the gospel were wrong and invalid. All this was occurring at the very same time that the ecumenical movement was seeking to push forward its agenda of the visible unity of existing churches.

A charitable interpretation of what men such as Stott and Packer were about would be along the following lines. Since men may have grace in their hearts when they are very muddled in their heads and since contending for the faith is to take place within the church as well as within the world,<sup>26</sup> it makes sense to stay aboard the ship to steer it back upon its true course rather than to abandon it, in order to seek to win back the minds of men who have the root of the matter in them. One is far more likely to win such men – and others – by courteous debate and discussion rather than by the intemperate denunciations which had disfigured American fundamentalism. Given the breadth of Anglicanism, this was the surest way of being a good, evangelical churchman. It was something of a long-term strategy, which might well encourage bright young men not to leave the fold but to become ordinands, thereby increasing the evangelical presence in the Anglican Church. Similar arguments were employed by men in the nonconformist denominations. It was this argument which Lloyd-Jones was rejecting. The reasons for this are clear. First of all, he had sufficient first hand, in-depth involvement with other non-evangelical church leaders to know that while there will always be good men who are muddled, many of the non-evangelical leaders knew exactly what they believed and it certainly was not the biblical gospel. Moreover, their opposition to the gospel was all the more deadly when they were prepared to accommodate evangelicals, on the condition that evangelicals give up their

unwillingness to accommodate non-evangelical views.<sup>27</sup> **This is the very essence of pluralism and this is what Lloyd-Jones was resisting.** It was to this spirit that many evangelicals were succumbing. Of course, if one heard men such as John Stott and Jim Packer preaching, they would emphasise the uniqueness of the gospel as clearly as ever they had done. But the new stance and the practice within the church was inconsistent with that emphasis. Those evangelicals in large denominations who did not approve of such a rapprochement with non-evangelicals were, in Lloyd-Jones' eyes, quite different from those who were pursuing this policy. It is this which explains the difference in Lloyd-Jones' relationship with men such as Eric Alexander, David Samuel, and conference members and speakers at the EMW Ministers' Conferences from his relationship with men such as Packer and Stott.

The analysis I have offered might be challenged by reference to evidence adduced by Dr McGrath that it was Lloyd-Jones who changed his views rather than men like Packer.<sup>28</sup> While superficially plausible, Dr McGrath's case is not truly borne out by the evidence. It is certainly the case that Lloyd-Jones had agreed to share in a mission with Alec Vidler, a liberal Anglican, in Edinburgh in 1949,<sup>29</sup> and that he had taken part in other events in which non-evangelicals were involved.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to the impression given by Dr McGrath, this was not only something which he did in student circles in the 1940s. As early as 1929, he had taken part in the Annual Conference of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. On this occasion a well-known liberal also took part.<sup>31</sup> As Iain Murray comments, he was probably invited "as a representative of evangelical opinion".<sup>32</sup> However, as is clear from Murray's account, Lloyd-Jones did not present his view simply as the evangelical opinion but as the very truth of God. Similarly, Iain Murray's account of Lloyd-Jones' visit to the Chataqua Institution for the "Chaplain's Hour" also provides evidence of his involvement in a non-evangelical gathering where he forcefully proclaimed the evangelical message as *the only way*.<sup>33</sup> His visit to the Presbyterian Church in the USA in 1937 also provided evidence of his concern to bring the gospel to bear upon the church scene.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, the evidence to which Dr McGrath refers must be seen in the context of an unswerving commitment to the gospel and to a desire to do good to men by it. The kind of policy and practice espoused at Keele was very different. It involved accommodation to non-evangelicalism. What Lloyd-Jones' practice displays is a passionate concern to win men with, and for, the gospel, rather than the intolerant "oppositionalism" which characterised American Fundamentalism. But Lloyd-Jones was not prepared to seek to gain this influence at the expense of abandoning *in practice* the uniqueness of the gospel. Rather than change his mind, it would be more accurate to say that his thinking *developed*. The rise of ecumenicalism, the popular aversion to theological definition, together with the opportunity for evangelicals to stand apart from non-evangelicals *in order* to stand together, at a time when pluralism, was making massive inroads into the churches meant that he saw that obedience to Scripture required a very different policy from that which was pursued by men such as Jim Packer.

The positive policy that Lloyd-Jones advocated was demonstrated in his enthusiastic promotion of the British Evangelical Council. In the Luther Commemoration service at Westminster in 1967 he called on all conscientious evangelicals to come out of their denominations and to "... come into an association such as the British Evangelical Council, that stands for the truth and against

compromise, hesitation, neutrality and everything that but ministers to the success of the plans of Rome and the ecumenical movement. Come out; come in!"<sup>35</sup>

Of course, this is all history. **The present-day relevance of this account is to be seen in the following.** Firstly, while it is undoubtedly the case that "evangelicalism" is much more respectable and respected today than thirty years ago and that there are probably more evangelical ordinands and evangelical gatherings today than then, the nature of evangelicalism is different and its influence not all that it may appear. Various commentators have observed the breadth of evangelicalism.<sup>36</sup> This breadth may be threatening, precisely because the definition of evangelicalism has become stretched at those very points where it needs to be precise.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, an experience-centred and mood-orientated approach to the gospel may well be an unintended, but direct, consequence of the somewhat latitudinarian approach to truth which began to influence evangelicalism in the 1960s.<sup>38</sup> Thirdly, huge changes have occurred. Some who stayed in denominations have gone further from the biblical gospel. Some who stayed in have themselves questioned the wisdom of the policy pursued in the 60s, and some evangelical Anglicans have been very critical of the stance adopted at Keele.<sup>39</sup> As for influence, the rise of the so-called "gay Christian movement" raises two questions: if evangelical influence has – as is sometimes claimed – increased, how on earth have denominations been riven by this issue? The second question concerns whether some evangelicals will leave their denominations if practising and avowed homosexuals are ordained. Some have indicated – John Stott among them<sup>40</sup> – that they would seriously consider leaving. Does this mean that Dr McGrath will then accuse John Stott of being a fundamentalist oppositionalist? Presumably not. Which must mean that all who are seriously committed to the gospel will draw the line somewhere. It is unfair to charge those who draw it on the issue of deviant belief with being schismatic, when those who draw it on the issue of deviant behaviour are regarded as being principled. Nor can one – as is sometimes fondly imagined – simply say that *the* issue concerns one's submission to the authority of Scripture, for it is a simple, though alarming, fact that there are practising homosexuals who claim to accept the authority of Scripture but who interpret it differently from other evangelicals. Similarly, a Jehovah's Witness claims to accept the authority of Scripture. A true bowing to the formal authority of Scripture must be evidenced and accompanied by submission to the material teaching of Scripture.

Some who seceded did not have the gospel vision of Lloyd-Jones, and have been more concerned to maintain secession than promote the gospel. Some of those who stayed in have distanced themselves from theological pluralism. Some new charismatic churches which are not compromised in a denomination are, nevertheless, governed by expediency and experience rather than Scripture. The situation is vastly more complex than in the 60s. To the charge that Lloyd-Jones created this complexity by splitting evangelicalism, the reply is surely that he *exposed* a division which was there. How better the situation would have been today if more evangelicals had followed his lead!

**In this situation we should:**

1. Acknowledge that at the local level, there may be varying degrees of personal and church co-operation between evangelicals.
2. Recognise that what is true at the local level, may also be true at a regional or national level.

3. Avoid anything which promotes or gives countenance to theological pluralism.
4. Deal with the situation as it is today, not as it was in the 1960s. This will entail the realisation that there are evangelicals within denominations but who know nothing about the divisions of the sixties. Some of those are pluralist in their approach, while others are earnest in their contending for the faith. We need to distinguish between men who differ. This was, as we have seen, the principle upon which Lloyd-Jones acted.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1993); *To Know and Serve God: a Life of James I Packer* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1997)
- <sup>2</sup> *Evangelicalism*, p. 41.
- <sup>3</sup> See *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Letters 1919-1981* (Selected with notes by Iain H. Murray), (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), pp. 170-171; 180-181.
- <sup>4</sup> See his letter to Leslie Land in *Letters*, pp.58 – 59, especially his words in the first paragraph on page 59.
- <sup>5</sup> *Letters*, p. 183.
- <sup>6</sup> Even Lloyd-Jones' own grandson, as well as DA Carson seem to have misunderstood Lloyd-Jones' position in this way: see Christopher Catherwood, *Five Evangelical Leaders*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), pp. 88,89.
- <sup>7</sup> The minister was Revd Dr Sinclair B Ferguson, who gave two addresses, one on Assurance of Salvation and another on Assurance in Guidance, at the 1978 Conference. Interestingly, Dr Ferguson – who divides his time between Westminster Theological Seminary, USA, and St. George's Parish Church, Tron, Glasgow (a Church of Scotland congregation) – has also spoken at the Close of Year Service at London Theological Seminary. Lloyd-Jones was instrumental in the setting up of this seminary, and its Board and lecturers are comprised of men who stood very close to Lloyd-Jones on a range of issues, including the issues surrounding the division with John Stott in 1966.
- <sup>8</sup> *Letters*, p. 216-217.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.
- <sup>10</sup> Chapter 26, paragraph 3.
- <sup>11</sup> See Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939-1981* (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), pp. 313-320.
- <sup>12</sup> *To Know and To Serve God*, p. 121.
- <sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Beveridge translation), 4.2.1.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.4.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.11.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.2.2.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.2.4
- <sup>18</sup> *Letters*, pp. 174-175
- <sup>19</sup> Iain H Murray, *D Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years, 1899-1939* (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), pp. 294-295.
- <sup>20</sup> *Unity In Diversity* (London, Evangelical Alliance, 1967), pp. 16,17.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- <sup>22</sup> *Church Polity* (New York, 1878).
- <sup>23</sup> In *Fundamentalism and The Word of God* (London, IVP,1958) Packer demonstrated that Ramsey's criticisms of "fundamentalism" were directed as much at evangelical principles as at evangelical practice.

- <sup>24</sup> *To Know and to Serve God*, pp. 121-122.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- <sup>26</sup> For example, Jude 3-4 is addressing the need for believers to deal with decline which had entered the church, rather than to abandon the church because of the decline. Similarly, the letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2 & 3 call upon believers to *fight within* their churches. But it would hardly be obeying Christ's words if Jezebel were to be invited to expound her understanding of the Christian faith to the Church in Thyatira!
- <sup>27</sup> See the quotations from Ramsey, John Lawrence, and the *Church Times* in *D Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, pp. 539-540.
- <sup>28</sup> McGrath argues this in *To Know and Serve God*, p. 122.
- <sup>29</sup> A bad cold prevented him from actually taking part: *D Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, pp. 189-190.
- <sup>30</sup> *To Know and Serve God*, p. 122.
- <sup>31</sup> *D Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years*, pp. 189-190.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 274-276.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 327-329.
- <sup>35</sup> *Unity in Truth*, ed. HR Jones, p 43
- <sup>36</sup> See, for example, Derek Tidball, *Who Are The Evangelicals?* (Basingstoke, Marshall Pickering, 1994).
- <sup>37</sup> The doctrine of Scripture and the doctrine of Justification by Faith are two examples. See, Carson & Woodbridge, *Scripture & Truth* (Leicester, IVP, 1983); Carson & Woodbridge, *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Leicester, IVP, 1986); PH Eveson, *The Great Exchange* (Epsom, Day One Publications, 1996).
- <sup>38</sup> Numerous so-called charismatic congregations are not so much pentecostalist/charismatic in their understanding of spiritual gifts, but mood and feelings orientated in their worship. In this they reflect the prevailing cultural ethos. That this can be done in the name of an enhanced spirituality is only possible because the claims and demands of God's truth have been somewhat marginalised. But that process of erosion began when countenance was given to a pluralist position. Of course, men like Stott and Packer have tried to arrest the erosion process; but it was *their* policy which encouraged it in the first place.
- <sup>39</sup> For example, Philip Jensen, a regular speaker at the Evangelical Ministry Assembly convened by the Proclamation Trust, has been very outspoken in his criticisms of the kind of policy pursued at Keele and the trend which it encouraged.
- <sup>40</sup> Stated by Stott in an interview with Roy Jenkins broadcast by Radio Wales in the summer of 1997 in *All Things Considered*.

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## Another FOUNDATIONS

**I**t has come to our notice that a quarterly journal entitled FOUNDATIONS, published by the William Temple Foundation, made its first appearance in January 1998. It is a 32 x A4 page format, sub-titled "Making connections for Christian Action". Its aim is to provide radical theological and social thinking from an ecumenical perspective. The publishers are now aware that the BEC title has been in existence for 20 years and we have agreed that one way to minimise potential confusion is for a brief notice to appear in the next issue of each, making readers aware of the other publication.

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## Book Reviews

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### Split Image

Anne Atkins

Hodder & Stoughton, 1998, 286pp pbk, £7.99

Anne Atkins is best known as the speaker who took a Biblical stand on homosexuality in a Radio 4 "Thought for the Day" in October 1996. This provoked a furore, and following that she was taken on as the Agony Aunt for the *Daily Telegraph*. She is respected for holding to a Biblical line on questions of morality, and so many people may read this book for an evangelical view of gender distinctions. It is sub-titled *Discovering God's True Intention for Male and Female*.

She is critical of some aspects of feminism but argues that the excesses are partly due to a culpable lack of involvement by Christians who have not been the salt that might have leavened the movement. In the first chapter there is a strong plea to accept the Bible's teaching without reading our own prejudices or cultural assumptions into the text. The next chapter on "Difference" argues that the only undeniable difference between men and women is that men beget children and women bear them, and that this has no relevance to how they should be treated (p. 14). Beyond that there is only some vague difference between the "masculine" and "feminine" principle, which again has no real relevance to how we treat each other. Any other treatment of the differences between the sexes is dismissed as of no importance. It is as if any stress on the differences might invalidate the following (excellent) chapter on "Equality". But in the next chapter on "Interdependence" the author speaks freely and naturally of masculine and feminine qualities. In the section on "Work" the only distinction is

that women have babies. Division of labour should be according to gift, preference and circumstance, not an old fashioned concept of "man as breadwinner, woman as homemaker". The chapter on "Authority" deals with 1 Corinthians 11 in some detail, picking up Morna Hooker's interpretation of v. 10: that the "authority" on the woman's head is *her* authority, and Atkins pushes that to conclude that v. 10 is speaking of the woman's authority over her head, ie over the man (p. 94). So, nothing in the chapter speaks of the subordination of women; rather we see women having authority over men in some situations of worship. Atkins is grateful that the Anglican Church now ordains women, though she abhors the way that those who oppose women's ordination have been treated.

In the chapter on "Marriage" the teaching of Ephesians 5 is taken to mean that yes, the wife should submit to her husband, but that the love the husband is commanded to show the wife effectively means that he is to submit to her as well. "It is often thought that a wife's submission implies a husband's leadership. This is not so: Christians submit to one another, but this does not make every Christian into a leader." (p. 158). The teaching of 1 Corinthians 7 is drawn alongside to show that "When it comes to authority, the marriage relationship is absolutely symmetrical" (p. 165).

The section on "Singleness" is very helpful: Biblical, balanced and warm. It would be good to see this chapter reprinted as a booklet, as it is hard to find positive material on this subject. *Split Image* was first published in 1987, and following the controversy over homosexuality mentioned above, the publishers decided to reissue it

with a new chapter on "Homosexuality". This chapter too is excellent: clear, compassionate, maintaining throughout the insistence that homosexual acts are wrong, and giving an honest appraisal of the appalling risk of being part of the "gay scene". Again, this chapter would make an excellent booklet.

The concluding chapter is on "Feminism". "A feminist is someone who believes that women are equal to men and that they should be treated as such" (p. 248). So all Christians should be feminists. "As far as I know, no one in the Church has attacked feminism from a position of knowledge. Those who are well acquainted with the movement are largely sympathetic. Those who are critical of it seem to be criticising a grossly inaccurate caricature" (p. 249). Atkins argues passionately for what she calls "Christian feminism". Bible believing Christians are to care about ill treatment of women: whether it be the atrocity of female circumcision in the Sudan, or the tragedy of wife battering here at home.

There are plenty of good things about this book: many of the comments are wise, perceptive, witty and true. The author challenges many cherished prejudices, and gives numerous anecdotes, some entertaining, some painful, which illustrate the way that both men and women can be "boxed in" by societal or church expectation. There is a great deal of unhelpful prejudice around in traditional evangelical circles. There is also the massive under use of female gifts and abilities in the church: a pitiful lack of opportunity for "full time" Christian work for women in conservative reformed churches. Bible training is often suggested for bright and capable young men but rarely for similarly gifted young women. They have to go abroad to serve full time!

But the positive aspects simply make

this book all the more disappointing in its failure to teach Biblical male headship. The author's use of terms such as "inter-dependence" and "complementarity" raises hopes that here will be a work treading a Biblical middle path between the two extremes of a repressive, culturally hide-bound, and narrowly traditional view of gender on the one hand, and evangelical feminism on the other. But as is so common, the author falls prey to the logical fallacy of the *excluded middle*. Atkins believes that women should minister in the church. Therefore they must be able to do everything that men can do. She believes that wives should not be passive and servile. Therefore husbands are not to be leaders in the relationship. But it is quite possible to believe passionately in Biblical ministries of women, while also believing that the Bible teaches that the authoritative teaching-governing function of elder is to be exercised only by men. It is quite possible to reject a repressive view of headship where the husband is seen as the "boss" and the wife has to endure even gross abuse in the name of submission, but to hold to a belief in the husband's loving servant, Christlike leadership

Over the past ten years a considerable amount of work has been done by writers such as Mary Kassian, Wayne Grudem and John Piper, to develop a positive and Biblical view of gender. Such literature from the "complementarian" perspective is totally ignored by Atkins. She complains that all Christian criticism of feminism is ignorant. That is simply untrue of a serious work such as *The Feminist Gospel* (M Kassian). She caricatures the anti-feminist perspective as pushing the "fluffy housewife" or "made-up sex kitten" image and complains that Christian critics of feminism have never read the feminist writers first hand. But her sweeping condemnations of Christian anti-feminists

show the same ignorance. Moreover, having read many of the feminist writers, I simply do not recognise the saccharine portrayal of feminism in this book. There is no reference to Millett, Firestone, Mitchell, Daly, Dworkin, Rich, Faludi et. al. nor to the secular critiques of feminism (such as those published by the Institute of Economic Affairs), which demonstrate that in many ways the feminist movement has had devastating effects on women.

On the differences between the sexes there is no reference to books such as *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (S Goldberg), *In a Different Voice* (C Gilligan) or *BrainSex*. (A Moir & D Jessel). These works demonstrate that the differences between the sexes are far more profound than Atkins' rather simplistic rendering. They do not imply that the differences justify discrimination: if a woman or man is individually gifted in any area there should be equality of opportunity. But the differences explain why in many areas there will never be equality of outcome, and to cry "sexism" or "discrimination" is wrongheaded.

In conclusion, does this book live up to the subtitle and help us to discover God's true intention for male and female? Regrettably, no. There are many good things in this book but sadly these may persuade readers to take on board the whole package – another attractive yet fundamentally flawed presentation of evangelical feminism.

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Sharon James

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### ***Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.***

This organisation was founded the US in 1987, and produces resources which provide a Biblical and positive perspective on gender issues. A UK branch has now been set up. If any readers would like

further details, and/or a free sample copy of the latest issue of the CBMW Journal (which includes "An open letter to egalitarians: Six questions that have never been satisfactorily answered" by Wayne Grudem), please write to:  
CBMW, 9 Epsom Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 7AR.

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## **The Radical Evangelical**

Nigel Wright

SPCK, 1996, 144 pp, £12.99

After such recently well-known epithets as "conservative", "charismatic" and even "post" evangelical, there is now a "new kid on the block" – "radical". It is written by a former lecturer in Christian Doctrine at Spurgeon's College, and appears in SPCK's *Gospel & Culture* series. The book evidences wide reading, deep reflection, and some thought provoking conclusions, all in comparatively short compass. It is well written, indexed and footnoted (I was able to discover only one typographical error – "1993" instead of "1983" – page 134, footnote 12).

Wright defines his "radical evangelical" position succinctly: "It is not inherently suspicious of 'higher criticism'. This is a 'radical' position in that it is not wedded to the 'conservative' assumptions of much recent evangelicalism" (p. 11, his quotation marks). He thus attempts to sail somewhere between the Scylla of the old liberalism and the Charybdis of conservative evangelicalism.

His avowed chart and compass is what he terms a Trinitarian "Revolutionary Orthodoxy". This enables him, graciously but firmly, to reject the extremes of the pluralist John Hick, the feminist Daphne Hampson, and the "atheist priest", Anthony Freeman. Conversely, he is able to acknowledge his debt to Barth for his understanding of Barth's (reformulated)

doctrine of election, with its tendency towards a “hopeful universalism” (p. 42). He is committed to Scripture’s general reliability but not its inerrancy. Moreover, he is uncomfortable with the doctrine of “penal substitution”, as traditionally presented, and urges more relational atonement models. Thus, the cross itself is “not necessary to enable God to forgive”. Rather, it is “the revelation of that cost in God” eternally that actualises itself at a precise moment in time (p. 67f).

Given his Barthian view of election, it is no surprise to encounter a “wider hope” for those outside the visible Christian Church, perhaps by some form of “post mortem” evangelism for some. For others, although he is not specifically cited, Karl Rahner’s well-known “anonymous Christian” paradigm is tacitly urged. For such, the gospel becomes the interpretation of “a reality into which they have already entered” (p. 100). Unsurprisingly, hell is not “eternal, conscious punishment”, though still a possibility, thus avoiding full-blown universalism.

His desire for a recovery of “radical politics” will ring many “Nonconformist bells”. Moreover, his final chapter’s call, *Towards a Generous Religion*, has some pertinent and challenging things to say to the “absolutism, restrictivism and judgementalism” of various forms of evangelicalism.

By this time, I suspect, the theological radar of many readers of this journal will be working overtime. There is more work to do. For more disturbing still is his treatment of the person of Christ. Although it is becoming a Christological commonplace among some theologians to believe that our Lord assumed a fallen human nature (for a recent excellent refutation see D Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Apollos, 1998)), most evangelicals have balked at the implications. Wright attempts, however,

“to boldly go”: “to assert his humanity surely involves the capacity ... to get things wrong” (p. 82); “There should therefore be no difficulty in acknowledging that Jesus was capable of innocent mistakes” – (p. 83). Unsurprisingly, these comments appear in the chapter, *The Legacy of Liberalism*.

This is a compassionate, challenging yet ultimately alarming book. I am unconvinced that the “radical” has taken me back to the “roots” of my faith. Rather, I feel I have been detoured to a neo-evangelicalism to who knows where.

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Steve Brady

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## Transforming the World

David W Smith

*Paternoster, 1998, 146 pp, £12.99*

David Smith, the former Principal of Northumbria Bible College, argues that modern evangelicalism has lost its original vision of being what he terms “a world transformative religion”. The book takes the form of a potted history of evangelicalism from the time of the Great Awakening, highlighting the drift from its original concerns for social and political reform into the realms of purely personal faith and morals.

The thesis is by now a familiar one, having been rehearsed in numerous different ways in various publications in recent years. The value of this work lies in its exclusively British perspective – it is sub-titled “The Social Impact of British Evangelicalism” – and in its accessibility. It is clearly-written and targeted at a non-academic readership. Its brevity is by and large a virtue (there are only 125 pages of text) although this requires a fairly idiosyncratic selection of material.

All the compulsory heroes of contemporary, conservative evangel-

icalism get a mention. Spurgeon and Lloyd-Jones are both commended and lightly rapped over the knuckles as though the author is not quite sure where they fit into the picture. John Stott is applauded as the principle theoretician behind the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, which David Smith considers to have been a watershed event. Since then, evangelicalism has been nudged back on to the “world transformative” course it should never have abandoned.

Advocates of creationism will not like the author’s approach to the evolution debate. They are considered to be part of what Mark Noll would call “the scandal of the evangelical mind”. Readers of this journal may well also wish to take issue with the way in which the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is simply identified with fundamentalist literalism.

The book ends with an optimistic scenario in which the various strands of present-day evangelicalism combine their distinctive strengths and we are reminded of some of the advantages of a disestablished Church. All in all, a good read for a train journey and well worth putting into the hands of those believers for whom these issues are virgin territory. But be prepared to answer the questions that will arise!

### **Jobs and Justice, Homes and Hope – Analysing the state of the nation**

*Sir Fred Catherwood,*

*Hodder and Stoughton, 1997, 220 pp, £8.99*

**N**o one could accuse Sir Fred of having needed the Lausanne Congress to wake him up to the social agenda! This book shows the fruit of a lifetime committed to bringing a

Christian perspective to the worlds of politics and economics. Here is the author’s diagnosis of our nation’s current ills and the way they could be cured (European Monetary Union featuring as a prominent ingredient in the medicine). The book highlights the need for the churches to give a moral lead in our fragmenting society. Here also we find another plea for disestablishment. Could it really happen?

### **Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger**

*Ronald Sider, Hodder and Stoughton, 1997, 332 pages, £7.99*

**T**he 20th anniversary edition of this well-known book claims to be “completely rewritten for a new generation”. I remember the impact the first edition made on me when it came out, so I was interested to see how it would strike me as I read it again years later and to note what changes had been made. The writing still feels powerful. While undoubtedly naive and utopian at times, I would still make this book compulsory reading for those who believe Christianity and politics should be kept apart.

The world is a very different place twenty years on. Sider acknowledges a dramatic drop in world poverty as a result of many emerging nations adopting market economies. He is less concerned to try and prove that the Bible demands absolute equality of income and wealth. But though his radicalism is somewhat tempered, it is far from tamed. (“I believe that private property is so good that everybody ought to have some”!) His attacks on rampant materialism and consumerism in the West are, if anything, all the more strident.

Full of memorable statements and striking suggestions, this book remains a classic of its kind. A must read!

## God of the Poor – A Biblical Vision of God's Present Rule

Dewi Hughes with Matthew Bennett  
OM Publishing, 1998, 330 pp, £6.99

Out of the TEAR Fund stable, here is another book telling us about the iniquitous division between the world's rich and poor. Full of sincerity but, compared with Sider, devoid of passion. Only the already-persuaded would be likely to get through it, which is a pity because it contains much valuable information and many useful insights. The author is an unashamed representative of middle-of-the-road evangelicalism and sits on the fence without apparent discomfort at a number of points (for example, when discussing the Bible's view of the role of women.)

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Jonathan Stephen

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### Briefly Noted

Bioethics (abortion, reproduction, genetic screening, euthanasia, etc.) is one of the most urgent areas of Christian ethical concern today. With the erosion of Christian values in society and the rapid advancement of medical technology pastors and churches are facing some difficult issues. The American theological ethicist **Gilbert**

**Meilander** has written a very helpful and insightful little book entitled *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (Paternoster 1996, 120pp). Meilander tries to approach these issues not from a minimalist position (what is possible in a pluralist society) but from a thoroughly Christian position with a view to commending this as an alternative. There is a great need for more short, masterly books like this one.

On the borderlands of historic evangelicalism there are some worrying developments of which all church leaders should be aware. A reliable guide to some of these developments is **Millard Erickson's** *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Paternoster 1997, 140pp). After surveying the current state of evangelicalism, Erickson introduces us to the thinking of Bernard Ramm, Clark Pinnock, Stanley Grenz and others on a number of doctrines such as Scripture, God, salvation as well as theological method. Perhaps too eirenically Erickson in the end comes just short of saying that some of these men are no longer evangelicals in the historic sense of the word.

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Ken Brownell

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### Obituary

The Rev. Professor R Tudur Jones. of Bangor, North Wales died at the age of 77 on 23 July 1998. Professor Jones was a distinguished church historian and a Congregationalist by conviction. He had been Principal of Bala-Bangor Congregational College from 1965-1988 as well as a university lecturer then professor. Most of his academic teaching in Bangor and writing was done through the medium of Welsh. His classical work *Congregationalism In England* (1662-1962) was published in 1962 and his definitive work *Vavasar Powell* in 1971. Bryntirion Press published *The Great Reformation* (1997; also published 1985). A new work in Welsh by Professor Jones entitled *Grym Y Gair A Fflam Y Ffydd* (The Power of the Word and the Flame of Faith) was published by University of Wales, Bangor only eleven days after his death. His contribution as an historian and theologian to the evangelical faith has been considerable.

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## **EDITORIAL POLICY**

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