

FOUNDATIONS

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Evershed House, Alma Road, St Albans, UK, AL1 3AR

Tel/Fax: 01727 855 655

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Preaching Mission

Salvation, Atonement and Accessibility

Evangelising Our Cities

The Local Church and Mission

The Evangelical Gender Agenda

British Evangelical
Council

FOUNDATIONS

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Editor **Rev. Dr Kenneth Brownell**
6 Elrington Road
Hackney
LONDON
United Kingdom
E8 8BJ
Tel: 020 8980 6125 (Office)
020 7249 5712 (Home)
E-mail: k.brownell@solfa.co.uk

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

Editorial Board **Rev. Christopher Bennett MA**
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Editor's Notes

One of the more hopeful signs at present for mission in the United Kingdom is the revival of catechising as an evangelistic strategy. For isn't that what is happening with the proliferation of courses intended to introduce people to the Christian faith? The most notable of these is the ubiquitous Alpha Course. With all its faults (and they should not be understated), the Alpha Course has shown us how catechising is still an important weapon in our armoury. There are, of course, other courses such as Christianity Explained which are better but show the same thing. This form of catechising has been adapted culturally and pedagogically, but is fundamentally the same thing as that known by our forefathers. The Christian faith is systematically taught in a structured and memorable way. A few years ago I was in a ministers' meeting where this approach to evangelism was being discussed. The point was made that it was not preaching with the implication that it was not an inappropriate form of evangelism. I disagreed and said that it was a form of preaching and that certainly I felt that I preached when I taught the Discover Christianity course in my church. But perhaps a better response would have been to say that it was a form of catechising and as such was a very appropriate form of evangelism.

That this is so should not surprise us. The early church and later the Reformers and Puritans used catechising extensively in their evangelism. It was the appalling ignorance of the people that moved the Reformers to revive the ancient practise of systematically teaching the faith in this way. Later the Roman Catholics picked up the practise and sadly today catechising is more usually associated with Catholicism than Protestantism. But as with the Reformers, does not the ignorance of people today cry out for a return to catechising? Of course the pedagogical method has to be adapted. The rote question and answer format of traditional catechisms needs to be adapted to the way people learn today. I am convinced that careful instruction in an hospitable setting can be used by the Holy Spirit to open hearts to the gospel. In his magisterial history of Protestant Nonconformity, *The Dissenters* (2 volumes, Oxford University Press), Michael Watts makes the point that the remarkable growth of Nonconformity in the period 1790-1830 was largely due to Nonconformist preachers reaping the harvest sown by Anglican catechising. While we may be seeing little advance today could we not be living in a time when we should be patiently teaching the faith in a culturally appropriate form so that our children and their children will, by God's grace, reap a harvest in years to come. Perhaps we will see something of that harvest ourselves.

All this ties in to the theme of several articles in this issue, namely mission. John Nichol's article on Thomas Chalmers reminds us of the importance of urban mission today. Chalmers was something of a pioneer in this area, as John Roxborough makes clear in his book *Thomas Chalmers: Enthusiast for Mission* (Paternoster/Rutherford House, 1999). The book has the feel of a thesis, but it is nevertheless an inspiring introduction to this great man and his passion for both "the Christian good of Scotland" and of the world. In Part 1 Roxborough puts Chalmers in context and then recounts how he moved from a moderate to an evangelical position and in the process picked up a passionate concern for the intensive evangelisation of a fast industrialising Scotland.

With all his limitations Chalmers's vision and concern has much to teach us in a far more urbanised world today. In Part 2 Roxborough turns to Chalmers's concern for world missions. It is impossible to be unmoved by the bigness of the man. What struck me was that Chalmers was far bigger than many of the men around him. Roxborough perhaps overstates this, but it made me wonder whether Chalmers would easily fit into many of our churches or groupings.

One of the most effective mission movements in British history was Welsh Calvinistic Methodism. Again I would recommend Watts's volumes for the statistics involved. For a warm-hearted and inspiring account of what happened I recommend William Williams's (not Pantycelyn) *Welsh Calvinistic Methodism* (Bryntirion Press, 1998). First published in 1872, this account conveys something of the remarkable move of God's Spirit that transformed Wales spiritually and culturally. Whatever strategies we develop and methods we adopt what we need above everything else is for the Holy Spirit to be sent from heaven on preachers as happened then. Something of the kind of spirituality this produced can be delightfully tasted in the more famous William Williams's (this time of Pantycelyn) *Theomorphus*. Selected, edited and translated by Eifion Evans and entitled *Pursued by God* (Bryntirion Press, 1996), this is one of the classic works of the Great Awakening now made available to English readers. Like John Bunyan, Williams pictures the Christian life as a great drama of universal significance. Space prevents me from illustrating the point, but suffice it say that I think that in portraying the Christian life many of us preachers miss this dramatic element. Was not one of the characteristics of the evangelistic preaching of Whitefield and others their ability to describe in such a vivid way the working of God on the souls of ordinary people. Surely this is biblical as we can see so clearly in Paul's letters.

Of course, preaching has not always been like that of the Calvinistic Methodists. In the third volume in a remarkable, and as yet incomplete, history of preaching, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), the American scholar and pastor, Hughes Oliphant Old, covers the medieval period. This volume is a real eye-opener. Here are great preachers I have never heard about and those I have were often far greater than I ever imagined. Contrary to what I understood there was a great deal of expository preaching going on right through the history of the church. Sadly in this period much of it was undermined by the dominance of the allegorical method of interpretation and much of that preaching took place behind the doors of monasteries. The preaching also tended to be moralistic and even at its best, with the notable exceptions of a few preachers like Wycliffe, the note of justification by faith was missing. But that said the missionary preaching of the Celtic church and the missionaries from Britain to Germany was remarkable in what it achieved. In spite of their flaws, one cannot but be moved by the spirit that animated the great preaching orders, such as the Dominicans, in their concern to instruct the peoples of Europe in the faith. Indeed one of the surprises of this book is its account of the catechetical preaching of Thomas Aquinas. In 1273 great crowds gathered in San Domenico Majori in Naples to hear this theologian teach the Apostle's Creed in beautifully clear, well illustrated and practically applied sermons. With this fascinating book Old has put us in his debt by opening what to most of us is unexplored territory and whetting our appetite for what he has to say about the preaching of the Reformation era.

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Preaching Mission in the Regular Life of the Church

Ray Porter

Mission leaders are always trying to get churches to give a larger space to World Mission. If some had their way, the church would have no real activity but the support and sending of missionaries. There is, however, a danger that a church will so concentrate on Mission, either globally, or locally, that it neglects other aspects of what it means to be a community of the people of God. If, however, we let Mission flow naturally out of the preaching and teaching ministry of the church, it will not only be of benefit to the task of world mission, it will also produce churches that are more Biblically literate.

False attitudes to preaching mission are found in many churches. The first is that mission should only be mentioned on special missionary Sundays. Some church members like notice of a missionary speaker so that they can arrange not to be present. Some churches only have one Sunday a year when Mission may be mentioned. Many Anglican churches have mysterious creatures called “Deputations” that are regularly fought over by the representatives of the societies the church supports. They often end in tears. Partly this is the fault of the church that fails to communicate to society representatives what they want them to do. Often it is the fault of societies who do not send out representatives who are capable of doing what the church wants. Some churches want just a few stories of strange places. Such a request keeps Mission in its marginal role. Often the stories present aspects of mission that do not reflect the main thrusts of Modern mission. All too often it reinforces an imperialistic view of the world with “needy natives”, rather than the expanding maturing global church from whom we should receive instruction as to what it means to be the people of God. This form of deputation does nothing to develop the Biblical thinking, the renewal of the mind, that is the task of the preacher within worship. People are only entertained, not enlightened.

A mission should be asking serious questions as to what the church wants. One of the best ways of ensuring that there is a fresh presentation is for the church to set the Biblical passages that should be explained as part of the message of mission. Continuity of mission within the life of the church is often demonstrated if the mission speaker is asked to take one of the topics or passages that is part of the regular teaching ministry.

Ministers’ attitudes to Missionary Sundays are varied. There is first the absentee minister. I know of one mission leader who will not visit a church if he knows that the minister will not be there. While some may be grateful that there is an opportunity for mission input on a Sunday when the minister is preaching elsewhere, a minister who is never present for a Missionary Sunday is conveying a very clear message to his congregation – this is something with which I do not personally want to be involved. There are various reasons for this. For some it is financial. “Please Lord, we are struggling financially, don’t let the congregation be carried away by the needs of other work”. For others the agenda and theology of the mission is not something that fits in

with their vision for the life of the church. For a few it is professional jealousy – “I don’t want to let anyone else into *my* pulpit!”. This may be due to their experience of bad missionary preaching. I believe that there are also ministers who have never fully resolved their calling to home ministry. Those who were brought up with the mistaken idea that to be a missionary is more glorious than being a minister may sometimes question themselves as to why they are not overseas. I remember working through with a group of Ordinands in Oxford the qualifications needed for overseas service in physical, psychological, spiritual and social terms and seeing the relief in some faces as they realised that the person God had made them to be was not one who could easily serve in another country. (Incidentally, it is sad to note that there are nowadays many fewer ministers who are called to overseas service). Others may be so burdened with the needs of Britain that they don’t want people thinking seriously about a calling to other places or the greater needs elsewhere. We need a full Biblical theology not to become so nationally concerned that we are no longer true to the Gospel.

I believe that the way mission should be tackled is to put it in its proper context of the preaching ministry of the church. If Mission is a major part of God’s purposes for his people, it should be found throughout the scriptures and not just in certain familiar passages. One may struggle with some parts of the Old Testament, but I believe that Missions can be preached from almost every book of the Bible. There are two reasons for this. First we have a God who is concerned for the salvation of all people from every culture and nation. Secondly, in different ways, in every book of the Bible we are dealing with a cross-cultural situation, either within the book or in our own interaction with it. The problem for many preachers is that they do not recognise the message of cross-cultural mission within the text of scripture. Commentators are not often missionaries. A recent review of commentaries on Deuteronomy commented on Chris Wright’s superb volume in the New International Bible Commentary Series¹:

The distinctive feature is ... its orientation to missiology, for which Deuteronomy is shown to have interesting and unexpected implications (relevant, incidentally, to the troublesome problem of the book’s attitude to the non-Israelite peoples of Canaan).²

Sometimes a blinkered Western viewpoint can produce erroneous comments as in Westcott’s commentary on John 2:3

when the wine failed, as it might be expected to do from the unexpected addition of seven guests to the party already gathered³

No one who has ever attended a Middle Eastern or Asian village wedding where the guests may number several hundreds would ever make that remark.

More often we do not notice the elements of cross-cultural mission within the text of scripture because we are so concerned with our own agendas. When you last preached from Genesis 1, what questions did you address? Were you concerned to defend the truth of a creator God? Do you get all heated up to promote a belief in a creation in seven days? Was your sermon an attack on evolution rather than an exposition of scripture? Did you expound clearly the relationship of mankind to the rest of creation? Did you present the purpose of God that a man and woman in relationship are to be the image of the relational God in the world? Did you reflect on the carefully constructed form of this chapter with its combinations of sevens in the Hebrew text? Or

did you think about the strangeness of this chapter as the beginning of the writings of little Israel in the midst of a hostile world? Were you struck by the audacity of the claim that Elohim, who is also Yahweh, the God of Israel, is set forth as the creator of the whole universe? Did you note the way in which all the rival claims of other nations' gods were picked off one by one? If you regarded the Sun or Moon as the supreme god you worshipped, how would you have liked to see them referred to as mere 'lights'? If your life were ruled by your horoscope, would you have been happy with the throwaway line 'he made the stars also'? And at that point you suddenly realise that this is not just a presentation of the creator God to attack the beliefs of long dead Sumerians or Babylonians, but a very relevant passage in your own cross-cultural ministry to people who always read their horoscopes in their daily paper.

If you are bold, you may want to reflect on the attack on the deification of animals that is to be found in the story of their creation and subjugation to mankind. The implication this might have for Egyptian readers is clear. Then you move on in chapter 2 to their unsuitability as the companion to mankind and suddenly you are facing the attitude of Miss Jones who loves her dog while being misanthropic and sour in all her relationships with fellow human beings. By the time you have mentioned the animal rights people and reflected on the role of the serpent in chapter three, you will be in all the local papers and in conflict with most of your congregation. In so doing you will have realised the extraordinary boldness of Genesis 1 as it was originally given. And then you might go on to reflect the importance of the early chapters of Genesis in the evangelism of Hindus or Buddhists or Muslims. For many in Britain this will not be just the question of what missionaries are doing in other countries, but how to communicate with your neighbours. Different theologies of God and mankind produce different cultures and different doctrines of salvation.

Genesis begins the long story of God creating humankind to be his image in the world, which is then frustrated as mankind rejects that role of living to the glory of God in favour of listening to the creature and serving our own desires. Our Biblical theology will grapple with the way in which God set about rescuing mankind, both through his special revelation of himself within Israel and his supreme self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Throughout that story, there is the particularity of the cultural revelation of God as well as the interaction with surrounding cultures of the people, in whom God is revealing himself.

Sometimes the relevance of a passage to Mission may surprise us. Recently I had to stand in for two Sundays while our minister was ill. I decided to expound 2 and 3 John. It was only as I began to prepare 3 John that I realised that I wasn't having a break from preaching on Mission. Gaius receives missionaries and ministers to them, not because he knows them or is friendly with them, but just because they have gone out because of 'the Name'. To support friends is natural. To support people because of the message they bear and the task they are involved in, is spiritual. Diotrephes didn't like what Gaius had done. There are too many Diotrephes in churches today.

Let us look at one other passage to illustrate the use of narrative material to preach mission. 2 Kings 5 is a familiar Sunday School story. It is also an account of how the message of the saving power of the God of Israel penetrated across hostile cultures. How do you penetrate the household of a heathen general? A young girl captured in

battle and made a household slave. She keeps her belief in the God of Israel, despite her traumatising experience of capture, and speaks to the general, not from a position of power, but in the weakness and humility of a servant. She is someone who has a love and concern for those she is living among. In fact, she is the ideal picture of a person who has gone with their job or profession to witness in another culture. Filipino servants in Saudi Arabia are probably an exact parallel, but the character of this girl is what one looks for in any professional. The writer brings out a contrast between the exiled nameless maid who was a true witness to the love of the God of Israel for the stranger and Gehazi, the servant of Elijah, ever living near to the prophet and the word of God. The girl was faithful in a foreign land, Gehazi was faithless, worshipping his own desires, in the land of promise. He was in Israel, but with a heart distant from the God of Israel. Which servant would you like to be?

A realisation of the cross-cultural message of the scriptures will be of vital use, not only in thinking realistically about world mission, but also in our own interface with contemporary British culture. What does the use in Proverbs of maxims that were also to be found in Egyptian writings, or Paul's adoption in Acts 17 of poetic verses about Zeus to explain humankind's relationship with the God of resurrection, say about our adoption of modern cultural forms to explain the Gospel? How does the Song of Solomon speak to the prevalent views of sexuality in British churches or to the erotic carvings of your local Hindu temple.

In a missiological expounding of the Old Testament, we get an understanding not only of an agrarian culture with which a lot of the world is still familiar, but also of the behaviour of the people of God in a pluralistic world. I believe also that we begin to see the characters of the OT as real people. Looking at them in their own context, comparing them with people in parallel cultures in the world today, we see them in their own dignity and not as rather English characters on which we can hang some pietistic or spiritual lessons. To enter their struggles to be true to God's revelation within their own culture, will help us and our hearers to exhibit the same faithfulness. While we do not want to equate our nation with Israel, a study of the OT will help us to understand the political struggles of the church in many parts of the world. State events cannot be separated from the context in which the Gospel has to advance.

Turning to the New Testament, we are presented with the life of the emerging church of Jesus Christ, composed of people from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds. We have the story not only of the advance of mission into West Asia and Europe, but also the struggles of the emerging church as its members reacted with their own host cultures. Much of the research by evangelical scholars over recent years has made us more aware of the cultural background of the New Testament. While some may see these as rather obscure academic studies, in fact they make us realise afresh that we are dealing with real people struggling to be faithful within their culture. The continuing dialogue that is presented in the Epistles shows us the working and reasoning that we need to apply in our own cultures today. A knowledge of what God is doing in the world today will help us to understand how typical the NT churches are of emerging churches in other parts of the world. It will also help us as we react with our own increasingly pagan society.

The parallel between NT churches and the emerging churches in other parts of the world today was brought home to me in a new way by Don Cormack, the author of

Killing Fields, Living Fields,⁴ speaking about the church in Cambodia. He said that this church was now in AD70, having just come through the Neronian persecution. How revealing it is to look at churches in the light of parallels with churches of similar age in the NT. As we look at emerging churches, we understand why so many struggle with morality or power. The NT churches had the same struggle. It is part of what it means to gather a people for God out of a nation.

Above all in the NT there are two characters that will be the foci of our preaching about Mission. They are of course our Lord and the apostle Paul. Our Lord is the prime example of a cross-cultural missionary. He came from the glory of God to reveal the character of God as an authentic human in first century Jewish life. We see the ways in which he related his mission into that Jewish context. His parables were often familiar stories to which he gave a counter-cultural twist and an ending which attacked the preconceptions of his hearers. Ken Bailey's⁵ books are particularly useful in helping us to see this. A missionary in the Philippines is attempting to rework Jesus' parables into Filipino dress so that they will come as a corrective to their natural thinking. It is not just Jesus' words that convey the truth of God, but his life and death that show forth what God is like. Here is the authentic calling of any missionary – to manifest within a different culture the character of God. Just as our understanding of God is redefined by the life of our Saviour, so other people understand the nature of the God through the life of the missionary who proclaims him. There is not only the challenge of that fact to the individual missionary, but also a base line for all our thinking about the task of cross-cultural mission in the world today.

Paul is the typical missionary as much as he is a picture of the Christian worker. It is a long while since Roland Allan wrote his book on Paul's Missionary Methods.⁶ There have been numerous other books on the subject, but many people still think that you can expound Paul without remembering that he was a missionary. Have you preached through Romans without giving much attention to Ch. 15? James Dunn has at least called his recent book, *The theology of Paul the Apostle*. Many in their desire to formulate theology from Paul's writings ignore the dynamic of church planting. The great issue of the early church was the defining of a trans-racial and trans-cultural community who knows God in Jesus Christ. Whatever view you might take of the writings of people like Dunn and Tom Wright on Justification, it must be admitted that they have reminded us that the arguments of much of the New Testament are directed at what was the strange social phenomenon of the emerging church – that it brought together in one social community people from divergent and opposing social contexts. I am sure that if that theme had been preached more clearly in our churches over the years, there would not be so much xenophobia and racialism within them today. Moreover, there would be a much clearer understanding of the missionary imperative and the difficult path of obedience to the Great Commission.

Paul's missionary methods as they are demonstrated through his epistles and within the book of Acts, if not totally regulative for Modern mission, do set out a pattern for "doing mission" that we ignore at our peril. The trust that Paul gave to his developing church leaders and the liberty of development is in sharp contrast to the practice of many missions even today who retain control in the hands of ex-patriate missionaries. A church that has worked missiologically through Luke's account of Paul's ministry

and his letters will not only be able to think clearly about church planting throughout the world, but also be a Biblically based goad to those Missions that are still languishing in an imperialistic past.

Notice also the missiological significance of Revelation. Here is a book that brings together all the strands of Biblical literature from Genesis onward. There is the great picture of the completed church of Jesus Christ drawn from every nation, tribe, people and tongue. While it presents the certainty of God's victory over all evil, it also holds out a message of salvation to the nations. With each fresh disaster on the wicked, the gospel message goes out again. It does not seem able to picture even a new heaven and earth without the gates being open for the riches of the nations to be brought in (21:26). The final chapter of Revelation has the Spirit and the Bride sounding forth the familiar Gospel call from Is 55.

So, from Genesis to Revelation there is a consistent message of Mission. To neglect to preach mission in our regular ministry is to misuse scripture – and none of us would want to do that!

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- ⁴ Don Cormack, *Killing Fields, Living Fields* (OMF/MARC/Monarch, 1997)
- ⁵ For example Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant & Through Peasant Eyes* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1983)
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Ray Porter is the Southeast Regional director of OMF and lectures on world missions at the London Theological Seminary.

Editor's Notes continued from page 2

Finally we return to urban mission with a book edited by Michael Northcott entitled ***Urban Theology: A Reader*** (Cassell 1998). This is something of a text-book on urban theology and ministry, but I have to say it is a very mixed bag. There are some very good pieces in it from the likes of Jacques Ellul and Ray Bakke, but much if it is long on theologising in a vague kind of way and short on the applying Scripture to urban church life and mission. If you want to familiarise yourself with current thinking in this area of mission this book is useful, but your money would be better spent on books by the likes of the late Harvie Conn, Roger Greenway and Ray Bakke. Of a similar kind is ***Urban Churches, Vital Signs*** (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999) edited by Nile Harper. This book contains a number of short profiles of urban churches and ministries in the United States. A few are evangelical, but most are liberal and largely involved in social ministries of one kind or another. While it is interesting to read of how inner city American churches are seeking to meet the enormous social needs around them there is not much help here on thinking biblically about the city. That said the efforts of these churches challenge evangelicals like us regarding our social involvement. Surely we have even more reason than liberals to seek to show God's mercy to those in need by good works. Chalmers understood this. To use his famous phrase, "the expulsive power of a new affection" in Christians should make us people who work to see the City of God filling the City of Man.

Salvation, Atonement and Accessibility: Towards a Solution of the “Soteriological Problem of Evil”¹

Daniel Strange

Introduction

If Christ declares Himself to be the Way of salvation, the Grace and the Truth, and affirms that in Him alone, and only to souls believing in Him, is the way to return to God, what has become of men who lived in the many centuries before Christ came? ... What, then, has become of such an innumerable multitude of souls, who were in no wise blameworthy, seeing that He in whom alone saving faith can be exercised had not yet favoured men with His advent?²

Steering a safe course between the Scylla of particularity and the Charybdis of universality has long posed a Herculean challenge for the Christian theologian.³ While Porphyry’s question suggests that this challenge is not recent in origin, the phenomenon of “empirical pluralism”, that is the seemingly uncontroversible “fact” that in the West we live in an age of ethnic and religious diversity, has brought an intense urgency, theological, philosophical and emotional, to the challenge of mediating particularity and universality. The question of the “unevangelised”, that is those people who have never heard of Christ through no fault of their own, possibly highlights the challenge in its most acute form. John Hick neatly summarises the problem:

We say as Christians that God is the God of universal love, that he is the creator and Father of all mankind, and that he wills the ultimate good and salvation of all men. But we also say, traditionally, that the only way to salvation is the Christian way. And yet we know, when we stop to think about it, that the large majority of the human race who have lived and died up to the present moment have lived either before Christ or outside the borders of Christendom. Can we then accept the conclusion that the God of love who seeks to save all mankind has nevertheless ordained that men must be saved in such a way that only a small minority can in fact receive this salvation? It is the weight of this moral contradiction that has driven Christian thinkers in modern times to explore other ways of understanding the human religious situation.⁴

It is well documented that for Hick and other like-minded individuals, the tension in affirming both an axiom of particularity and one of universality has been unbearable, and that he has found release only in the rejection of the very foundation of particularity, the *solus Christus*. Hence his call for a “Copernican revolution”;⁵ a paradigmatic shift out of “Ptolomaic” exclusivism with its imperialistic notions of Christocentricity, and into pluralism with its inclusive affirmation of “Reality-centricism”.⁶ Somewhat polemically it could be said that for Hick and those like him, the Herculean task has proved too difficult and that faced with twin perils, the dangers of the whirlpool have been less fearsome than that of the monster.

The Question within Evangelical Theology

What about those Christians who still wish to affirm the *solus Christus* and at the same time affirm universality in one form or another? Are such people to be thought of as theological monsters, or perhaps better “dinosaurs” of the past “Ptolomaic” age? Are they living with an unresolvable contradiction which is illogical and incoherent? Or, can they really affirm both particularity and universality at the same time? Can they solve the “soteriological problem of evil”?

In this article I wish to explore some of the issues that arise in affirming both particularity and universality, by focusing on the question of the unevangelised and on two types of responses to the question within “evangelical” theology,⁷ a theological community who not only strongly affirm the *solus Christus* in terms of truth, revelation and salvation, but who have traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on an explicit confession of Christ: *fides ex auditu* (faith by hearing). These two types of responses are that of “trinitarian openness”,⁸ and traditional Arminianism.⁹ Rather than concentrating on their biblical exegetical responses to the question of the unevangelised, I wish to look at the internal coherence of one of the theological presuppositions or axioms which generate these responses, realising that for an evangelical methodology it is somewhat of a false dichotomy to separate the question of biblical validity from that of internal coherence.

Within evangelical theology in general and particularly within the two evangelical traditions mentioned above, the question of the existence and fate of the unevangelised has been framed around the claim that any viable response must equally uphold two axioms, that of particularity and universality. The particularity axiom asserts the *solus Christus*. The salvation offered through Jesus is final and particular where the term “finality” “refers to the unsurpassability and normativity of both the work (e.g. atonement) and the revelation of Jesus”,¹⁰ and the term “particularity” “refers to the fact that the salvation provided by God is available *only* through Jesus.”¹¹ I believe that all legitimate evangelical theologians would claim to assert this axiom, and it will remain uncontested in this paper.

What I do want to focus on in this article is the construal of the second axiom, the “universality” axiom and its relationship to the particularity axiom. The universality axiom contains three linked presuppositions: firstly, the belief in God’s universal salvific will (that God desires the salvation of everyone), secondly, the notion of unlimited atonement (that Jesus’ salvific provisions are for everyone); and finally, and most controversially, the notion of universal accessibility (that everyone must be personally eligible to receive God’s provision of salvation in Christ). In what follows I wish firstly to outline the systematic lines of argument which lead some evangelicals to affirm universal accessibility; secondly, to indicate briefly how they have attempted to prove universal accessibility and why I believe these attempts to be unsatisfactory; and finally, to point to a third evangelical tradition, the Reformed evangelical tradition, which rejects this construal of the universality axiom. As a result, this third tradition is, in terms of internal coherence, better equipped to deal with the soteriological problem of evil in the shape of the unevangelised.

God's Universal Salvific Will and Universal Accessibility

One evangelical who has done more than any other to highlight the problems surrounding the unevangelised as well as presenting the most detailed and nuanced argument concerning their salvation, is the Baptist theologian Clark Pinnock.¹² Pinnock's analysis of the problem is one part of his broader theological framework and it is here where I will start my analysis of the universality axiom. Pinnock works within a theological paradigm which he calls the "trinitarian openness of God."¹³ Placing itself between the "biblical-classical synthesis" model of God (which is accused of being heavily influenced by Neo-Platonism and which exaggerates God's transcendence), and process theology (which stresses a radical immanence), Pinnock summarises his model thus:

Our understanding of Scripture leads us to depict God, the sovereign Creator, as voluntarily bringing into existence a world with significantly free personal agents in it, ... In line with his decision to make this kind of world, God rules in such a way as to uphold the created structures and, because he gives liberty to his creatures, is happy to accept the future as open, not closed, and a relationship with the world that is dynamic and not static ... Our lives make a difference to God – they are truly significant.¹⁴

In order to maintain his belief in mutuality and conditionality between God and humanity, Pinnock has deemed it necessary to redefine the divine attributes and especially those concerning God's sovereignty. He rejects not only the Calvinist belief in foreordination but also the Arminian doctrine of simple foreknowledge, believing both to be incompatible with libertarian freedom. Indeed in general, one can view Pinnock's "new" paradigm as a logical extension of traditional Arminianism. Like Hick's call for a "Copernican revolution", Pinnock regards traditional Arminians as having only gone half-way in their theological development, as many still seem content to add more and more artificial "epicycles" which attempt to uphold libertarian freedom and a traditional view of God's sovereignty. Pinnock calls Arminians to be logically consistent in their theology and make the paradigm shift into "trinitarian openness".

Pinnock states that it is a challenge of theological interpretation to mediate the tension which holds that God loves the whole world (universality) and that Jesus is the only way to God (particularity). Specifically the problem concerns access to God's grace. Here Pinnock makes the following claim:

If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved, it follows logically that everyone must have access to salvation. There would have to be an opportunity for all people to participate in the salvation of God. ... God's universal salvific will implies the equally universal accessibility of salvation for all people.¹⁵

But is there a logical link between God's universal salvific will and a universally accessible salvation? Like Carson¹⁶ and Nash,¹⁷ I believe this implication to be problematical for two reasons both of which relate to Pinnock's trinitarian openness. Firstly, Pinnock holds to a qualified definition of a "universal salvific will" because he believes that God's will can be frustrated by human libertarian freedom. Hence, soteriologically speaking, God may desire everyone to be saved, but such a desire can be frustrated by a rejection of God's grace. Could not though the same argument be used concerning universal accessibility? God may desire everyone to hear the gospel, but this desire for everyone to hear can be frustrated. At this point we must note that

this has indeed been the view of many evangelical Arminians: God may desire the salvation of all men, but getting the gospel to those people is our task, and this task can succeed or fail. One of the primary motivations for two thousand years of mission and evangelism has been the belief that Christian men and women are the means by which the unevangelised hear the gospel and the fact that many have not heard is their responsibility. That people never hear the gospel is a “risk” God takes in deciding to create a world of conditionality and mutuality.

Secondly, the linking of God’s universal salvific will to universal accessibility seems problematic in view of Pinnock’s denial of exhaustive divine foreknowledge. As Carson states:

Since Pinnock’s God ... is necessarily ignorant of the outcome of future free human decisions – including, presumably, the decision to have children, where they will live, what they will eat and read and so forth – it is far from clear what Pinnock means by insisting that God must give access to all of them. He cannot even know how many will exist. Or is the universal provision of access effected by general revelation and/or by the *imago Dei*, regardless of how many human beings there are, what they are like, where they live, and so on? If so, Pinnock’s argument needs much more substantiation.¹⁸

These two reasons alone would seem to prove that while God’s universal salvific will and universal accessibility may compliment one another, there is no necessary link from the former to the later. If universal accessibility is to be theologically proved, then it must be on other grounds.

Universal Atonement and Universal Accessibility

However, Pinnock does not only link a universal salvific will to universal accessibility, but he also links unlimited atonement to universal accessibility: “If Christ died for all, while yet sinners, the opportunity must be given for all to register a decision about what was done for them. They cannot lack the opportunity merely because someone failed to bring the gospel of Christ to them.”¹⁹ If the notion of a universal salvific will proves a dead-end in proving universal accessibility, then what about the notion of unlimited atonement, the belief that Christ’s death includes everyone in its scope. Strangely, neither Carson nor Nash mention this link in their critiques of Pinnock.

There seems to be a close connection between God’s universal salvific will and unlimited atonement as the saving will of God is revealed in Christ’s sacrifice. However there would also appear to be some important differences between the two concepts because in the atonement, we are not dealing with an abstract “wish” that can be frustrated, but in the making of this wish come true, a reality that has occurred in history: Christ died for all. Is there a necessary link between Christ dying for everyone, and everyone hearing about Christ dying for everyone? This is certainly the view of the apologist Stuart Hackett:

If every human being in all times and ages has been objectively provided for through the unique redemption in Jesus, and if this provision is in fact intended by God for every such human being, then it must be possible for every human individual to become personally eligible to receive that provision – regardless of his historical, cultural, or personal circumstances and situation, and quite apart from any particular historical information or even historically formulated theological conceptualisation – since a

universally intended redemptive provision is not genuinely universal unless it is also and for that reason universally accessible.²⁰

The question therefore is not whether a universal redemptive provision is universal in its efficacy, for Pinnock and the Arminians admit that man's freedom to resist salvific grace limits the efficacy. Rather the question is whether a universal redemptive provision can be limited in its scope in some way or another, for example the failure of Christian mission to take the gospel to certain parts of the world. All the treatments of unlimited atonement that I have looked at (apart from Pinnock's), do not answer this question. I would briefly like to offer what I think must be the response.

Let me describe in a little more detail the contours of the doctrine of unlimited atonement. Here I want to focus on the scope or extent of the atonement rather than on its purpose and meaning, of course realising that both areas impinge on the other. At the heart of this doctrine are two sets of linked ideas: objective accomplishment and subjective application, and universal possibility and particular actuality. Whatever Jesus' death accomplished (and for evangelicals some model of substitutionary atonement is emphasised), only Jesus could pay the penalty for anyone and everyone, but each individual must still accept that free gift:

It is clear...that Christ's death is universal in sufficiency and intention, but it is limited in its application. This limitation is imposed not by God but by Man. The individual human being, created in the image of God with free will, must accept the benefits of the atonement.²¹

Therefore one sees a mutual reciprocity between objective and subjective sides in Arminian soteriology: a positive subjective response is needed to make effective the objective accomplishment, but there could not be the possibility of a subjective response without the objective provision. Because there is a degree of conditionality in this schema, an objective universalism is avoided, for unlimited atonement only leads to universalism if "God's sovereignty means that every act of God must be 'efficacious' and 'cannot be frustrated by man', thereby negating any possible human freedom as being consistent with divine sovereignty."²² There is enough biblical evidence to suggest that not everyone has accepted God's free gift in Christ. Conversely while there is the possibility that no one would accept Christ's free offer of grace, this is only a logical possibility since the Bible suggests that many do indeed accept this offer.

It is the inextricable link between the objective and subjective sides of the Arminian soteriology, which seems to tie universal atonement to universal accessibility. For although Christ's death has achieved something objectively independent of the believer (i.e. a possibility of salvation which did not exist before Christ's death), in terms of its salvific potential, the subjective offer of this objective achievement would seem to be necessary to make the provision truly "universal". It would appear that to make a make a genuine "universal" offer one needs every recipient to be in position to accept or reject the offer. For example, if I, in my benevolence, was to offer everyone in the world a copy of this paper but some do not hear about my offer, then in what sense is my universal offer, universal? These people have neither accepted or rejected my paper and surely must be in a position to accept or reject my paper for the offer to be universal. But can my universal offer be genuine yet frustrated? It can in terms of

efficacy (acceptance or rejection) but what about scope? Or to return to the topic, one can say that the atonement is potentially universal in efficacy but can it be only potential in scope? To affirm this would appear to disrupt the delicate balance between objective and subjective with the subjective totally defining the objective. I do not think that this is what Arminians mean when they claim that Christ's death is objectively unlimited and universal, for without the universal possibility to accept or reject Christ, Christ death becomes limited to those who hear about it and of no use to those who don't.

I would like to suggest, then, that whereas a belief in God's universal salvific will does not necessarily imply universal accessibility, a belief in universal atonement does. I do not think that the argument I have put forward is a new one and I believe that the problem of universal accessibility has always been an issue for those who believe in universal atonement. However, I do believe that what has been implicit and has lain dormant, has recently become explicit and active. While the unevangelised were thought of as a small minority of people, the issue of universal accessibility could remain on the periphery of systematic thinking. However, as I have already noted, in today's pluralistic climate, the importance of the question has increased significantly as we realise that possibly the majority of people who have ever lived have not heard about Christ or his work. The idea of universal accessibility would appear to be a central doctrine both logically (in that it is inextricably linked to universal atonement) and emotionally. As Pinnock states, though, "This raises a difficult question. How is salvation within the reach of the unevangelised? How can anyone be saved without knowing Christ? The idea of universal accessibility, though not a novel theory, needs to be proven. It is far from self-evident, at least biblically speaking. How can it best be defended?"²³

Theories on Universal Accessibility

The last ten years has seen a number of theories proposed by evangelical theologians all of which propose some theory of universal accessibility.²⁴ The problem is that no one theory has come close to universal acceptance and all appear to raise more questions than they answer.

Firstly there is the position of post-mortem evangelism or divine perseverance. Believing that an explicit confession of Christ is needed for salvation but that many have never heard of Christ, they propose that the unevangelised will meet Christ after death and be able to accept or reject him at that point. This is not to be confused as a "second chance" theory, but rather the universality of a first chance. Supporters of this position include, Gabriel Fackre, Stephen Davis, Donald Bloesch and from among non-evangelicals, George Lindbeck. The main problems surrounding this position are firstly, the long Christian tradition which believes that our human destiny is fixed before death; and secondly, the problem of defining what constitutes a genuine "chance" in this life. Somewhat perversely it can be argued that it would be better not to ever evangelise since people are more likely to accept Jesus himself after death than by an over zealous missionary in this life. This latter objection highlights a fundamental problem I have chosen not to mention so far in this paper: defining who exactly are the unevangelised. Many theologians include in their definition those who have heard only a perverted form of the gospel, and those who have been presented

“historically” with the Gospel, but not existentially, for example missionaries who have taken the Gospel to an unreached people and have proceeded to preach the Gospel in their own language. It is conceded that only God knows who has heard a full and adequate presentation of the Gospel.

William Lane Craig uses his belief in “middle-knowledge” to argue that there is no one among the unevangelised who would ever respond positively to the gospel, for in every world that feasibly exists, they freely reject his grace. He calls this “transworld damnation”:²⁵

If there were anyone who would have responded to the gospel if he had heard it, then God in his love would have brought the gospel to such a person....God in His providence has so arranged the world that....all who would respond to his gospel, were they to hear it, did and do hear it. Those who only respond to general revelation and do not respond to it would also not have responded to the gospel had they heard it. Hence, no one is lost because of lack of information due to historical or geographical accident. All who want or would want to be saved will be saved.²⁶

Of course, the main weakness of Craig’s position is the philosophical viability of “middle-knowledge”.

Finally, there is a wide spectrum of positions which can be labelled as “inclusivist”. The main evangelical proponents of this theory are Clark Pinnock and John Sanders. Inclusivists believe that the unevangelised can be saved ontologically by Christ whilst being epistemologically unaware of him. Clark Pinnock argues that there is enough information, for example, in God’s general revelation in creation and the *imago Dei*, for salvation and he draws an analogy between the way chronologically pre-messianic believers were saved and those today who are “informationally” pre-messianic. Recently, and influenced by both Vatican II and Karl Rahner, Pinnock has developed this argument further by arguing that implicit faith, as evidenced in a Christ-like attitude, are signs of the Spirit’s saving grace in a person’s life. The main areas of contention surrounding this position revolve around the nature of saving faith, the purpose and sufficiency of general revelation and the means of saving grace. While this is the most sophisticated argument concerning the unevangelised, it is by far the most controversial as it appears to call for a redefinition of the *solus Christus*.

To be fair, all the above arguments have their strengths and weaknesses and are becoming more and more nuanced as evangelicals realise the importance of the issue. What I have tried to demonstrate in this article is that if universal atonement is true then universal accessibility is true. If universal accessibility is true then one is “forced” to propound some kind of theory which includes the possibility of salvation for the unevangelised. However no one argument is wholly convincing and the retreat into agnosticism over the unevangelised remains the most popular option for many evangelicals. Yet as the acuteness of the question grows, this retreat seems more and more untenable emotionally and theologically. There appears to be a troubling disparity between the enormity of the question and the inadequacy of the responses given. One can begin to see why Hick regards all such theories as “epicycles” tagged onto the old “Ptolemaic worldview”.²⁷ Without a lot more work from evangelicals, the question of the unevangelised will continue to be a painful thorn in the side, and a major tension in their theology.

Another Option?

Rather than live with the tension caused by both axioms or take the more drastic step of denying the *solus Christus*, I would like to suggest that in terms of internal coherence, there is a third theological community within evangelical theology, the Reformed/Calvinist community, which has the theological framework to deal more ably with the “soteriological problem of evil” by rejecting the universality axiom and so deny its existence as a problem. This is not to say that this community does not believe that the unevangelised theoretically can be saved (although many do not), but rather they are under no necessary logical pressure to develop any theory concerning their salvation. Here I can only outline one type of Reformed theology, realising that there are many variations on the one theme.

The notion of God’s sovereignty is the hub of Reformed theology. As Packer writes, Calvinism is a unified philosophy of history which sees the whole diversity of processes and events that takes place in God’s world as no more, and no less, than the outworking of His great preordained plan for His creatures and His Church.²⁸

The Reformed doctrines of predestination and unconditional election are all generated by this view of sovereignty. Concerning the relationship between the three presuppositions of the universality axiom, Reformed theologians deny that there is universal accessibility to salvation, and offer a host of theological reasons why God’s justice is not impugned by the particularisation of accessibility. Our interest lies in how this limited offer relates to the scope of the atonement and the divine salvific will. The relationship is a very strong one as the majority of Calvinists deny that Christ died for all (the doctrine of particular redemption) and that God desires all to be saved. With their views of sovereignty, had God desired all people to be saved, all would be saved, because God’s will can never be frustrated. Similarly because Christ’s death accomplishes salvation and does not merely make salvation possible, had Christ died for all, then all would be saved. Here there is seamless unity in the work of the three Persons of the Trinity: the Father wills the salvation of some, the Son accomplishes the salvation of some and the Spirit applies this salvation to some.

How do the unevangelised fit into this framework? Donald Lake claims that the doctrine of unconditional election solves the problem for Calvinists in the following way:

The doctrine of election has served to solve the problem of those who have died without ever hearing the gospel: if they were part of the elect, they were saved without hearing; if not numbered among the elect, their not hearing was of no consequence.²⁹

I believe that such an argument unnaturally divides the ends and the means to that ends, that is the decree of election and the implementation of that decree. It seems more natural to see election together with the scope of Christ’s death and with providence. This appears to be Calvin’s own view on the unevangelised as explained by G. Michael Thomas:

God’s providential deprivation of such people is to be viewed as an expression of the predestination which has destined salvation for only a part of the human race: “The covenant of life is not preached equally among all men ... This variety ... also serves the decision of God’s eternal election.” It must be a matter of causal determination of individual destinies revealed by effects (the conversion of some and the nonconversion

of others. Scope is thereby given for understanding God's intention concerning the scope of redemption in terms of its effects in time. ... Calvin was capable of sometimes measuring the scope of Christ's death by observable effects.³⁰

If God wishes to save the unevangelised (and in this theological framework it is now difficult to know what the term "unevangelised" means), he will provide the means for them to be saved. As the ordinary means was traditionally thought to be *fides ex auditu* through the human messenger, then those who never hear must lie outside God's salvific will and Christ's atoning provisions. At this point I want to note two caveats. Firstly there are exceptions to this rule and some Reformed theologians like Zanchius, Baxter, Zwingli, Shedd and Helm want to speak of *extraordinary* means of grace as well as *ordinary* means. Certainly this is believed to be the case of children who die in infancy (Westminster Confession of Faith 10/3). Secondly, it should be noted that a Reformed particularism does not necessarily lead to a *Heilspessimismus* (a parsimony in salvation). For example B.B Warfield and Charles Hodge, whilst still holding to a strongly particularist position, maintained that in terms of the numbers of redeemed, the lost would be insignificant to the redeemed. How is this possible considering that billions of people have never come into contact with the gospel of Christ? The answer is fashioned as part of their eschatological beliefs. As Sanders comments, "Warfield and Hodge appeal to the Postmillennial doctrine that a tremendous surge of evangelism and conversion will occur in the future. Since the future population of the earth will be greater than the total population throughout history, more will be saved than lost."³¹ However these caveats do not invalidate my central point: that in Reformed soteriology, universal accessibility is not theologically necessary and theologians are under no obligation to develop a soteriology which includes those who have never heard the gospel.

For Reformed theology this particularisation of the universal would appear to turn the problem of the unevangelised into a pseudo-problem, thus leading to the denial of the soteriological problem of evil. For the non-Reformed evangelical the problem remains all too real as it is inextricably linked to and generated by the presupposition of unlimited atonement, a defining doctrine for evangelical Arminianism. In terms of internal coherence, the Reformed position appears more satisfactory. Whether it is biblically or emotionally satisfactory is, of course, another issue altogether, and critics from both within evangelicalism and from without are not slow to point to what they see as the monstrous implications of such a position for the nature, justice, and love of God. Of course such a debate is only but a microcosm (albeit a very apposite one) of long running theological disputes. To try to demonstrate that the Reformed position has not veered off course and been devoured by the Scylla, and that it is a faithful reflection of the biblical data, lies outside the scope of this particular paper.

The Universality of Mission

Finally, I wish to conclude by re-affirming a defining tenet of evangelicalism: the necessity of evangelism and missions. In this paper, I have purposefully not dealt with the missiological implications of the question of the unevangelised.³² All I want to say is that from a Reformed evangelical perspective, a perspective that I have been advocating in this paper, rather than succumbing to a predestinarian paralysis which is sometimes levelled at the Reformed position,³³ one must take with utmost seriousness

the belief that God has not only ordained the way of salvation through the Gospel, but also the means for this Gospel to be proclaimed: through the human messenger. It is at this point that one must embrace a belief in universality, a universal vision for disseminating the Word of God. As the Canons of Dordt state, “The command to repent and believe ought to be declared and published to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the Gospel”(II/5). Commenting on Rom. 10:14,15³⁴ John Piper writes the following:

Charles Hodge is right that “the solemn question, implied in the language of the apostle, “HOW CAN THEY BELIEVE WITHOUT A PREACHER? should sound day and night in the ears of the churches.” It is our unspeakable privilege to be caught up with him in the greatest movement in history – the ingathering of the elect “from all tribes and tongues and peoples and nations”.³⁵

As an evangelical, I fervently believe that God commands all evangelicals to take this *evangel* into all the world, just as the king says to his servants in Jesus’ parable of the wedding banquet, “Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.”(Matt. 11:9). That it has pleased God to bring His salvation through the instrumentality of the preached Word, is at the same time an “unspeakable privilege”, and an awesome responsibility, a responsibility which is truly universal in its scope.

References

- ¹ The contents of this paper are a reworking of a small section of my doctoral thesis at the University of Bristol under Dr Gavin D’Costa, and entitled: *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised: An Analysis of “Inclusivism” in Recent Evangelical Theology*. This paper has been presented in various forms to the University of Bristol Post-graduate Conference, and the Whitefield Institute Grantees Seminar.
- ² Porphyry, quoted by Augustine in a letter to Deogratias, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Series 1, vol.1, ed. Philip Schaff (1866; reprint, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 416, quoted from John Sanders, *No Other Name* (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 11.
- ³ In Greek mythology, an infamous stretch of the Sicilian Sea contained two dangers which terrified sailors: the Scylla was a sea-monster, and Charybdis a whirlpool. Hercules had to steer a course through these straits when he brought back Geryon’s herd.
- ⁴ John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Oxford, 1993), p. 122f.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-133.
- ⁶ For a brief description and critique summary of Hick’s position and its relation to other positions in the theology of religions see Gavin D’Costa, *Theology of Religions* in ed. David F Ford, *The Modern Theologians* Vol. II (Oxford, 1993), pp. 274-291.
- ⁷ For the purpose of this paper I wish to adopt broad definition of evangelicalism, realising that for many such a definition may be too inclusive.
- ⁸ See below for a brief description of this position.
- ⁹ By Arminian, I am referring broadly to a range of positions which stress an indeterministic view of human freedom especially in the area of soteriology. Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutch theologian who disagreed with Calvin’s doctrines on predestination and election.
- ¹⁰ John Sanders, *No Other Name: Can Only Christians Be Saved?* (London, 1994), p. 26.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Pinnock (b. 1937) is currently professor of theology at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Biographical and bibliographical details can be found in Robert M Price, “Clark H. Pinnock: Conservative and Contemporary” in *Evangelical Quarterly* 88.2 (1988), pp. 157-183; Robert V. Rakestraw, “Clark H. Pinnock: A Theological Odyssey” in *Christian*

- Scholars Review* 3 (1990), pp. 252-270; Ray CW Roennfeldt, *Clark H Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position* (Michigan, 1993), pp. 71-79; Daniel Strange, "Clark H Pinnock: The Evolution of an Evangelical Maverick" in *Evangelical Quarterly* (forthcoming).
- 13 See ed. Clark H. Pinnock, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Carlisle, 1994).
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 103f.
- 15 Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Christ in a World Of Religions* (Grand Rapids, 1992, p. 157.
- 16 Don Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester, 1996), p. 289.
- 17 Ronald Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Saviour?* (Grand Rapids, 1994), pp. 130-135.
- 18 Carson, op. cit., p. 289 n. 53.
- 19 Pinnock, *Wideness*, op. cit., p. 157.
- 20 Stuart Hackett, *The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim* (Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 244.
- 21 Terry L. Miethe, "The Universal Power of the Atonement" in ed. Clark H. Pinnock, *The Grace of God and Will of Man* (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 75.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Pinnock, *Wideness*, op. cit., p. 157.
- 24 The best survey is by John Sanders. See his *No Other Name*, op. cit; & ed. Sanders *What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelised* (IVP, Downers Grove, 1995).
- 25 See William Lane Craig, "'No Other Name': A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ" in *Faith and Philosophy* Vol.6 No.2 April 1989: 172-188; p. 184.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 185
- 27 See Hick, op. cit., pp. 124-130.
- 28 JI Packer, "Introductory Essay" to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1959), p. 5.
- 29 Donald M. Lake, "He Died for All: The Universal Dimensions of the Atonement" in Clark H Pinnock (ed.), *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis, 1975), pp. 31-51, p. 43.
- 30 G Michael Thomas, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus* (Carlisle, 1997), p. 15f.
- 31 Sanders, "Is Belief in Christ Necessary for Salvation?" in *Evangelical Quarterly* 60: 1988, pp. 241-259. See B. B. Warfield, "Are They Few That Be Saved?" in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 334-350; and Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 3 Vols. (Grand Rapids, 1940), 3:879-80. Commenting on Warfield. Helm notes, "In Warfield's view God's saving purposes widen through history, rather as a ripple in a pool. By a process of development, first Israel and then the Christian Church, which is the 'internationalised' Israel of the New Testament era, enlarge the circle of God's saving grace until it embraces the vast majority and women, 'the world'. The lost are 'the prunings' as Warfield put it." Paul Helm, "Are They Few That Be Saved" in ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 267. Warfield himself writes, "It must be borne well in mind that particularism and parsimony in salvation are not equivalent conceptions; and it is a mere caricature of Calvinistic particularism to represent it as finding its centre in the proclamation that there are few to be saved." BB Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (1915), p. 97. quoted in Helm, op. cit., p. 268.
- 32 This area has been tackled ably elsewhere. See John K. Barrett, "Does Inclusivist Theology Undermine Evangelism?" in *Evangelical Quarterly* 70/3 (1998), pp. 219-245; John Piper, *Let*

the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions (Leicester, 1994), pp. 115-167; Nash, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-169; William V Crockett & James G Sigountos, "Are the 'Heathens' Really Lost?" in eds. William V Crockett & James G Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own?* (Grand Rapids, 1991), pp. 257-265; John D Ellenberger, "Is Hell a Proper Motivation for Missions?" in eds. William V Crockett & James G Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own?* (Grand Rapids, 1991), pp. 217-227; Charles VanEngen, "The Uniqueness of Christ in Mission Theology" in eds. Edward Rommen & Harold Netland, *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions* (Pasadena, 1995), pp. 183-217.

- ³³ For example John Sanders writing on the importance of missions for restrictivists states "An example of restrictivists who do not subscribe to this argument would be those in the Reformed tradition, who have traditionally not evidenced much interest in missions despite their belief that the unevangelised are damned to hell." *No Other Name*, *op. cit.*, p. 48, n. 24. For a refutation of Sanders claim, see William Travis, "William Carey: The Modern Missions Movement and the Sovereignty of God" in eds. Thomas R Schreiner & Bruce A Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will. Volume 2: Historical and Theological Perspectives on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1995), pp. 323-336. For a strong Calvinist position which stresses the importance of mission over and against hyper-Calvinists who do not, see David J. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Reformed Free Publishing Association), pp. 67-127.

- ³⁴ "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

- ³⁵ Piper, *op. cit.*, pp. 158. Piper is quoting from Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York, 1893), p. 553.

Suggested Reading:

Daniel Strange is currently doing doctoral research at Trinity College, Bristol.

Book Brief

WEC International is producing, in partnership with OM Publishing, a series of booklets profiling different areas of mission around the world where Christians are a minority. Written by Glenn Myers, the first three in the series cover the Arab world, the Malay-speaking Muslim world and the peoples of the West African Sahel region. Within 63 pages you get a concise and up to date overview of the mission situation among those peoples along with some points for prayer. These booklets are a step on from *Operation World* without being full-length books. Busy pastors and others need such helpful and easily digestible material to keep their missionary vision fresh on both the local and global levels. **KB.**

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John Nicholls

Babylon or Rome?

City life can be ugly:

There is no point to life, no point to families, no point to neighbours, no point to going to school. Life is traipsing in the rain to the Netto supermarket where everything is cut-price and traipsing home, hoping nobody notices your shameful Netto bags. Life is queuing for giros, propping up a wall on the corner of a street, sleeping till the afternoon and watching telly till dawn. Life is nothing. It is being pregnant for no reason, being jobless with no hope. It means nothing. It has fallen apart.

And it is there – in the hollow inside them, in their indifference to everyone, including themselves, in their total acceptance of pain, in their contempt for the law and for all the rest of their surroundings, in their “damaged, deprived, depraved and delinquent” way of being – it is there that the children of Hyde Park (in Leeds) and the children of the Forest in Nottingham show their common origin, in these thousands of battered council estates which together form the heartland of the undiscovered country of the poor.¹

How can the Evangelical Church reach such people?

In the city of Babylon, God’s people sat and wept. Confinement to that heathen city was seen as the ultimate covenant judgement. Their presence in the city represented a disaster in the life of the church.

In the city of Rome, the Apostle Paul sat and preached. Confinement to that heathen city was seen by Luke as the symptomatic fulfilment of the risen Lord’s promise that the Gospel would be proclaimed in the ends of the earth. Paul’s presence in the city was a portent of Gospel triumph.

Christians have generally been inclined to identify more with the tearful songwriter in Babylon, than with the writer of Acts. Cities are unpleasant necessities in a developed society. They may have to do business there, but they’d rather not live there. The inner city as Babylon, not Rome. Ever since William Wilberforce and his friends retreated to (then) semi-rural Clapham, the Evangelical Church has been predominantly suburban, in location and mentality.

Predominantly, but not entirely. There have been notable exceptions – one of the earliest and most significant being the ministry of Thomas Chalmers in Glasgow and Edinburgh, between 1816 and 1847.

Thomas Chalmers in Glasgow

Chalmers came to the Tron Church, Glasgow, in 1815 from Kilmany, a small village congregation in northern Fife. Behind the move lay his evangelical conversion in 1811. Before that, his was the agenda of a leisured country minister with an eye on the Chair of Mathematics at St Andrew’s University, but now he had different priorities and larger ambitions. Glasgow was then in the first flush of its expansion into a major industrial city. Though still small by today’s standards, it had trebled in size in thirty-

five years. In 1815 it was hit hard by the economic collapse that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Revolution was in the air, troops were on the streets, and to compound the sense of doom, a typhus epidemic struck the city in 1817. Only about 7% of the population attended church, and the old parish system of the Church of Scotland, unchanged in 200 years, was simply swamped by the growing population.

Although he was a great preacher who drew vast crowds to all his services (a series of sermons on Christianity and Astronomy sold 40,000 copies when it was published), Chalmers realised that the vast bulk of the inner-city, impoverished population was unreachable. So he set out to visit every house in his parish, – itself a revolutionary action for a city minister and not lacking in personal danger. He aimed to assess the situation and formulate a ministry plan. The experience was not encouraging:

I feel as if it were a mighty and impenetrable mass, truly beyond the strength of one individual arm, and before which, after a few furtive and unavailing exertions, nothing remains but to sit down in the idleness of despair. It is a number, it is a magnitude, it is an endless succession of houses and families, it is an extent of field which puts at a distance all hope of a deep or universal impression – it is an utter impossibility, even with the most active process of visitation, to meet the ever pressing demands of the sick, and the desolate, and the dying.²

But Chalmers did not “sit down in the idleness of despair.” Instead, he devised a great “experiment”. He identified two major barriers to an effective evangelical ministry in such a city parish. One was the system whereby the Church of Scotland, and especially the parish minister, was directly involved in the distribution of relief funds to the poor – funds gathered from a rated tax on the property owners of the city. This involved the minister in much committee work and also inevitably complicated his spiritual dealings with his parishioners. The second major problem was the sheer size of the parish – a size that made direct contact between the minister and the whole population virtually impossible. Chalmers removed these barriers, firstly by creating a new, smaller parish, St John’s, out of the old parishes. Secondly, he persuaded the civic authorities that, within this new area, a totally different system of poor relief would operate – one entirely funded from the collections in the new St John’s Church. The heart of the “experiment”, though, was much more than these organisational adjustments. Chalmers divided St John’s parish into 25 sub-divisions (or, districts) each containing about four hundred people. To each of these districts he appointed two visitors – one elder and one deacon. Their job was to go regularly and frequently to each home in their district, to get to know every person who lived there. The elder was to promote the spiritual welfare of the people, beginning a Sabbath School, and then providing a day school (not free, but very cheap). There was also appropriate instruction for the adults, leading to church attendance. The deacon’s focus was on physical and social needs. But handing out money was a last resort. He was first to encourage and help the impoverished to find work; failing that, to encourage relatives to help out. If there were no family, he would try to persuade neighbours to give support. Only if these three steps all failed, would he resort to Church funds. Altogether, the visitation by elder and deacon was intended both to convert individuals and to transform families and communities.

By 1823 Chalmers was satisfied that the experiment had been a great success, with St John’s congregation growing, and the church collections being amply sufficient to cover the grants given to the parish poor. He wrote and spoke voluminously about it, even addressing a committee of Parliament in London. Not everyone was convinced.

Some said that Chalmers' popularity as a preacher guaranteed a supply of elders and other volunteers which an ordinary minister could never attract. Others questioned the financial aspects of the welfare scheme. But many were persuaded to try something similar. The Church of Scotland, increasingly dominated by a resurgent Evangelical party, launched a Church Extension campaign in 1834, to plant new churches within the old, over-large urban (and, indeed, rural) parishes. Their slogan was "*A church and a minister within easy reach of every door*" – neatly implying that ministers ought to go to doors, as well as people to church! By 1840, 216 new churches had been erected – one of them St Peter's Church in inner-city Dundee, to which a young man named Robert Murray M'Cheyne was ordained.

Chalmers in Edinburgh

Ironically, Chalmers' Church Extension Scheme became a major cause of the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, when a large minority of ministers and people left to form the Free Church of Scotland. Ironically, because although Chalmers is remembered as the inspirational leader of the Free Church, in many ways he was a most unlikely and unwilling seceder. The Church's mission to the urban masses remained his great obsession, even as he became the first Principal of New College (the Free Church's Theological Seminary). In 1844 Chalmers startled friend and foe alike by resigning from most of the committees of the new denomination in order to conduct a second great experiment. For a laboratory, he chose one of the most notorious slums in Edinburgh – the West Port. It contained about 2,000 people, with a large proportion of paupers, beggars, thieves and prostitutes. Church attendance was minimal. No longer involved with a State church, Chalmers did not now face the complications of the Poor Law which so dominated discussion of the St John's experiment. But the heart of the experiment was the same as in Glasgow. The area was divided up into small districts – this time with about 100 people in each. Chalmers recruited a team of volunteers to carry out regular visitation of an assigned district, under the oversight of a missionary. Chalmers himself met regularly with the visitors, to encourage and advise them. Almost immediately, in November 1844, a school was set up (charging 2 pence a week), followed by a weekly service. Welfare assistance included the provision of a laundry. By February 1846, when a church building was opened, the new congregation had one hundred communicants from the West Port area. The missionary was ordained as the first minister.

Chalmers believed that this second experiment had demonstrated that his basic approach of "district visitation" was an effective way of evangelising the massed population of the cities. The method would work both for a state-recognised "parish church" and for a church such as the Free Church which was totally without any state connection.

Chalmers' lessons were applied by a whole regiment of Scottish ministers, both before and after the Disruption. They appointed missionaries and visitors to their parishes, then created new "parishes" within the original one as evangelism led to increased congregations and the "hiving off" of daughter churches were formed. In some cases there were several "generations" of new churches, as the earlier "daughters" were themselves sub-divided.

But it was not only within the (Free) Church of Scotland that Chalmers found followers. In many British cities, the 1820s witnessed the creation of "District Visiting Associations" as Evangelical Christians seized on the essential element in the St John's

experiment. In England, the Church Pastoral Aid Society was initially established to provide extra (lay) manpower to assist the clergy in the visitation of their parishes. And, beginning in Glasgow in 1826, David Nasmith began founding “City Missions” that were manifestly based on Chalmers’ approach.

Some writers on the history of (secular) social work acknowledge Thomas Chalmers and his district visitors as pioneers of the “case study” method. But among his successors in the ministry of his own and other Evangelical churches, the lessons of Chalmers’ ministry have been largely forgotten or quietly shelved. Chalmers work and numerous writings therefore constitute an abiding challenge and an untapped resource for today’s church as it struggles with the “mighty and impenetrable mass” of our 21st-century inner-cities and the Council Estates epitomised by our opening quotation.

The District Visiting Model

[The aim of this section is to give more detail on the method Chalmers employed, and the reasons he gave for advocating it. I have used many of Chalmers own writings, although his grandiloquent prose makes crisp quotation difficult. His was definitely not a sound-bite generation!]

In his experiments, Chalmers had a clear aim– to show the superiority of his “District Visitation” (DV) model for the urban church over the form of church which had come to predominate in Scotland’s cities. The latter involved a church drawing its congregation from across the city, with people choosing a church where they wished to worship, then travelling to its services. This may be termed the “Gathered Church” (GC) model – though, as Chalmers pointed out, it could equally be called the “Scattered Church” model, for its members were scattered across large areas. It made little difference whether the churches were “parish churches” of the Church of Scotland, or dissenting churches of the various breakaway denominations. Then (as today) almost all churches followed the GC model, whatever their theoretical attitude to the parish system.

Following the St John’s experiment, it was a major aim of Chalmers’ writings to convince his fellow church leaders in all denominations that the DV model could, under the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, effectively evangelise large cities, whereas the GC model *would not* and *could not*.

Most Christian societies (churches, etc) try to cover a large area with their work. It is far better to concentrate on particular districts, assigning a particular worker to a definite locality, and restricting their labours to that area.³

The Details of District Visitation

What was required was a small enough area (or parish), sub-divided into manageable districts where one or two visitors could regularly and frequently visit each home. It was crucial that the same visitors should go to the same homes, building up a relationship of trust. The minister himself would also visit the homes of unbelievers as well as church-goers, but would mainly deal with special needs and crisis situations. The ordinary visitation would be by volunteers, whether office-bearers or suitable Church members. They were definitely *not* “door-step preachers”. They were not to “ram the gospel down people’s throats” (to use the modern terminology). Instead, they were to be friendly and practically helpful, using “*the simple elements of attention, and advice, and civility, and good-will*”,⁴ and waiting patiently for relationships to develop. They had no “official” authority – only the moral authority of their interest in and love for the people.⁵

Depending on local conditions, they would organise Sunday Schools and day schools for the children, and such facilities as libraries, savings banks and laundries for the adults. There would also be a pressing invitation to church services, with the aim of establishing a strong community-congregation within the parish. “Outsider Christians” (living beyond the designated area) would be welcome initially to help get things moving – but the whole focus was on the needs of the locality. The church’s programme and planning would be controlled by the needs of the local population, not the preferences of the travelling believers.

The Advantages of District Visitation

Chalmers defended the DV system against accusations that it was somehow “unspiritual” to plan and organise such a “mechanism” for evangelisation:

Some Christians “look, and they rightly look, to the Spirit of God, as the agent of every prosperous revolution in the Christianity of our land. ... (It) were folly to think, that, by the mere erection of a material framework, the cause of Christianity can be advanced, by a single hairbreadth”, unless the Holy Spirit works. But they then draw the totally erroneous conclusion that there is no point in doing anything at all – “they would sit in a sort of mystic and expectant quietism, till there come down upon us from the skies the visitation of that inspiring energy which is to provide for all and do all.”⁶

DV has many advantages. For one, it saves much time which GC ministers spend travelling to and fro across the city, visiting their scattered congregations. It also has an important “psychological” impact on the minister and the visitor, in that it gives a clear sense of responsibility and a realistic sense of progress and achievement. The DV minister or visitor knows that a precise group of unbelievers is “his”, or “hers”. And, even after their first few visits, they can see that they are making progress – there are only another 90 or so families to go!

The worker will feel a more powerful urge to go forth among (his district’s) families ... His task will be rendered finite and manageable, instead of paralytically indefinite.⁷

In contrast, the minister of a GC simply cannot hope to visit all the homes of non-church-goers in the city, and so visits none except those of his congregation:

nothing so reduces one to inaction as the despairing sense of a task so oppressive and operose (laborious) as to have become impracticable. When there exists an invincible barrier in the way of doing all that we would, it often discourages even from doing all that we can.⁸

Far more fundamental, however, is the reality that the DV church is essentially and deliberately evangelistic. It is, by its very nature, a “going” church, reaching out “aggressively” to the non-Christian population around it, including those who have no interest at all:

In moving through the lanes and the recesses of a long-neglected population, will it be found of the fearful multitude that not only is their acquaintance with the gospel extinguished, but their wish to obtain an acquaintance with it is also extinguished. In these circumstances, we know of no expedient by which this woeful degeneracy can be arrested..., but by an actual search and entry upon the territory of wickedness. A mere signal of invitation is not enough... Instead of holding forth its signals to those who are awake, (the District Church) knocks at the doors of those who are most profoundly asleep.⁹

In contrast, the GC always tends to relegate aggressive evangelism to (at best) a secondary priority. Any influx is of people so spiritually awakened as to be at least seeking for the truth. Such churches, as a matter of observation, simply do not reach the working-classes.

Another advantage of the DV system is that its outreach is interactive and cumulative:

... (The visitor's work becomes) tenfold more effective, by the concentration of these various good offices on the contiguous households of one and the same locality. There is in it somewhat like the strength of an epidemic influence, which spreads by infection, and more amalgamates the people both with him and with each other ... Let him ever and anon be making presentation of himself to the same eyes, and he will be the talk of the people on the same stair – the object of a common reference and recognition among the inmates of his own locality. ... (The) same amount of attentions ... done to fifty families far apart from each other does not tell with half the influence they have when discharged upon them in a state of juxtaposition. ... So he may (quickly) become the familiar of all, and even the friend ... or a few.¹⁰

As that quote suggests, the DV also has the advantage of creating (or restoring) a local community, for it “*amalgamates the people with him and with each other*”.

The GC deals with some individuals. Indeed, anticipating the terminology of the Church Growth movement, Chalmers says that the GC minister may “*bring around him such families as are of a homogeneous quality with himself*”,¹¹ but it will not be a congregation which reflects the social balance of the local community. The DV minister, however,

may acquire over the hearts of his hearers the likeliest influence of any that is ever to arise in an aggregate of human beings, for building up ... **a community of virtuous and well-ordered families.**¹²

Chalmers was a preacher of rare ability. But he had no illusions that the great mass of a city population could be evangelised by church-based preaching, however powerful:

The glare of publicity and an eloquent preacher may draw a crowd, but it will be from those pre-disposed to Christianity... (It) will be a mixed, not a local congregation... There is no portion of what may be called the outfield population, that will be sensibly reclaimed by it. And little do they know of this department of human experience, who think that it is on the mere strength of attractive preaching, that this is to be done.¹³

(Similarly, another great nineteenth-century city preacher, CH Spurgeon, when encouraging support for the London City Mission, said, “I love the City Mission because it takes the glorious Gospel direct to the people. Thank God for all faithful preaching in churches and chapels, *but the multitudes are outside*. Oh, support this Mission because it takes Jesus and His salvation to the perishing.”)

Chalmers had another criticism of the GC system:

There is not a city population that will not rapidly degenerate under the regimen of well-served pulpits and ill-served parishes [i.e where there is no systematic visitation] The word that is sounded forth may carry far and wide, as by the four winds of heaven, and even descending here and there upon individual consciences, may cause that the town shall not be spread, but (if I may use the expression) be **spotted** with Christianity; ... yet the town after all is a moral wilderness.¹⁴

Those purer ingredients of the mass ... may travel ... a considerable distance [to attend a GC]. But the bulky sediment remains untouched and stationary ... and below the goodly superficies of a great apparent stir and activity, may an unseen structure of baser materials deepen and accumulate underneath, so as to furnish a solution of the fact, that with an increase of Christian exertion amongst us, there should, at one and the same time, be an increase of heathenism.¹⁵

There have generally been big churches with famous preachers in our cities. They have impressed visitors, and built up generations of Christians. But at the very same time, the level of Christian commitment and influence in those cities has been decreasing. They have not changed the city:

The Implications of District Visitation

Amongst many, three may be specified:

1. The DV approach demands the mobilisation of ordinary Christians

it is a great mistake, to think that any other peculiar power is necessary for such an operation, than peculiar pains-taking. It is not with rare and extraordinary talent conferred upon a few, but with habits and principles that may be cultivated by all, that are linked our best securities for the reformation of the world.¹⁶

2. The DV approach demands wise thought and action in welfare/charity.

Because it brings Christian visitors and ministers into direct contact with the full cross-section of inner-city society, the DV system inevitably confronts them with the harsh and complex realities of financial, social and moral impoverishment – realities not met within the gathered congregation. As mentioned above, the subject of Poor Law reform tended to overshadow the St John's experiment, and Chalmers was passionately interested in it. Whatever the value of his particular remedies, he is pressingly relevant in his call for Christians (and society) to think deeply about the nature of welfare:

If the mere money-giver is mortified to find that, with all his liberalities, he has utterly failed to spread over (his district) the face of a larger sufficiency or contentment than before, (and that there is no) sensible abatement of the raggedness and filth, ... then let him be made to understand that, for the purpose of doing .. substantial or permanent good, something more is necessary than to **compassionate** the poor, he must also **consider** them; and let him learn at length that there is indeed a more excellent way of charity, than that to which his own headlong sensibilities have impelled him.¹⁷

3. The DV method demands co-ordinated action by Evangelical churches

Chalmers recognised that the "heathenised" city population was so vast as to be beyond the resources of one congregation, or even one denomination, to tackle. Therefore he genuinely hoped that his experiments would galvanise not just his own, but every Evangelical, denomination.

In December 1844 he addressed a public meeting in Edinburgh, describing the West Port experiment:

Some people say, Oh! This is all a scheme of the Free Church. Now I say this is a mistake. Who cares about the Free Church compared with the Christian good of the people of Scotland? Who cares for any Church, but as an instrument of Christian good? For, be assured that the moral and religious well-being of the population is infinitely of higher importance than the advancement of any sect. For myself, I should rejoice if the ministers

of every evangelical denomination would go and do likewise. There would be a far greater likelihood of our coming to a closer union, if we were engaged together in such missionary work, than by meeting in Committees, and drawing up articles which give rise to interminable controversies.¹⁸

This concern for a “Universal Home Mission” was also expressed in connection with the new Evangelical Alliance. In 1846 he published a pamphlet which advocated “*each denomination through all its local congregations co-operating for the evangelisation of their respective neighbourhoods.*” And, facing the anticipated objection that this would encourage the spread of what some would regard as “error and false theology”, he adds,

Where is the man, and what is his denomination, who can hold up his face to the declaration, that he would rather have the millions of our hitherto neglected population not to be Christians at all, than to be Christians minus his (own) peculiarity?¹⁹

Chalmers may not state it specifically, but he certainly implies that the GC approach tends to produce competing congregations which magnify their distinctives in order to set themselves apart from other churches, rather than magnify the great centralities of Christ in order to set them before the local population. The call for Evangelical co-operation continued after Chalmers’ death. In 1857, an Edinburgh pastor wrote: “*Let the ministers or representatives of the different denominations within the city – Episcopalian, Baptist and Independent, United Presbyterian, Free Church and Established Church – meet, and form themselves into a real working Evangelical alliance. ... Let them map out the dark and destitute districts of the city – assigning a district to each congregation. Let every congregation then go to work upon their own part of the field ...*”²⁰ He then warns, “*I have no hope of accomplishing this object if the churches are to be laced up by their old rules, and people are to leave everything to ministers and missionaries.*”²¹

4. The DV method demands patience, humility and self-restraint

Chalmers claimed, “*It is a sure movement, though a slow one.*”²²

[The district system] appears totally impracticable to those who think nothing worthy of an attempt, unless it can be done in one bound – unless it at once fills the eye with the glare of magnificence, and unless it can be invested, at the very outset, with all the pomp and patronage of extensive committeeism... We are sure that (the district) operation will not stop for lack of labourers – though it may be arrested, for a while, through the eye of labourers being seduced by the meteoric glare of other enterprises, alike impotent and imposing. So long as each man of mediocrity conceives himself to be a man of might, and sighs after some scene of enlargement that may be adequate to his fancied powers, little or nothing will be done; but so soon as the sweeping and sublime imagination is dissipated, and he can stoop to the drudgery of his small allotment in the field of usefulness, then will it be found that it is by the summation of many humble mediocrities that a mighty result is at length arrived at.²³

A Relevant Challenge for Today?

Thomas Chalmers was not infallible, either as a church leader or as a theorist. His views were influenced by the currents of an age very different to ours. We face problems of a scale and complexity that he knew nothing of. Some would say that the entire DV approach to urban evangelism is outmoded. Lyle Schaller, expert analyst of church growth, states that “*Today friendship circles or social networks are determined primarily*

by one's vocation, employment, hobby, or membership in a voluntary association rather than by the place of residence. One result is that the neighborhood church no longer finds it easy to attract nearby residents."²⁴ That may be true. But is it also a symptom of the breakdown of community in our individualistic society, and therefore something that the Gospel should and can overturn?

Chalmers must certainly be questioned. But he remains one of the few systematic experimenters in inner-city ministry. Question him, but don't ignore him. At the very least, he provides a good starting-point for re-consideration of our whole approach to evangelisation and church life in the light of the Great Commission and in the shadow of the ugly city.

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John Nicholls has pastored churches in Scotland and London and currently works with the London City Mission

The Local Church and World Mission

Peter Milsom

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible declares God's gracious purposes for the world. God's eternal purpose in Christ embraces the nations. As Adam and Eve were leaving Eden, in total despair, God graciously gave them the first promise of the coming Messiah. One day the woman's seed would crush the serpent's head. Eve was the "mother of all living" and from her would come the rainbow nations of the world. From these nations God would call his international church, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

God's eternal purpose embraces the world

Throughout the Old Testament God unfolds his eternal purpose in Christ. In his covenant promise to Abraham he declares that his purpose is universal, "... all peoples on earth will be blessed though you." (Genesis 12:3)

The Psalmist speaks of God's purposes for the nations through his Messiah, "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." (Psalm 2:8)

The prophets declared the day when God's mercy will extend widely, "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.'" (Isaiah 2:2-3)

Jonah's ministry prefigured the Gospel Age as he was sent to Gentile, pagan Nineveh, the capital of the evil Assyrian empire. Jonah struggled with and rebelled against the fact that God's purposes were more extensive than the Jewish people. He didn't want a wicked and uncircumcised people to experience mercy, but, reluctantly, he acknowledged the Lord's character and ways. "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God who relents from sending calamity." (Jonah 4:2)

As we move into the New Testament, John the Baptist is given an insight into the significance for the world of the coming of Christ. The atoning work he had come to undertake had the world in view, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Jesus declares, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16)

Caiaphas, in his bitter hatred of Jesus, spoke prophetically that Jesus would die not only for the Jewish nation "but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one." (John 11:52) As Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem the Pharisees, witnessing the acclamation of the Jewish people from Jerusalem and the Diaspora, said, "Look how the whole world has gone after him." (John 12:19)

After his resurrection Christ commanded that the Gospel be taken to the nations. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20) The disciples were to “go” and to “proclaim” the Gospel to all the peoples of world. (Mark 16:15-16)

This great task could only be accomplished by God’s power so before his Ascension Jesus promised, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) As the first century was drawing to a close John was given a glimpse of the glorified church. “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9)

Real progress has been made

As the curtain rises on the 21st century we rejoice that much has already been accomplished. Millions of people around the world, from many nations, profess Jesus Christ as Lord. In the face of persecution, heresy and moral failure, the church has grown, as Jesus promised it would. The world’s great empires have come and gone, but the church of Jesus Christ has continued and grown. In recent years the fall of the Iron Curtain has led to the advance of the Gospel in many Eastern European countries. During the past 50 years, churches in China have grown amazingly in the face of bitter persecution.

In his book *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, Patrick Johnstone describes the growth of the church through history, and especially the advances made in many parts of the world during the turbulent 20th century. He also underlines the challenge facing us. Still 15-20% of the world population have yet to hear the Gospel, one billion men, women and children, especially amongst Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. Pioneer church planting is the priority amongst 3000 people groups in the world, and at least 1000 of these have no indigenous witness. Patrick writes, “No one need feel unemployed! Every one of us and every single congregation is vital to the final prosecution of the task Jesus gave us!”¹

Patrick Johnstone is more than merely a statistician. Successive editions of “Operation World” have stimulated prayer for many nations, previously ignored, and given us all valuable information about the task before us. Patrick believes passionately that, as Christians and churches around the world, we should take practical steps to bring the Gospel to the unreached peoples during our generation. Even if we are hesitant about making our timetables too specific, surely the urgency of the need and the unprecedented opportunities should stir us to action.

Local churches are central to God’s global purpose

One of the defining characteristics of evangelical churches is that we are people of the Word. The Bible is our primary standard and the foundation for our faith and action. In a recent article, a North American mission leader appealed to preachers and teachers to “teach the whole counsel of God”. This was not an appeal merely for orthodoxy, but that we recognise that “God’s Word is a missionary document.”²

One characteristic of many of the first century congregations was their commitment to the advance of the Gospel beyond their immediate situation. The apostles and early

Christians believed in the “both ... and” of mission (Acts 1:8 (KJV)). At one and the same time they were busy both in their own locality and also did everything possible to promote the Gospel cause more widely. Hearing news of Gospel blessing in Antioch the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas. (Acts 11:22) In obedience to the direction of the Holy Spirit the church in Antioch set apart their two most gifted leaders to a pioneer church planting ministry (Acts 13:1-3). Paul commended the church in Thessalonica because “The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere.” (1 Thessalonians 1:8)

Today secular pundits, seeing the desperate state of many churches in Britain, are pronouncing the demise of the Christian cause. We, too, are deeply concerned about the spiralling moral and spiritual decline. Yet around the world the church continues to grow and the Lord is clearly seen to be at work. It is vitally important that, as local churches, we have a global vision of the greatness of God’s purposes. We may live in small communities and belong to small fellowships, or live in remote parts of the world and see very little happening, but it is a tremendous encouragement to realise that we are part of the greatest enterprise in history. Significant interaction with the work of the Gospel around the world can be a tremendous stimulus to a local church in facing the demands of its own situation. Reading of what God has done and is doing in China in Tony Lambert’s book *China’s Christian Millions* encourages us to believe that the same can happen in our country too!³

Cultivating a global vision in the local church

How can local churches cultivate a global vision? Many churches struggle to develop a meaningful mission involvement. They faithfully support various missionaries and mission agencies, but often feel a lack of in-depth involvement. In some local churches the general level of missionary interest is not high. Nor, often, is the commitment to evangelism in all its various forms. Missionary meetings and conferences are not well attended, and consistent prayer for missionaries can be patchy. Pastors and missionary secretaries work hard to stimulate interest and prayer through regular missionary meetings, but it is very difficult to deepen missionary interest and to cultivate a sense of meaningful involvement.

Mission agencies can greatly help local churches by re-assessing the relationship they have with them. Mission agencies need to work more closely with local churches. Too often the agendas and programmes of agencies are established in isolation from churches. Missions seek candidates from local churches, and hope the churches will support them financially, but our relationships need to be significantly strengthened. The task of world mission is too important for us to allow inadequate relationships to get in the way! In fact it is only as we work together in an effective partnership that the task of world mission can be accomplished.

The early Christians spontaneously co-operated together in strategic areas and this contributed to the advance of the Gospel. Their co-operation is seen in:

The work of Gospel proclamation and church planting: during his great missionary journeys Paul drew on gifted men from many churches, including those which were newly established (Acts 15:40; 16:1-3; 20:4). Today we need to draw on gifted men from many churches for the great task of reaching the world with the Gospel.

A ministry of mutual care and encouragement: the apostles and others visited churches to encourage believers (Acts 8:14; 9:32; 15:41; 16:1-5). Churches around the world today need encouragement. Such a ministry does not imply either a continuing apostolate or the authority of one church over another.

The provision of leadership, ministry and pastoral oversight: the ministries of Barnabas at Antioch, Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete are examples of this (Acts 11:22; 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5). Developing church situations in many countries today would greatly benefit from such assistance. On a recent visit to Côte d'Ivoire a pastor made an urgent plea for help. In addition to his extensive family commitments, he is caring for 11 village congregations, with no means of transport. He is burdened about many other villages without a Gospel witness, and is committed to training men to share in the work. He needs help through experienced pastors visiting to assist him in the vital task of training indigenous evangelists and teachers.

Serving each other with gifts of love, both material and personal: the early churches sent financial gifts (Acts 11:29-30; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; Philippians 4:14-16), and even people, to help and encourage the Paul when he was in prison (Philippians 2:25). Practical help of this kind is greatly appreciated by churches in poorer countries today and some churches in the UK have already entered into significant partnerships with such churches.

Defining and defending the truth in the face of error: the Council of Jerusalem considered an important doctrinal issue and communicated the authoritative decision to all the churches (Acts 15:1-16:4). We are living in a global village where means of communication are very fast, especially with the growing influence of the Internet. Unbiblical teaching spreads like wild fire and church leaders need help in handling important doctrinal issues. The help is not all one way. It was encouraging to hear a report of church leaders in a tribal community in Irian Jaya handling a "new" teaching by taking the people back to the Bible, and to the things they had been taught by those who brought the Gospel to them. They seem to have identified the teaching as unbiblical more effectively than many in the UK and United States! It was the African bishops at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 who took a firm stand against an unbiblical "morality".

Our model for the relationship between local churches and mission agencies needs to reflect this dynamic New Testament model. Mission agencies and churches need to function in a growing partnership of trust, accountability, and co-operation. Churches send missionaries. This is God's normal *modus operandi*. Mission agencies can assist and work with churches in the practicalities of sending and in providing the skills needed to ensure an effective context for cross-cultural Gospel ministry.

Local churches need to identify and train gifted people

In each generation God's purpose is fulfilled as spiritually mature people are raised up. In the UK we have learned, to our cost, that doctrinal orthodoxy is not safeguarded mainly by establishing good confessions and by legal constitutions, but by a true apostolic succession of Bible believing people. Church leaders who no longer believe the Bible will soon find a way of circumventing and undermining the best of confessions and constitutions.

The New Testament Churches identified and set apart spiritually gifted men. Paul was always looking for suitable men to work with him. When he revisited Lystra the church leaders spoke well of a young man in their church and Paul took Timothy with him (Acts 16:1-3). As the time for his death drew near Paul urged Timothy, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Are we raising up a generation of men who have proven skills in evangelism, Bible teaching, discipling and church leadership. Men whose first commitment is to the cause of the Gospel in the world? Does our church leadership reflect a spectrum of ages incorporating both the wisdom of age and the energy of youth? This is a vital issue both for the well-being of our churches and for the cause of world mission.

The church, of 500 members, in which I grew up recognised the importance of training young people. When I was a youth leader I was given my first opportunity to preach God's Word in a Sunday service. This experience was significant in awakening in me a sense of call to the ministry and gave the church leaders the opportunity to assess my ability. When later I approached my minister to tell him that I felt the Lord was calling me to the ministry he told me that a number of people who had heard me speak at youth services had been anticipating this. In the same church, over a 5 year period, 2 other young men were given similar opportunities and also later entered the ministry. There is a real danger today that as evangelical churches we are not developing the incipient gifts of young preachers and missionaries through giving openings to minister God's Word in the church.

If this is so, it has serious implications for the future of the Gospel around the world. There is an urgent need for proven workers, both pastors and missionaries, and an obvious shortage of gifted and experienced people. One of the great needs in many countries is for Bible teaching. We need men who can teach the Word and who can, at the same time, train others to be Bible teachers. Such a ministry requires experience. Our churches need to be nurseries where Bible teachers are trained and sent out. Recently it has been encouraging to see a number of men with pastoral experience being called to cross-cultural missionary work. Their churches have keenly felt a sense of loss at their going, but surely this is the quality of person we need to be sending.

In 1990 a church leader in Uganda, wrote "The missionary comes to us, feeling that he or she would like to do evangelism and church planting in a different culture. But in some cases, they have never done evangelism and discipleship in their own neighbourhood and churches.... We need more proven leaders on the mission field."⁴

On my first visit to Spain, church leaders encouraged us to send more missionaries to their country, but also impressed on me the need for experienced people. They had observed over the years that the fine young Christians sent by various mission agencies had very little experience before going to Spain. The Spanish churches, many of whom are small and whose pastors work in secular employment to support their families, have needed to assess the gifts and train those who have come as missionaries to Spain.

In every sphere of life we look for people with ability and training. When I go to a doctor, I expect him to be fully trained in medicine and competent. I would be greatly alarmed if he was not! I expect the pilot of a plane to have been trained to a high level of skill before I entrust my life to him. In the great issue of people's eternal destiny we need people who are equipped by God and who have been trained to be effective

servants of the Lord. There is no better place for this training to take place than in the local church.

Cross-cultural missionary work is very demanding. It involves learning a new language and understanding the culture of the people amongst whom you live and work. Before you go you need to have been given basic training and experience for the work to which you are called. You need a good working knowledge of the Scriptures and an ability to teach from them. You need to have had significant Christian and church experience. You need to be an effective witness to Christ and to be able to disciple those who have come to faith. You need to have leadership potential and skills and to be capable of and committed to developing those same leadership skills in others. The basic nursery where these skills are learned is the local church.

In the New Testament the training of potential leaders was a priority. Our Lord is the model for such a ministry. He invested considerable time and energy in training the Twelve. “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:13-15). He spent time with them. They were able to observe him in action. They learned from his example and were inspired by him. His explicit intention was to prepare them to be sent out. He sent them out on evangelistic missions (Matthew 10:1-42). By the time the Holy Spirit came in Acts 2 these men had already gained valuable experience of Christian service and vital understanding of themselves through the time they had spent with the Lord.

Paul actively gathered a team of workers around him. He identified potential and then cultivated it by “apprenticing”. He took young Timothy with him and through the experience he gained with Paul he became a strategic church leader of outstanding spiritual character. Later Paul commended him very highly, “I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel” (Philippians 2:20-22). By the time of his third missionary journey Paul had gathered a team of workers from a number of churches. “He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia” (Acts 20:4). Like the church at Antioch, these newly established churches were willing to commit their best men to a ministry of cross-cultural evangelism and church planting.

Some world mission priorities for the local church

Over the past 50 years the Lord has been pleased to raise up many churches in the UK which believe the Bible and proclaim the Gospel. How can these churches play an even more effective part in world mission?

Keep your eyes on the big picture

We need to keep our eyes on the big picture. In the Bible God gives us his vision and agenda. He encourages us to think big thoughts, and to share his passion for the nations to be reached. It is easy for church leaders to accept that stimulating an interest in world vision is difficult and not to make it a priority. But we dare not turn in on ourselves.

This will lead to stagnation in the local church and be a denial of our biblical convictions. The task is urgent! People are dying without a Saviour and passing into a lost eternity. The Gospel has been entrusted to us and we have a solemn responsibility before God to go and make it known

Think strategically as church leaders

The church leaders in Antioch spent time “worshipping the Lord and fasting” (Acts 13:2). Whilst they were doing this the Holy Spirit directed them to release Saul and Barnabas to a new ministry. As church leaders today we need to spend time before the Lord, and to be prepared to think strategically and to take bold steps in new Gospel initiatives. The world was as hostile in the 1st century as it is in the 21st, but Gospel witness turned it upside down (Acts 17:6)! We need to join with churches from other countries who are already thinking strategically and stepping out in faith. Working together with them will be mutually enriching.

Pray as churches for workers to be send out

Jesus told his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field (Luke 10:2). Those who see the greatness of the task are the ones who pray most urgently for the Lord to send more workers! As local churches we need to pray that the Lord will send out workers from among us. Like the church in Antioch we may well find that he calls our best people, but he will also raise up others to take their place. Nothing is more likely to stimulate the interest of a local church in world mission than when the Lord calls someone from the church to go as a cross-cultural missionary. May many more of our churches see this happening, and may the Lord who calls them be pleased to bless and use them greatly.

Footnotes

- ¹ “The Church is Bigger Than You Think”, Christian Focus/WEC, page 146
- ² Larry Sharp, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, January 2000.
- ³ Tony Lambert, *China's Christian Millions* (sevenoaks, Monarch Books/OMF, 1999)
- ⁴ David Zac Niringiye, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, January 1990

Peter Milsom is the Director of UFM Worldwide

Christians who flourished in the days of Puritanism ... were men of prayer but not men of missionary performance; and the Christians of our present day are men of performance but need perhaps to be humbled by crosses and adversaries into men of prayer. It is out of the happy combination of these two habits that the evangelising of the nations is to come.

Thomas Chalmers, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 59

The Evangelical Gender Agenda: The Subversion or the Supremacy of Scripture?

Stephen Clark

Review article on *Speaking of Women Interpreting Paul*, Andrew Perriman, Apollos, 1998, 237pp, £19.95

Time was when many evangelicals assumed that the Bible taught that men and women had different functions in the home and in the church: women were not to teach in a mixed Christian congregation and wives were to be submissive to their husbands. “Not so,” said a new breed of evangelicals, whose reading of the Bible was much more sophisticated. “Peel back the crusty layers of prejudiced tradition and you find that that older view was really a misreading of Scripture; and since Scripture, not tradition, is our authority and since the Reformation view is that the Church should always be being reformed, the sooner we ditch these bizarre prohibitions on women, the better.”

Some who held the older view have been somewhat disorientated by this newer understanding of Scripture, fearing that if they have misunderstood something which appeared to be quite clear to them, then it is possible that they have been equally mistaken about other matters in Scripture. Might this have implications for their understanding of the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture and the right of private judgment? Others have been less impressed, particularly since they have a sneaky kind of feeling that it is not entirely coincidental that evangelicalism should be experiencing such a *volte-face* at the very time when women’s issues have been to the fore in society at large. They fear that it’s the old problem of the Church allowing the world to set her agenda and conforming to the culture instead of countering it.

Enter Andrew Perriman! In *Speaking of Women* he argues that it is right for the Church to conform to the culture because those passages of Scripture which appear to require the submission of women and to prohibit women teaching are culturally relative. Since until fairly recently our society has held a view of women not too dissimilar to that of the first century Mediterranean world, it was right for the Church to exclude women from some areas of service. But now that this has changed, the Church should change too. For, according to Perriman, a careful reading of Scripture indicates that while there is teaching which requires women to be submissive, this is not because of an inherent difference between the sexes but because it was, in New Testament times, a cultural expression of that difference. If Perriman is right, a way out of the trench warfare between “trads” and “rads” is possible.

While the older understanding of key passages is declared valid, the more egalitarian theology of women is held to be the proper application of those passages. Everybody has won and all shall have prizes, not the least of which is evangelical unity and an end to this distracting and disfiguring debate. But *is* he right? And what if he’s

wrong? Before answering these questions, it will be helpful to summarise the main arguments of the book.

On the issue of headship, Perriman disagrees that the Greek term *kephale* denotes “head” in the sense of *head over*, and also that it means *head of, source*. He believes that it means *prominence*: the New Testament is not teaching that the man has authority over the woman, but that he was in the Mediterranean world of that period (as largely throughout history), the prominent partner in a marriage and in society. Paul’s call for wives to submit to their husbands is not a universally binding commandment but a call for wives to do in a Christian spirit what society and custom required: *as to the Lord* (Eph. 5:22). Paul was very concerned that Christians did not give the gospel a bad name by being insensitive to the customs of society, provided that those customs were not contrary to God’s will. Since women did not have a vocal role in political assemblies, it was important for them to know their place in Christian assemblies. Moreover, since the church was composed of Jews and Gentiles, there was need for Gentile Christians to respect the cultural sensitivities of Jewish believers in the interests of the unity of the church and the primacy of the gospel. In this way Perriman deals with Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 14 and is able to harmonise it with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 of women prophesying and praying.

Perriman’s treatment of I Timothy 2:11-15 begins with the argument that in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul is giving specific instructions on a range of culturally variable matters and is not necessarily laying down instructions for all times in all places. For example, he does not understand eldership to be divinely ordained. “There is little to suggest that eldership as it appears in the New Testament is understood as a divinely ordained form of church leadership. [Eldership]... was taken over from Judaism ... without much reflection ... elders appear almost incidental to Paul’s understanding of the nature of the Christian community” (p. 203). This being the case, Perriman suggests that the fact that the majority of women would have been uneducated and that their sexual attractiveness might make them vulnerable to being deceived by false teachers meant that they should learn quietly. The material from Genesis 2 and 3 are not cited to establish universal norms grounded in creation and reaffirmed after the Fall: “... verses 13-14 are statements not so much about a state of affairs established at creation ... as statements about the situation in Ephesus in language *borrowed* from the Genesis story ... This being the case, in a situation in which women are no more likely than men to be seduced into moral or spiritual error, a model derived from Genesis 2:21-23 may be less appropriate than, say, the egalitarian model of Genesis 1:26-27” (italics Perriman’s, p.164). The chiasmic structure of this part of the chapter is such that verse 12 is something of a parenthesis, and that it is not a universally binding command is demonstrated by Paul’s use of the verb *epitrepô*: “I permit”. Furthermore, the verb *authenthein* does not denote *having* authority but *using* or *exercising* authority. So while Paul was not allowing women to teach or exercise authority in the Ephesian context in which Timothy found himself, the Church would be wrong to see this as being a perpetual bar to women having authority or exercising a teaching ministry.

Published by Apollos, the scholarly publishing wing of IVP, it clearly presents a very different understanding from that of JB Hurley’s *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, also published by IVP in 1981. Before attempting an evaluation of the book’s thesis, a few general comments are in order.

First, the debate about gender differences is of fundamental importance. Since all are agreed that male and female are God's image bearers and that God has not made us as neuter "persons" but as His image bearers as male or female, it inevitably follows that this debate is dealing with something very basic. We ignore it at our peril. If Perriman is right, then more polarised approaches will inevitably be wrong; so we need to evaluate his case carefully.

Secondly, we cannot dismiss Perriman's approach by saying that issues of culture are not to enter into our reading of Scripture. I doubt if many who read these pages wash the feet of their fellow church members, or if the men greet one another with a kiss, even though Scripture commands these practices. We can fulfil the obligations imposed on us without having to do so in a manner that is culturally meaningless. Perriman might argue that he is simply applying and extending the same kind of argument. If we think that to be mistaken, we must be able to distinguish what he is doing with the role of women from what we do with foot washing and kissing.

Thirdly, it is somewhat naive for Perriman to lament the tension which is created by the heavy theological ammunition which is being used in this debate. After all, it was the more egalitarian evangelicals who opened this Pandora's box. They can hardly complain if those of a different view fight for a position rather than throw in the towel at the first bell. Moreover, Perriman himself is taking up a position, and although he discharges his gun in the most irenic of ways he is nevertheless quite definite that the more traditional approach is out of place today. If others think he is wrong about so important a matter, then they can hardly be silent and be in submission!

The last general comment is that the ferment over women's ministry may well be the latest manifestation of a problem which has been with the Church since the beginning: that is, the tendency to turn some parts of Scripture into an interpretative grid through which other passages are forced in order to fit. Take the Christological controversies. Some held that since Jesus is God, He could not be a real man, and thus mangled texts asserting Christ's deity. Others reasoned that since He was a real man He could not be God, and thus mangled texts which asserted His humanity. Church politics notwithstanding, which always makes it more difficult to maintain the balance of Scripture, thank God that the early church thrashed out the doctrine of God and of the Person of Christ. The gender issue today is also frequently entangled with non-theological considerations. However, if we fail to get to grips with it, we shall bequeath a terrible legacy to future generations.

But we must analyse Perriman's arguments in detail. To begin with, his work may be criticised as to its *methodology*. In the final paragraph of the book he writes: "There is need for reconciliation. The church is being torn apart and something needs to be done about it. Perhaps exegesis can help, if it is candid, critical and constructive. *But as we struggle towards scholarly consensus*, something more fundamental is also required..." (p. 212, italics mine). The concern for peace in the Church is commendable. But if there are irreconcilable views, why must we seek consensus? By all means let us avoid what RT France calls on the back of the book, "a dialogue of the deaf". Also, if painstaking exegesis can remove misunderstanding and achieve greater unity, all well and good. But can exegesis be truly "candid, critical and constructive" if it is influenced by the desire to achieve consensus? Has not greater theological

understanding frequently been obtained in the heat of controversy and as a result of theological positions being sharpened, corrected, qualified and refined in debate?

Again, a weakness in Perriman's methodology becomes apparent in his treatment of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Having considered the text critical question of the precise location of the words found in verses 34-35 and the relationship of verse 33b to verses 34-35, Perriman begins his treatment by saying: "If verses 34-35 are authentic and we accept that Paul required women to be silent and not to speak in church, how are we to reconcile this with the participation of women in prayer and worship presupposed in 1 Corinthians 11:5?" (p.108). But this is the wrong question to ask. Clearly, all who believe in the unity and inerrancy of Scripture must seek to harmonise passages which appear to contradict each other. Indeed, systematic theology seeks to organise all of the teaching of Scripture on a given subject into a coherent and consistent pattern. But for that very reason, it is misguided to approach the exegesis of a passage with the question, How can I best interpret this so that it can be reconciled with another passage? Rather, one should seek to ask what the passage means in its immediate context and only then seek to understand it within the wider biblical context. Failure to do this led to imbalanced views in the Christological and Trinitarian controversies, and in other controversies within the Church. The problems with this methodologically flawed approach are compounded when other believers take 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as their absolute starting point and then ask how 1 Corinthians 11:5 can be reconciled with these verses.

I am not naively assuming that exegesis either can be or should be unaffected by systematic theology. As Carson has written, "If every theist is in some sense a systematician, then he is a systematician *before* he begins his exegesis".¹ However, he goes on to note that we are not locked into a hermeneutical circle but are in a hermeneutical line which moves from exegesis, through biblical theology, to systematic theology, with historical theology making a direct contribution towards systematics without itself being part of the line. However, he then affirms that there are feedback lines and acknowledges that it is absurd to deny that one's systematic theology does not affect one's exegesis. "Nevertheless," he writes, "the final line of control is the straight one from exegesis right through biblical and historical theology to systematic theology. The final authority is the Scriptures, the Scriptures alone".² When Perriman should be gathering the individual exegetical building blocks from which he intends to construct his Pauline theology of womanhood, instead he is arbitrarily making one of those blocks something of a cornerstone or foundation stone of his theology. This inevitably influences the way in which other blocks are fitted together. Obviously every building needs cornerstones and foundation stones. But the exegetical foundation stones upon which the theology of womanhood rests are to be found in the opening chapters of Genesis rather than in the Pauline writings themselves. But Genesis is considered in detail towards the end of the book. Perriman is confusing roofing work with foundation work; inevitably the building is somewhat out of line!

Another aspect of Perriman's methodology is its inconsistency in application. Central to his thesis is that Paul wanted believing women to conform to the cultural *mores* of their society so as not to bring the gospel into disrepute. But as many

egalitarians have rightly pointed out, Jesus' inclusion of women among His disciples; His readiness to teach the woman of Samaria; His commendation of Mary for publicly sitting at His feet, and His appearing to women and charging them with telling the other disciples that He had risen from the dead, were radically counter cultural. If, then, Paul's teaching is governed only by cultural considerations, is he not turning the clock back on Christ's teaching and needlessly putting something of a straitjacket on the women?

But there are also problems with Perriman's treatment of the place of women in the Gentile world of the Mediterranean at that time. Perriman states:

Opinion and practice regarding the value and role of women were by no means uniform, and, at the time of Paul, were in a state of flux. Still, powerful legal, cultural and social forces contrived to drive a wedge between the sexes and to confine women to a position of inferiority and subordination. According to Aristotle, "the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject"...While a handful of remarks from disparate ancient writers, taken out of context, does not amount to a social history, they are nevertheless highly suggestive and can reasonably be taken as illustrative of prevailing opinion (p. 51).

This is a highly misleading statement of the position. To begin with, quotations from Aristotle may tell us something about the situation a few hundred years before Christ, but they are no more helpful in telling us the prevailing views during the New Testament period than Archbishop Laud's views of Puritans can help us to understand Dr Carey's opinions concerning nonconformists today! Indeed, it is a commonplace of Roman Law studies that the position of women, especially married women, had improved enormously by imperial times as compared with the republican period.³ But Roman Law is not Andrew Perriman's forte, even though he makes a foray into it on pages 51 and 52. He tells us that "it was a basic principle of Roman law that all women should be under male guardianship because of the levity and weakness of their sex", and immediately goes on to inform us that a daughter grew up under the authority of a *paterfamilias* "who could choose to transfer her to another male guardian or to the power (*manus*) of her husband". But he does not say that boys as well as girls would be under the potestas of a *paterfamilias*.⁴ Moreover, a woman could be either *filiafamilias* or *sui juris*.⁵ By the time of the Empire, free marriage was common and this meant that the wife was not in *in manu* to her husband.⁶ Contrary to the impression conveyed by Perriman, the guardianship to which he refers was something quite different from *patria potestas* and had to do with protecting the property of minors. Since the inheritance rights relating to women's property was somewhat different from that which related to the property of males, the Romans devised a type of guardianship – *tutela* – which applied to girls after puberty.⁷ The reference to the levity and weakness of their sex was something of a legal fiction⁸ and by the time of the Empire this form of guardianship was largely a formality.⁹ Furthermore, husbands and wives owed each other a respect and kindness known as *reverentia*.¹⁰

The above comments are not intended to suggest that women at this period were the emancipated products of the post Germaine Greer era, but simply to point out that they had far more privilege than is sometimes realised by those who are not versed in the Roman law of persons. But this leads us to the point that the husband was, as a social

fact, the prominent one and that the wife was to acknowledge this in a Christian way. Is this all that Paul was saying in Ephesians 5? Surely not, and that for the following reasons.

To begin with, we should deal with the vexed issue of the meaning of *kephale*. Clearly the semantic range of a word may be such that it may have different referents in different contexts. Perriman has certainly done a lot of work on the Septuagint use of this term and on its usage by Philo, Josephus, as well as by classical writers and by Paul himself. However, impressive as this scholarship is, the simple fact remains that in Ephesians 5:23 Paul grounds the imperative of verse 22 – “wives to your husbands” (the reference to “submitting” being supplied from verse 21) – on the indicative of verse 23: *the husband is the head of the wife*. This is made abundantly clear by the use of the causal conjunction, *hoti*, at the beginning of verse 23. Therefore, whatever verbal equivalent we use to render *kephale*, it is quite clear that Paul uses the term in this verse to refer to a reality which implies a certain “head over” dimension. Let us, for the moment, accept Perriman’s argument that Paul is not laying down a universal norm but rather is calling on Christian women to live in accordance with the prevailing cultural *mores* as part of their allegiance to Christ. This would not alter the fact that since the women were submitting to their husbands *because* the husbands were the heads of their wives, headship in such a context must imply some element of authority. This point cannot be evaded simply by saying that the husband was the prominent one; if so, it was a prominence which led the wife to be submissive. And in arguing for the fact that headship implies an element of authority, traditionalists have been contending for nothing more than the fact that such headship requires a corresponding submission on the part of the wife.

Perriman’s argument that the imperative in verse 21 is not so much emphasising a general duty – women are to be submissive – as the person to whom a wife is to be submissive – her own husband – and the reason why she is to be so – “as to the Lord” – is quite beside the point. For the traditionalists (certainly this reviewer, at any rate) have never argued that Ephesians 5:22 is calling for all women to be submissive to men. Rather they have argued that a Christian wife is to be submissive to her husband as part of her obedience to Christ. That is what this debate is partly about.

Perriman is also guilty of a *non sequitur* when he says that the headship of Christ over His church is not a model for, nor an endorsement of, the husband’s headship of his wife. We cannot here analyse in detail Perriman’s premise and consider if it is well grounded. But even if we concede his point, this entails nothing more than that just as the headship of Christ entails certain obligations on the part of His church, so the headship of the man entails certain responsibilities for his wife. Perriman wants to argue that the husband’s headship is just a social fact rather than being derived in some way from Christ’s headship. *But it is not an essential element of the traditionalist argument that the husband’s headship must be derived from Christ’s headship of His church, nor are there only two alternatives: a headship deriving or in some way formed on the basis of Christ’s headship of His church or a headship that is merely a temporary social reality.* There is a third possibility: that this headship is an integral element of marriage as God ordained it. I would join this with the position that also sees Christ’s headship in some ways as a pattern. But it is logically distinct and derives

from the fact that God ordained that the two become one flesh: verse 31 (c.f. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5). The “body image” of marriage is, therefore, a creational reality rather than a cultural expression of the marriage relationship. Perriman might agree, but reply that the *husband’s headship* in that one flesh relationship is but a cultural phenomenon rather than a creational reality. This, of course, leads us to the crux of the issue: how are we to understand Genesis 1 and 2?

One of the major difficulties of Perriman’s treatment of Ephesians 5 is the way he glosses over Paul’s command to husbands to love their wives and how Paul ties this to the head/body image and also the counterbalancing of the wife’s duty to the husband with the husband’s duty to the wife. Logically, it would be very difficult to see why the husband’s duty should not also be seen as culturally relative. Paul grounds the love which the husband is to show the wife in the nature of the one flesh where the husband is the head of the wife. In addition, this love is to be patterned after Christ’s love of His church, He being the head and the church being the body. On what *logical* ground, then, can one resist the argument that since, as social reality, husbands are no longer the head of their wives, Paul’s commands no longer apply to them, just as they no longer apply to the wives? If the reply is that cold logic is inappropriate in exegesis, I must rejoin that sentimentality is inappropriate to exegesis. Perriman constructs an elaborate logical argument, and therefore cold logic is essential in analysing what he says. Nor can the force of what I am saying be evaded by responding that the husband is no longer to love his wife as her head, but he is still to love her: for by the same logic, I am then entitled to say that the wife is no longer to submit to her husband as head, but she is still to submit to him just the same. Indeed, at the end of the chapter, Paul baldly calls on wives to reverence their husbands and on husbands to love their wives. All of this surely indicates that the head/body image is less culturally constrained than Perriman claims and that the model of Christ and the Church is more central than Perriman is prepared to concede.

Moreover, while there were obviously husbands who loved their wives, ancient culture was not as monolithic or monochromatic as Perriman’s book would suggest. The notion of love for one’s wife may not have been as self evident to Paul’s contemporaries as it is for us. Concubinage “was accepted as a social fact”.¹¹ Greek and Roman writings indicate that homosexual relationships, especially involving pederasty, were highly prized as setting forth the ideal of human love.¹² Of course, Perriman would rightly reply that these relationships would be contrary to God’s will and that at that point the Christian must be counter cultural. Granted; but this is precisely the point: what Paul was calling for was, in measure, counter cultural for the husbands and the wives. The fact that when he treats of these matters he usually goes back to Genesis 1 and 2 should alert us to the fact that those chapters are more tightly tied to his theological argument than would be the case if they merely functioned in some figurative kind of way.

Perriman’s almost avalanche dodging approach to Scripture comes through in his exegesis of the word “law” in 1 Corinthians 14:34. While he is very detailed in his consideration of the term *kephale*, he is rather meagre in his treatment of the meaning of “law” and concludes that whatever Paul is saying, he is not enforcing submission on women on the basis of Old Testament teaching, even if there were unambiguous Old

Testament teaching to that effect. Quite apart from weakness in his exegesis of this term, his general hermeneutic is seriously flawed in his treatment of this concept. Since Moo's contribution to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* is cited in the bibliography, why is there no reference at all to Moo's detailed study of the Pauline use of the term *nomos*?¹³ Perriman seems determined in his treatment of 1 Corinthians 11:3 to ensure that this verse is not going to function as a major and integral part of the argument in verses 3-16. The section is, admittedly, a difficult passage to exegete, but the difficulty does not chiefly reside in verse 3. Indeed, this verse helps to provide a framework for the whole of the argument. God's headship of Christ is introduced to provide something of a model for the headship of Christ over the man and the headship of the man over the woman. The massive New Testament theology found in the gospels and expanded upon in passages like Philippians 2: 5ff makes it entirely proper for verse 3 to be seen to function as follows: Christ shares divine nature with the Father, as the Son of God, but as the divine human Messiah He voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father, and even though now exalted He has been *given* that position in the economy of redemption. Though man shares with Christ human nature, yet He differs from us in being the God Man, and in the church, men are in a special sense submissive to and *accountable* to Him. Though the woman shares human nature with the man, yet the difference between male and female *is* to be preserved in the church and this means that the man is head of the wife but she is not head of the man. Role reversal is therefore wholly out of place: even when she prays and prophesies, as indeed she may, she must do so in such a way as not to blur that distinction. But fundamental to that distinction is the headship of the man. (Note that Paul is using the headship image differently here from in Ephesians 5. There Christ is head of all the church, male and female; here, His headship is specifically expressed to be of the man, while the man is head of the woman. We are here dealing with the whole question of the order of the Godhead in the economy of redemption and the order between the sexes established in the churches.)

Perriman is right to see Genesis 1:27 as foundational. Both male and female equally bear the divine image. The equality of the sexes is the bedrock of biblical teaching on this subject. But it is not true that diversity of function is not found until chapter 2. It is hinted at in 1:28. In v. 28b the man and the woman are told to pro-create. They are *both* involved in this. But the woman obviously bears the heavier load (literally!) in the bringing of children into the world. We shall see that this implicit point is underlined and made explicit later in Genesis. This being the case, are we warranted in saying that while *both* are involved in the ruling over creation (v.28c), the man will bear the heavier burden? While the text does not explicitly say this, *it* is implicit and this fact will be teased out in the next two chapters.

In chapter 2, we learn that Adam was tending the garden and naming the animals *before* the woman was created. She was created to help the man. If some traditionalists have been guilty of loading the concept of "help" with unbiblical accretions, the more feminist writers have made too much of the fact that God is the helper of His people. The donkey may help to carry my goods: this is an inappropriate analogy because, as the text emphasises, the animals do not share my nature. God may help me in a task; but no mere human can help me as God does. My neighbour may help me to carry a

table, where we are equal in the load we bear. I may help my neighbour to build a shed, where I am merely assisting because I am a rather impractical man. There are indicators in the text that the woman was to stand to the man in this last category of helping him as his equal but under his leadership. Why? Precisely because the mandate imposed on man and woman (1 :28c) was historically fulfilled by the male first and with the woman coming after. This argument is not negated by the fact that man was made after the animals: it is the reason why woman was expressed to be created which is important. Secondly, the naming of woman *is* important, contrary to what Perriman alleges. Even egalitarians acknowledge this. Thus Ann Brown stresses that the real naming of woman came after the Fall; therefore male authority is the result of sin and is removed in Christ.¹⁴ But Adam named twice: first he names woman as woman; then after the Fall he names the specific woman, Eve, as the mother of all living. No doubt this was an act of faith. The point is surely that naming, which clearly expresses an element of authority, pre-dated the Fall and was continued after the Fall.

The point I am making can be put beyond all dispute. Why, in 2:24, is it the man who will leave his parents and cleave to his wife. Will she not do likewise also (cf. Gen. 24)? Yes; but there is an initiative which belongs to the man. This existed before the Fall and is reaffirmed by Jesus as still existing: Matt. 19:5. The point is borne out by the teaching of chapter 3. It is a commonplace of treatments of the judgments in this chapter that God takes the very blessings and, while not eradicating them, introduces an element of pain and frustration. The woman is affected in that which will be a large part of her life: the bearing of children and her desire for her husband (v. 16). The man has the sentence of death pronounced on him (vv. 17-19). But will not the woman die? Of course she will! But God is touching the man in what will particularly loom large in his life: the subduing of the earth (vv. 17 -19; c.f. 1:28c). What is implicit in chapter 1 is gradually unfolded in chapter 2 and, by the judgments of chapter 3 is made explicit. It is the man who is cast out of the Garden of Eden (3:24). But was not Eve cast out as well? Yes, but it is the man who is singled out and this is then developed in Romans 5. Of course, Adam represents the whole race. But the precise point is surely that it was not Adam and Eve who represented the race but only Adam. Primogeniture as male is crucial here.

The Mosaic covenant restricted the priesthood to the male descendants of Aaron. These had the specific responsibility of teaching God's covenant. Surrounded by a Canaanite culture where there were priestesses galore, is it not significant that while women could prophesy in Israel, the teaching function was confined to men? This did not make women inferior to men, any more than the other tribes were inferior to the descendants of Aaron. Are we to believe (which is what consistency would require of Perriman at this point) that in the Old Testament the church was to be counter cultural but in the New it was to conform to the culture? Is it not more hermeneutically consistent to say that what was embedded at creation and reaffirmed after the Fall became the pattern for God's Old Testament church and continued in the New Testament period. Paul does not quote a text in 1 Corinthians 14 because the teaching on the submission of women in the gatherings of God's people runs through the entire Old Testament. Nor will it do to say that we are all now priests unto God. Of course we are *in certain respects*. None of us is in the sense that nobody today offers blood

sacrifices; all of us are in our direct approach to Christ and in our offering of praise; only men are in the sense that only they may teach God's Word. Paul himself can be very nuanced in the way that he applies the Old Testament teaching on the priesthood (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 9:13-14). Perriman seriously addresses none of these considerations, nor the fact that the Old Testament monarchy was reserved for the *sons of David*. Ruling and teaching were confined to the men.

In Matt. 19: 4-8, Jesus makes clear that some provisions of the Mosaic law have passed; those things rooted in creation will continue. Therefore, it is a sound hermeneutical principle to say that those things in the Mosaic covenant which work out creational principles are still valid today. The submission of the wife and of women in the church is one of these things.

Accordingly, Perriman's treatment of 1 Timothy 2 must be judged a failure, and an example of special pleading. It is not just that the details are wrong,¹⁵ but it is not these details which mar Perriman's book. It is, rather, that the whole work proceeds on the wrong footing by failing to see the significance of the creational pattern, which is distorted though not obliterated by the Fall and the judgements, and then rescued and restored in Christ.

Paul makes specific reference to the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 in 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5 and 1 Timothy 2, and to the Law in 1 Corinthians 14, and the Fall and judgment in 1 Timothy 2. These show that these passages were very much to the fore in Paul's thinking about male and female. That the Mosaic covenant confirms what we found implicit in the creation and Fall accounts means that there is a massive theology which Perriman has to dodge to establish the case that all along Paul was dealing with cultural issues rather than creational patterns. As Warfield pointed out in connection with the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, it is one thing to dodge a few stones, it is very different dodging an avalanche. You may dodge the odd text, but Perriman is dodging an avalanche of Scripture.

In conclusion, some cautionary remarks are in order. First, arguing for the cultural relativity of certain parts of Scripture has to be done responsibly and in a disciplined way. Otherwise what begins as cultural relativity will end as doctrinal and moral relativism. All Scripture was given in certain cultural contexts; but the God of Scripture is the God of providence. As Warfield pointed out, if God wanted the kind of letters written which a Paul would write, then He prepared a Paul to write them. Perriman may draw the line as to where he applies his principle of cultural relativity. But lacking, as he does, a principled theological hermeneutical control, he may be hard put to explain why those liberals were wrong who argued that since sacrifice was a central idea in the ancient world, it was natural for the biblical writers to explain the death of Christ in sacrificial language. They might go on to say that now that society has outgrown those outmoded concepts, we are free to restate the death of Christ and any theory of atonement which may remain in non sacrificial categories. Linked with this point is Perriman's failure to address the question of "common grace" and general revelation and whether certain cultural patterns preserve something of the divine ideal, which is then underlined and confirmed by special revelation.

It is cause for concern that numerous writers who argue against the teaching on submission of women to their husbands and in the Church reach identical conclusions

by diametrically opposed routes. Such writings appear to be conclusions in search of exegetical arguments. Perriman's is one of the most sophisticated treatments, but his case is seriously flawed. But where does this leave the average church member, confronted with a plethora of alternative routes to the same conclusion, which leave him feeling that he cannot read his Bible? The doctrine of Scripture's perspicuity is being subtly undermined by some of these treatments. This is not to argue for a simplistic reading of Scripture; but one is left feeling that come what may some people will get their conclusion in the end. Some years ago, I was present at a private conference on the role of women. During the discussion following the paper by one lady (who, together with her husband, I count as good friends) which had argued heavily for egalitarianism, a number of us raised questions which none of the egalitarians present were able to answer. Some of the positions which they attributed to us we were able to demonstrate to be *non-sequiturs* which were not entailed by our arguments. Yet when this friend published a book on the subject some time later, none of our arguments had been addressed but she simply repeated the position which she had been unable to defend at the conference. Is that not saying something important? Just what would some egalitarians require Scripture to say before they would concede their case?

Of course, egalitarians are sometimes simply over-reacting to an unbiblical traditionalism which has relegated women to making the tea, washing the dishes, teaching the children, but never noting the enormous potential for service of the kind of a Priscilla and of those women listed in Romans 16. We *must* distinguish Scripture from our evangelical traditional sub-culture.

Finally, has not the time come when we need to ask whether our statements of faith need to grapple with this issue? No one wants to fragment evangelicalism still further over secondary issues. Furthermore, among those who argue for women teaching there is a range of positions held and we must distinguish between those who have abandoned the authority of Scripture from those who merely differ in their interpretation of Scripture. But a point may be reached where someone's claim to accept the authority of Scripture may be denied by the way they use it and by the vehemence with which they advance their position. To give an extreme example, a Jehovah's Witness claims to accept the authority of Scripture but the material content of his belief system means that his formal acceptance of Scripture is thereby undermined.

Perriman's book is likely to be very influential. The traditionalist case must not be allowed to go by default and be relegated to the theological museum. To prevent this happening, perhaps we should look again at our confessions of faith and ensure that they are properly contextualised in the beginning of a new millennium rather than in a past which assumed things which are now called in question.

References

- ¹ DA Carson and John D Woodbridge *Scripture and Truth* (Leicester, IVP, 1983), p. 91
- ² *Ibid.* p. 92
- ³ Free marriage existed by the time of the Empire and guardianship had become a formality: see B Nicholas *An Introduction to Roman Law*, Oxford University Press 1962, pp. 82; PE Corbett *The Roman Law Of Marriage*, Oxford University Press 1969, p.125. There had been

some ferment over this issue even before Aristotle. Plato, for example, had argued in Book 5 of *The Republic* that women could be guardians in his ideal state. Earlier, Aristophanes had mocked similar ideas in *Ecclesiazusae*. The fact that he mocked them may suggest that others had floated ideas similar to Plato.

⁴ Nicholas, *op. cit.* pp.65-66.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 80-82; Corbett, *op. cit.* p. 122.

⁶ Corbett, *op. cit.* pp. 122 and 125.

⁷ Nicholas, pp. 90-95.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

⁹ Corbett, p. 125.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

¹¹ Nicholas, *op. cit.* p. 84.

¹² See S Hornblower and A Spawforth (Eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1998) entries under *Heterosexuality*, *Homosexuality*, *Women*, and J Annas *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981), pp.181-182

¹³ Douglas J Moo, "Law," "Works Of The Law," And Legalism In Paul, Westminster Theological Journal 45 (1983) pp. 73-100.

¹⁴ A Brown, *Apology to Women: Christian Images of the Female Sex* (IVP, Leicester, 1991)

¹⁵ For example: if verse 12 were a parenthesis we should expect an asyndeton here, but in fact the connective particle *de* links this verse with verse 11. Also the idea that *exousia* is a neutral word whereas *authentēin* is so unusual is a half-truth. A cognate of *exousia*, *katexousiazō*, is used to denote the *exercise* of authority in Matt. 20:25 and is used almost synonymously with *katakuriēuō*, which in that verse appears to have a negative connotation. It could be that the *exousia* word group carries connotations of authority which may be rightly possessed although capable of improper exercise. If we accept Perriman's argument that *authentēin* in 1 Timothy 1:12 denotes the exercise rather than the possession of authority. it is because in the church a woman cannot, strictly speaking, possess authority *de jure* though she may exercise it *de facto*. This means that the KJV has captured the idea with its use of the word "usurp".

Stephen Clark is minister of Freeschool Court Evangelical Church, Bridgend

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