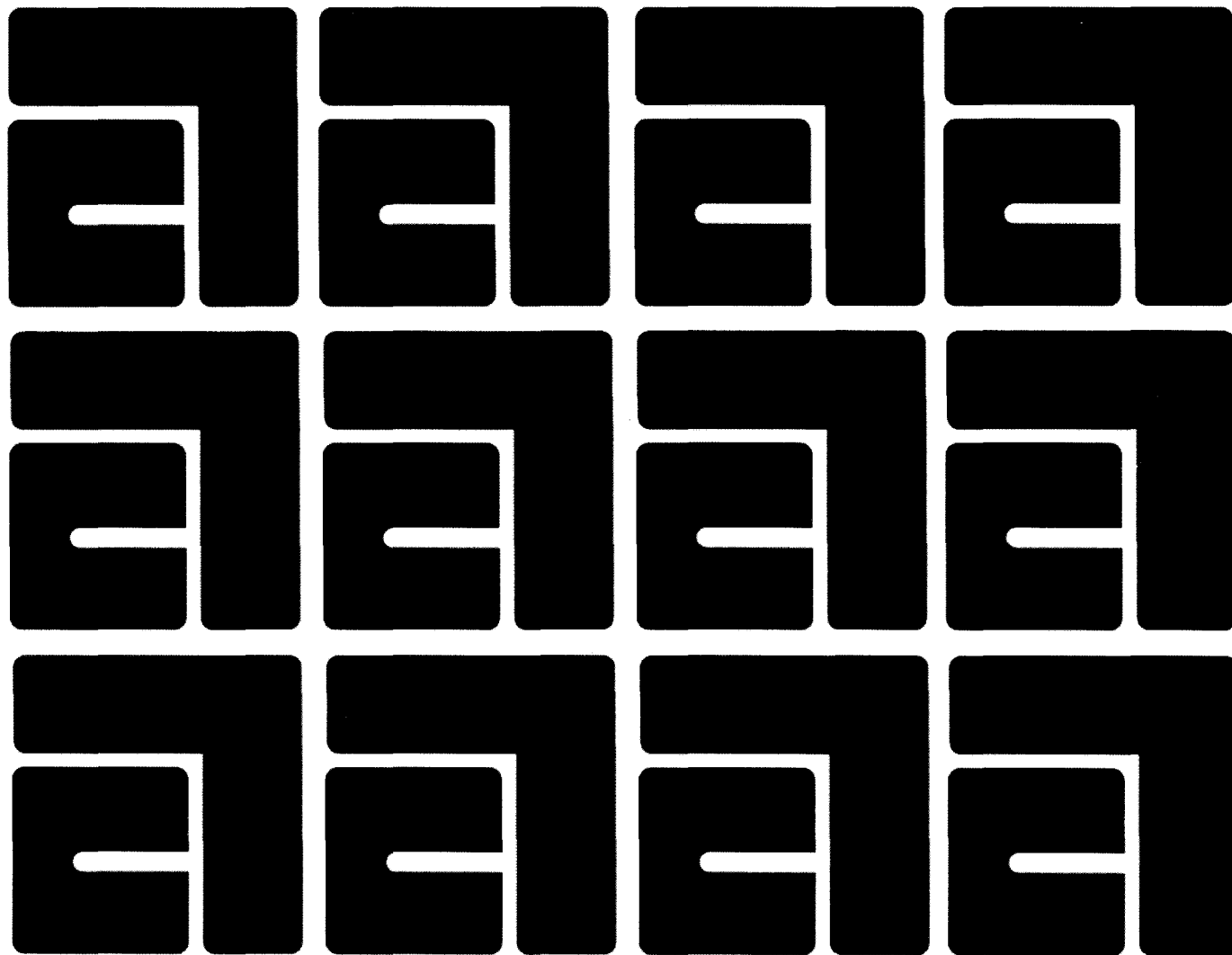




# FOUNDATIONS

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## FOUNDATIONS

is published by Affinity in April and October. Its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical theology, church history and apologetics – and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry. Its policy gives particular attention to the theology of evangelical churches which are committed to biblical ecumenism.

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## Editor's Notes

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The sheer number of books on the market concerned with church and ministry indicates that something is felt not to be right in the evangelical fold. That most of the books I will note deal to a greater or lesser extent with the cultural change being experienced in the west suggests why this is. Exhilarating or uncomfortable as we may find it, the cultural change summed up in the word postmodernism affects us all and all of us, even unconsciously, are having to adapt to it. The must read in this whole area is **David Wells's** *Above all earthly pow'rs*,<sup>1</sup> the fourth and final book in his quartet that has sought to analyze the theological and spiritual condition of evangelicalism. Readers of previous volumes will be on familiar ground here, but in this volume Wells takes us further. In particular he begins and ends by putting evangelicalism in the context of globalisation with particular reference to mass migration and its impact on western societies. The most helpful and stimulating chapters are those that examine the common yearning for spirituality in the light of orthodox Christian doctrine. Helpfully he distinguishes between agape and eros spiritualities, the former being about God coming to us in grace and the latter of our search for deity or deities. The tragedy is that much modern evangelicalism is tapping into eros spirituality. There is a very stimulating section dealing with eschatology, incarnation and justification in this context where Wells interacts with the new perspective, open theism and other theological fashions. The last section examines the mega-churches of the United States and concludes that in their cultural accommodation they are converging in some ways with the older and dying liberalism even while they remain nominally formally orthodox. One of his *bête noire's* is the homogeneous unit principle of the church growth movement and the way this has been tied into marketing strategies to gaining and keeping church members. Here paradoxically the churches that ostensibly are so desirous of growth are limiting themselves to one segment of American society – relatively well-off white suburbanites – while the country is becoming more racially, socially

and culturally diverse. In this there are some salutary lessons for British churches, especially as some with impeccable conservative evangelical credentials seem to be adopting this approach in church planting. However that is a hobby horse of mine that I better not ride. The bigger issue is whether our churches are truth centred and driven because of our commitment to Jesus Christ and the gospel.

Within mainstream Baptist and charismatic circles there has been some interesting thinking on church life. One of most remarkable is *The Gospel-Driven Church*<sup>2</sup> by **Ian Stackhouse**, the senior minister of Guildford Baptist Church. What is remarkable about the book is the very honest and thoughtful way in which Stackhouse critically examines the charismatic movement with which he is identified and finds it wanting in so many respects. In the opening chapter he castigates the faddism that afflicts the renewal as he calls it and he goes through all the most recent fads. In particular he is critical of the revivalism that has obsessed the movement to the detriment of the ongoing renewal of the churches. For this he advocates a retrieval of the classical ministries of the church. His chapter on preaching is excellent and will be welcomed by all who believe in expository preaching with passion and life-transforming power. He has a strong emphasis on the importance of the Lord's Supper and baptism that strikes me as quasi-sacramentalist, but he is right in wanting to see them restored to a central place in the life of the church. His reflections on the work of the Spirit and how it has been understood in charismatic churches is very insightful. There is also a welcome call to return to classic pastoral care, although again there is too much of an inclination to Catholic forms of spirituality. In all this Stackhouse doesn't repudiate the renewal but simply wants to bring it back into line with the great tradition of the church. That is welcome, but the book could have done with dealing more directly with the Bible, which in the end is the way we centre our churches on the gospel. Having said that there is much here that more Reformed evangelical churches could learn from. Indeed such

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churches would benefit from as honest an examination by one of their own. One other caveat: the book is written in rather theologically academic English.

In *Post-Christendom*<sup>3</sup> **Stuart Murray** recalls churches to a somewhat different tradition than Stackhouse. While Stackhouse wants to recover the churchly classical tradition Murray wants to recover the dissident Anabaptist tradition. He thinks this is particularly appropriate in the post-Christendom context in which we find ourselves. Secularisation has brought the long reign of Christendom in Europe to an end and that is no bad thing according to Murray. Christendom meant the captivity of the church to political, economic and cultural power and with it a whole mentality that shaped the life of the church and Christian discipleship or lack of it. Much of the book is historical and I think Murray is somewhat simplistic in both his understanding of the Anabaptists and of the magisterial churches. There is a tendency to see in the Anabaptists trendy post-modern Christians much as the same are seen by others in Celtic saints. Murray's bad boys are Constantine and Augustine of Hippo. The truth is that for good or bad Christendom is part of our heritage and while it has had many baleful effects, providentially it was used by God. However Murray is right in pointing us to the Anabaptists for help for living as a minority in an increasingly non-Christian culture, even if one doesn't buy into the whole Anabaptist package. As Murray points out it would be wrong to try to recover Christendom as some do in the way they promote revival or social transformation. Where I fear Murray's kind of neo-Anabaptism is leading is in the direction of the Emerging Church movement in the United States. There is a dislike of preaching and a tendency to downplay doctrine and to emphasise a more relational, inclusivist and non-judgmental approach to church.

For such an approach you need go no further than **Steve Chalke's** *Intelligent Church*.<sup>4</sup> This book will be less controversial than his last one and like it contains much that is good. By 'intelligent church' Chalke means church

that is intelligently thought out theologically and in terms of its social and cultural context. Much of what he writes he born out of his recent experience as the new minister of church.co.uk in London, formerly Christ Church and Upton Chapel. Using the chapter headings he wants churches to be inclusive (welcoming to everyone), messy, honest, purposeful, generous (with money, lives, gifts, etc.) vulnerable, political (not in a partisan way, but living and proclaiming the lordship of Jesus), diverse, dependent (on God in prayer) and transforming (of lives and communities). As I say there is much to benefit from even if here and there are things to disagree with such as where in the chapter on prayer he gets close to open theism. The real problem with the book is its basic premise. While Chalke is to be admired for his desire to engage people he has an inadequate understanding of the problem facing the church. It is expressed in this quote: 'The real problem for Christian mission in the West is not the absence of spiritual hunger in our postmodern society but rather the inability to engage with this longing'. Is that really the problem? Chalke assumes that the spiritual hunger is positive and not itself an expression of rebellion against God. The assumption is that if we only get church right people will respond. But that is a fundamentally Arminian assumption. The problem is not that we are unable to engage this longing, although that needs to be worked at, but that when we do so people are still sinners who need to have their hearts opened to receive Christ. So, yes, let's work hard to engage our culture, but let's also realise that we are confronted with unbelief that can only be overcome by the prayerful preaching of the gospel in whatever form or setting. And that gospel will include the truth of Christ's penal substitution for sinners. These words from David Wells sum up the issue well;

... those churches which have banished pulpits or are "getting beyond" the truth question are, however inadvertently, going beyond Christianity itself. The proclamation of the New Testament was about *truth*, about the truth that Christ who was with the Father from all eternity had entered our own time. As such he lived within it, his life like ours marked by days, and

weeks, and years. He lived in virtue of his unity with the Father, living for him, living as the Representative of his own before the Father, his very words becoming the means of divine judgment and of divine grace. But in the cross and resurrection, the entire spiritual order was upended, his victory reached into and across the universe, and saving grace is now personalized in him. The world with all its pleasures, power and comforts, is fading away, the pall of divine judgment hangs over it, a new order has arisen in Christ, and only in this new order can be found meaning, hope and acceptance with God. It is truth, not private spirituality that apostolic Christianity was about. It was Christ, not the self as means of access into the sacred. It was Christ, with all his painful demands of obedience, not comfortable country clubs that early Christianity was about. It was what God had done in space and time when the world was stood on its head that was its preoccupation, not the multiplication of programs, strobe lights and slick drama. Images we may want, entertainment we may desire, but it is the proclamation of Christ crucified and risen that is the Church's truth to tell.<sup>5</sup>

There is a need for a contemporary restatement of free church and Baptist ecclesiology. In *Free Church, Free State*<sup>6</sup> **Nigel Wright** does so very accessibly if not wholly acceptably. The book is accessible in that it gives us a clear and well-written survey of Baptist tradition, practice and issues along with biblical argument and theological engagement. He makes a good case for the classic free church and particularly Baptist understanding of the church and its relevance to our context in Europe. However Wright is too ecumenically minded. Among other places this comes out in his chapter on mission and relationships with Roman Catholics. More reliable and practical if not as stimulating is *The Deliberate Church*<sup>7</sup> by **Mark Dever** and **Paul Alexander**. Dever is minister of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC. The book is almost a how-to manual on church government. It could have been better organized, leaves out some things and reads a bit like transcribed addresses. Nevertheless it is very helpful and is a necessary affirmation of the importance of trying to do church biblically. Even among some free church people the Puritan idea of the regulative principle seems to have

evaporated and the Anglican normative principle (only the gospel matters and everything else is negotiable) seems to have taken hold. If like Dever we believe that the Bible speaks authoritatively about how to do church then we need to act on it. This applies not only to church officers but also to all Christians. Personally I cannot understand why principles of biblical church practice don't matter for many Christians when deciding which church to attend or join. Dever may help them. Here is a lot of wisdom that can help us from someone who is thinking these issues through in our contemporary context.

Here, briefly noted, are some other books related to church and ministry. *The Gospel Ministry*<sup>8</sup> contains the papers delivered at the 2002 John Owen Centre Conference. Six writers (including myself) seek to restate for the 21st century a classically Protestant understanding of pastoral ministry. *From Embers to a Flame*<sup>9</sup> by Harry Reeder III, minister of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, is a very helpful and brief guide to a ministry of renewing older churches. With so much emphasis on church planting today it is good to be reminded that older churches can be renewed. **Derek Prime** also gives us some helpful advice on leading churches in *A Christian Guide to Leadership for the Whole Church*.<sup>10</sup> There is much practical wisdom here from the former minister of Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh on everything from recognizing leaders to delegation and team leadership. There is also more such wisdom from another experienced minister in *Transform Your Church*<sup>11</sup> by **Paul Beasley-Murray**. Here are '50 very practical steps' that can help change church life for the better. You may not agree with them all, but reading the book is like giving a church a spiritual health-check. On the subject of leadership, *Leadership Next*<sup>12</sup> by **Eddie Gibbs** of Fuller Seminary is a useful survey of current thinking along with theological reflection and practical application. Gibbs's concern is for the church to have leaders appropriate to the changing culture. My concern with books like this is whether theology actually matters in the making of a

good leader. For a good biblical orientation on the nature of the church read *God's New Community*<sup>13</sup> by **Graham Benyon**. Each chapter takes a biblical passage with a view to unfolding the New Testament pattern of the church. For a pugnacious polemic on the church read **Peter Glover's** *The Virtual Church*.<sup>14</sup> Glover takes no hostages as he assesses the churches in the UK and beyond. While aiming his fire mainly at charismatics and pragmatists he doesn't neglect to lob a grenade or two at conservative evangelicalism. If he is a bit unfair to some of us neo-Puritans (not all of us are determined to meet whatever the 17th century throws at us) Glover says some things we need to hear.

I want to commend several books that have little relation to each other except that I have enjoyed them immensely and that in different ways they winsomely commend the Reformed evangelical faith. In *An Unexpected Journey*<sup>15</sup> **Robert Godfrey**, president of Westminster Seminary in California, unfolds the Reformed faith in the form of an autobiography threaded through with biblical reflection. It is a very fine book that is an accessible introduction to Calvinism. *On Being Black and Reformed*<sup>16</sup> by **Anthony J Carter** warmly and clearly expounds Reformed Christianity within the context of the African-American experience. Carter, who I believe is a Reformed Baptist, deals honestly with the injustices that blacks have had to suffer but uses that to open up the comforting and empowering reality of God's sovereign grace. I really loved this book and commend it to everyone. The ministry of Francis Schaeffer and L'Abri has so much to teach us today as **Wade Bradshaw** shows in *By Demonstration: God – Fifty Years and a Week at L'Abri*.<sup>17</sup> Schaeffer wanted L'Abri 'to show forth by demonstration,

in our lives, the existence of God'. How we need that in our lives and churches today. For a fresh and God-centred exposition of the gospel read **John Piper's** *God is the Gospel*.<sup>18</sup> All the familiar Piper themes are here in a soul satisfying and mind stretching reconfiguration. Piper has been very influenced by Jonathan Edwards, selections of whose writing you can find in *Day by Day with Jonathan Edwards*.<sup>19</sup> With a short reading for every day of the year here is a book to kindle the fire of your daily devotions so that they are truly God-centred. The theme of joy that is so prominent in Edwards' (and Piper's) works is warmly unfolded in **Marcus Honeysett's** *Finding Joy*.<sup>20</sup> As evangelicals we talk a lot about grace but how much is it a living reality that fills us with joy? With excellent biblical exposition and practical application, Honeysett helps us to be gripped again by grace. The man who helped me to appreciate grace in a fresh way was the late **Jack Miller**. He used to ask people as a leading question Paul's question to the Galatians, 'Whatever happened to all your joy?' Miller's *The Heart of a Servant Leader*<sup>21</sup> is a collection of his wide-ranging correspondence to co-workers, family, friends and others. What a privilege to receive such letters! There is also a short biography of Jack – pastor (Presbyterian, OPC and PCA), professor (Westminster), missionary (World Harvest Mission) - that tells the story of how he rediscovered the grace of God and dared to live accordingly. Here is a testimony to the transforming grace of God in one of his servants who was far from perfect but knew where to find the joy-giving grace of Jesus. If you are weary in ministry or in life generally read and savour these letters.

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As a theologically Reformed evangelical believer, I would like to propose a particular way to view missions. Given the proliferation of worldwide ministries, driven by a dizzying array of denominational, independent, and parachurch organizations, Reformed believers need to consider again what our own understanding of missions is. I would like to propose “Reformational” values as a baseline from which we can consider mission, our relationship to it, and our engagement in it.

By Reformational, I mean operating out of an understanding of ecclesiology, theology, hermeneutics etc., that has been profoundly shaped by the core values and world view of the magisterial Reformation. I do not intend to slight Anabaptists, their views have helped inform my Christian perspective in many ways. They are, however, significantly separated from mainstream Reformers.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, I do not insinuate that knowledge stopped there, that in fact would not be a Reformational perspective. The point is that the reformers such as Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger, Zwingli and the like represented values that help form my own as I interact with the Word of God. By “Reformational,” I do not mean “Reformed” in terms of anthropology and soteriology. Rather, I intend other values of the Reformers that impact most directly on church planting. Five of these are worth a brief mention, **christotelic, connectional, transnational, ecclesiotelically missional, and inter-dependent**. I freely admit that none of the five automatically come to mind, but a careful study of the 16th and early 17th century validates these claims. This also is not intended to represent the resurrection of European or American cultural violence and imperialism. We have a great and growing global church that does not need our importation of cultural forms, such as Charles Kraft’s American “christo-paganism.”<sup>2</sup> Kraft sees genuine faith enclosed by cultural forms that turn it into religion and, too often, into Western syncretism, “very intellectualized, organized according to foreign patterns, weak on the Holy Spirit and spiritual power, strong on Western forms of

communication (e.g. preaching) and Western worship patterns imposed on non-Western peoples as if it were scriptural.” To the contrary, this effort simply resurrects five values that represented the mighty acts of God.<sup>3</sup>

“**Christotelic**” represents the commitment to believing and communicating a certain understanding of Scripture. It is the story of a called people, but it is also a call to something. It is heilsgeschichte, “salvation history.”<sup>4</sup> It is to see all of scripture as a unit moving the reader to embrace Jesus as messiah, redeemer, eschatological king over creation and as the divine Son of God. It is going somewhere, to Christ. Christ is not, therefore, a moment in a larger narrative. He is also not a missing ingredient, completing an otherwise complete plan. He sums up all things in himself. “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him” (2 Cor 1:20). To be Christotelic is also a commitment to see the Bible as a canon, not a man-made collection of various, autonomous texts, but as one story. It is not an encyclopedia, nor is it an anthology. It is interconnected, progressive, and mutually-supportive. It is approached according to the “analogy of faith.” Scripture interprets scripture. This is the “heuristic maxim for interpreters”.<sup>6</sup> The Bible is revelation itself, not just the 66 building blocks contained within. Finally, it is a recognition that the canon was God’s idea not ours. It is a revelation, “God’s self-presentation to us.”<sup>7</sup> It is to be drawn into the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of listening, on our part, not fundamentally of creation. Furthermore, as Webster notes, God’s revelation in canon is a work of grace, given the fact that it is an act of reconciliation.

Finally, since people and text are both governed by the communicative presence of the Holy Spirit, the recognition of canon and the redemptive story it describes is an essentially passive act.<sup>8</sup> It is not a human construct we can ignore. It is God-sent. We are called to listen and obey. It, as the Orthodox wisely assert, reads us, we do not read it. As Packer notes, “Interpreted Scripture must be allowed to interpret its interpreters.” When it is all said, after all, we are still called to simply accept it, in all



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of its parts, and as it is given.

By **connectionalism**, I mean the commitment to the necessary, organic, and institutional interconnectivity of visible bodies of believers. This implies that visible assemblies are connected doctrinally, historically, spiritually, and ideologically. It means, at the most intimate level, they have more in common with each other than they have with any other part of the world around them. At an even more basic level, it also means that they see themselves as less than complete without the others. It stands against an ethos of independence and autonomy. It is the ethos of brotherhood and sisterhood, not of distant relatives or occasional friends. It is the language of true kinship; a repudiation of the Tower of Babel. To be clear, it does not necessitate denominationalism on the grand scale, but it does imply sustained, familial relations with the larger Body of Christ, expressed as webs of functional relationships. In an age of increasing missiological fragmentation and cultural hypersensitivity, it reminds us that God is a God of hospitality who has invited all of us to dine with him at the same table. It is the gathering of the Great Commission lived out

**Transnational** signifies the commitment to ties of real commitment between bodies of believers that transcend national borders. It goes beyond the national.

“International” is shaped by borders. It is not as though “International” is incorrect, rather it is insufficient. As Robert Kingdon has pointed out, Calvinism was from the beginning international, lacking the national ties common to German Lutherans and Dutch Anabaptists.<sup>9</sup> Its growth was fueled by rapidly spreading and growing colonies of refugees, much as Islam in Europe is today. Geneva served as a kind of resource hub, training leaders from all over Europe and a printing house, second only to Paris and Lyon for the French-speaking world.<sup>10</sup> In time, the movement also began to reproduce hubs such as Emden that could more effectively coordinate church planting and missions further north.<sup>11</sup> The networks formed around immigrant communities, empowered as they were by strategically located resource hubs (“mother

churches”), galvanized the spread of the Gospel. Sadly, this has not been the essential habit of European Reformed churches since the mid-17th century. The peace that settled over Europe following the Thirty Years War carried with it a heavy price. Given the fact that European nations emerging in the early modern period still reflected the Constantinian settlement, with state-sponsored religion, each ruler was empowered to determine the religion of his or her domain. Visible, organized churches, including connectional ones, were bounded by their nations’ political borders. This, however, was not the case 90 years prior. By the mid-16th century, Geneva, for example was the centre of a vital, expansive church planting, missionary effort that enveloped Northern and Western Europe in a web of interconnected colloquies, synods, presbyteries, and classes. Independent and denominational Reformed bodies all drank from the same trough. Reformed church planters were pioneer church planters and missionaries, well in advance of their Moravian brothers. It took the devastation of the Thirty Years War to snuff out the momentum and replace religious fervour with scepticism. The ever-shrinking globe has provided unique opportunities for this most biblical of values to flourish again.

The **ecclesiotelic missionalism** of the Reformed movement in 16th century Europe refers to the foundational commitment to look out, rather than focus in. Sadly, when we consider what we have become, it is difficult for us to understand that we were not always an introspective expression of faith, an introversion. By missional, I do not mean the necessity of believing communities to send out people that carry out the Great Commission. Rather, I mean missional in the sense that to look out, to be part of God’s creative, and re-creative process is essential to the definition of who we are. It is not an activity tacked onto our identity. It is our identity. It is militant faith. We forget that Calvin’s Geneva served as a school of missions. This was the life-blood of the faith.<sup>12</sup> Hundreds of missionaries were equipped and sent out by the Reformer. Geneva, in fact, served as the

paramount missionary hub of the 16th century. It is the faith of the missional church that connected the Genevan martyrs in Brazil with Felicity and Perpetua in the early church. It is ecclesiotelic in the sense that the focus is on the creation of faith communities, the biblical concept of church. These are marked by both inner faith and outward structure, governed by biblical forms and norms. Ultimately, this means that our commitment is to the creation of eschatological communities of mission, who also do the same. It is a commitment to a church kinetic. Geneva reported only one "particular" church in 1555. By 1562, there were 2,150.<sup>13</sup>

**Interdependent** churches locate their identity in the universal Body of Christ. On one hand, they know that they are home in the presence of others. At the same time, they are not, "buckets, sitting on their own bottoms." We are wisely repudiating dependent relationships between western and non-western peoples. Dependency has become a critical hurdle to overcome. The indigenous church principle, the focus of most missional activity since the end of the Second World War, churches that are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, underscores the recognition that paternalism represents an act of coercion and, therefore, promotes violence. As John Carter notes, what missionaries would not say that their goal was to work themselves out of a job? <sup>14</sup> Contextualization and its expression, "Insider Movements" also signify western commitments to honour "the other" as being made in the image of God. Equally, we see our own culture representing fallenness, as is every other culture.

On the other hand, we have now come to the place where we are "telling" non-western peoples that they no longer need us, and must be on their own. I wonder if we haven't just replaced one paternalism for another. Whether we tell them they need us, or we tell them they don't, we are still the tellers, not the listeners. It isn't a conversation. It is a speech. In a sense, it is still a vestige of post-colonial thinking. Is it, in fact, biblical not to need others? If Kraft is right to condemn western

"christo-paganism", surely a principle manifestation of it must be our obsession with radical independence. If we tell them that they do not need us, does that not also mean that we do not need others? What may sound like boldness and faith to us, the telling to national churches what they do not need, may sound like paternalism to others. <sup>15</sup> We must maintain that we are to be reflections of Christ to the world, but most of all to each other.

Moreover, if God is Triune, isn't interdependence as a value more congruent than either dependence or independence? The failure to grasp this is to fail to see that the evangelizers need to be continually evangelized. Acts 10-11 is an illustration in point. Peter himself needed to be transformed to take him beyond his Jewish conceptual borders before others could be transformed. The church that results from that transformative action is missional, as it is continually evangelized in an "ascending spiral", from church to mission to church. <sup>16</sup> We always need other voices proclaiming Jesus to us. This is what interdependence means. We always need them. We always need each other, for the life of the world.

Every people group and culture has something to contribute to the universal people of God. Every people group and culture needs redemption; none are fundamentally superior to the others. The shortcomings found within ourselves and our fallen cultural expressions cannot be resources entirely from within. God meets our need through the ministry of others outside ourselves. <sup>17</sup> Would it not be a more mature response to the missionary imperative for different indigenous bodies to partner together, interdependently? To be sure, the three-selves represent a very commendable goal, but only a first step in a longer relationship. Better still, as Carter calls them, are "coactive" ministries, consisting of all sorts of cooperative ventures. <sup>18</sup> Though their nature will be determined largely by the cultural context, the concept of interconnected ministry and mutual commitment does seem to reflect a more coherently biblical position. This does, of course, directly impact traditional goals for indigenouness, but it need not jeopardize contextual

ministry. The coactive participants decide the nature of the relationships, driven as they are by the circumstances and cultural constraints.

Interdependence implies service as well. The call to mission is the call to servanthood. Believers called to serve people of other cultures, are called first and foremost to be their servants, not their masters. Indigenous cultures, in the same way, see themselves as serving outside believers and the churches they represent as well. Interdependence transforms missions by replacing the power and control motifs resident in human nature. The later is, in particular, significant, as control is a principle source of global idolatry. Servanthood serves as a subversion of this manifestation of worldliness. It is thus Christ-like in the way that it shows the one true, saving God to others and because it does, critiques all fallen structures.

Finally, interdependence is a statement of profound humility. It acknowledges need. As such, it is opposed to all forms of pride. It admits a need to find answers outside of ourselves and even outside of our private relations with the Lord Jesus. We can see that God speaks through communities. These are not simply local however, they are global. We are called, as a consequence, to hold to our own positions with fidelity, but also with the knowledge that we have much to learn, both with regard to ourselves and most especially concerning God. We do not need culturally quarantined communities of believers, we need to share ourselves. We do not need to merge our distinctions either. We do not benefit from "vanilla" faith expressions, but we do need to enjoy all of the flavors.

1. Enormous debate has swirled around the different "wings" of the Reformation. Terms such as "left wing" and "radical" each represent opposing poles attempting to describe separatists and Anabaptists. Though Williams' "Radical Reformation" makes the case for seeing them as the Reformation carried to its logical conclusion, I am inclined to see it as a compromise with medieval devotion. As I see it, the magisterial Reformation is the radical Reformation. Therefore, its ecclesiology and theology reflect the Reformation's real frontier.
2. Charles H. Kraft, "Pursuing Faith, not Religion: The Liberating Quest for Contextualization" *Mission Frontiers* (September-October 2005) 10.
3. I do disagree with Kraft and his implications in a number of significant ways. His assumption that he can isolate faith from its cultural form (e.g. "form religion"), betrays naïveté. His own statements concerning western syncretism profile values that, given their contentious nature, can certainly be argued over. His statements also imply that elements of "religion" such as preaching (not merely Western styles of preaching, but preaching in the main) are disposable. By extension, so then would be church, offices, structures, sacraments, etc. I do not agree with his assumptions that these are simply cultural elements that can be freely replaced or discarded.
- 4.. David L. Baker, "Interpreting Texts in the Context of the Whole Bible" *Themelios* 5.2 (January 1980) 22.
5. Rich Lusk, "The Christotelic Spiral" (2004) [www.hornes.org](http://www.hornes.org).
6. James I. Packer, "In Quest of Canonical Interpretation" *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options* (Louisville: John Knox, 1983) [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com) 3.
7. John Webster, "The Dogmatic Location of the Canon" *NZSTH*, 43, Bd., S. 17-43.
8. Webster, "Canon" 36.
9. Robert M. Kingdon, "International Calvinism" *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 229.
10. Kingdon 235.
11. Far from the stereotypic closed community of relentless authoritarianism, Calvin's Geneva was a church planting dynamo. Some of its concepts such as the resource hubs of Geneva and Emden merit serious missiological study, if not outright imitation.
12. Ray Van Neste, "John Calvin on Evangelism and Missions" *Founders Journal* 33 [www.founders.org](http://www.founders.org).
13. Erroll Hulse, "John Calvin and his Missionary Enterprise" *Reformation Today* (1998) [www.theology21.org](http://www.theology21.org).
14. John F. Carter, "The Indigenous Principle Revisited: Towards a Co-Active Mode of Missionary Ministry".
15. Gerald H. Anderson, "Moratorium on Missionaries?" [www.christiancentury.org](http://www.christiancentury.org). The author is the President of the American Society of Missiology.
16. Willem Saayman, "Missionary by its Very Nature" *Southern African Missiological Society*. Originally published in *Missionalia* 11.
17. Mission Issues and Strategy Advisory Group II, "Ten Principles of Partnership: From towards Dynamic Mission: Renewing the Church for Mission" *The Anglican Communion: Mission and Evangelism* (1993) [www.aco.org](http://www.aco.org).
18. Carter 3.1. The coactive approach depends on genuine relationships that do not devolve into financial arrangements. These will not necessarily be evident at the start, but will emerge as both parties learn to value the other. Ultimately, the only thing preventing the concept from degenerating into a hopeless naïveté is the inner presence of the Holy Spirit, who moves the centre of gravity from the cultural and social to the spiritual and essential.

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## Introduction

Samuel was impressed by the first of Jesse's sons (1 Sam. 16:1-7). Eliab's appearance made him a good candidate for the kingship. In fact, the implication is that he was rather similar to the young Saul who was also impressive looking, standing head and shoulders above other men. Maybe that resemblance influenced Samuel in some way. This is what kings look like. But as Samuel thought 'This is the one' the Lord spoke clearly to him and gave what is surely the definitive word on the relative merits of style and substance: 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart' (1 Sam.16:7).<sup>1</sup>

'Man looks on the outward appearance'. Not only in the 21st century but in 1050 B.C. Not only superficial worldlings or teenagers, but the godly elder-statesman of Israel. The punchline however is that the man God did choose was impressive looking; David was 'ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome'. Ugly people cannot claim the spiritual high-ground; the point is that appearance simply does not matter.

Now what does this begin to say to us? The pursuit of holiness is always a struggle. Today we are part of a society greatly given to 'images' and to style, too often at the expense of substance. I want to look at the concept of the 'image of God' to help us distinguish what we are from what we appear to be. What is this image? What does its loss mean? How may it be recovered? How can people be led to reality and be less entranced by style. How, in other words, can 'the image' deliver us from images?

## The Image of God

Genesis 1:26,27 states that God made man, male and female, 'in our image, after our likeness'. There is no sound basis for a clear distinction between 'image' (*tsalem*) and 'likeness' (*demuth*) [see the use of 'likeness' alone in Gen 5:1, the use of both words again in 5:3, and 'image' alone in 9:6] but the overall meaning is that man (humanity) is made to *resemble* God and to *represent* God. God is saying 'Let us make man to be like us and to represent us'. The word 'image' is used of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel 3 – an image to represent the king, to remind the people to whom they owed allegiance. Two things become clear early in Genesis with regard to this image: (1) it is transferable through natural generation (5:3); Adam's son is in 'his' image which is presumably the image of God passed on – there is no clear suggestion that this is only his 'sinful' image. (2) The image is sacrosanct: (a) it is not to be murdered 'for God made man in his own image'(9:6) and (b) no other, competing image is to be made - the second commandment which, though it clearly has primary reference to protecting the spirituality of God in the eyes of the Israelites, also preserves the uniqueness of man as the only divinely authorised image of God (Deut 4:16; 27:15). Only man bears the Maker's trademark and it is not to be pirated. Man is in the image of God; it is not just something he has. He 'images' God. This is 'the heart of Christian anthropology';<sup>2</sup> it is what makes us human.

But what is the 'content' of this image? Various answers have been given. (1) Some look at what man does – a **functional** approach, in particular the restriction of the image to the exercise of dominion. But is this really 'the image' or is it 'a bestowment upon the image bearer'? Man's lordship is surely not identical with the image but an implication of it. (2) Others look at man's capacity for relationships - the **relational** view (eg Barth). We are analogous to God in our relationships but not in our being. A consequence of this is that nothing of the image is lost at the Fall because we are still capable of relationships. But this relational view seems too

restrictive. (3) A third approach is the **substantive** view - to see some particular quality of man - most commonly intellect or reason, or spirituality, as comprising the image. This was the approach of eg Irenaeus and Aquinas. No doubt something can be learned from each of these approaches though each is unsatisfactory in itself.

The Reformed approach has been to adopt what Raymond calls the 'restoration hermeneutic'.<sup>3</sup> This looks at that to which man is restored in Christ eg in Ephesians 4:23,24: the new man is created 'after the likeness of God (according to God) in true righteousness and holiness'; and Colossians 3:10, where the new man is 'being renewed in knowledge after the image (*kat' eikona*) of its creator'. Righteousness (moral rectitude, perfect conformity to God's will), holiness (true piety towards God) and true knowledge of God are renewed in Christ. Is it not justified therefore to see in these what was given at creation? Indeed not just given at creation but also - since it needs to be renewed - lost at the Fall?

Here we need to make the important distinction between the image in the 'broad' sense and in the 'narrow' sense. The Bible is clear that even after the Fall man is in the image of God: Gen 9:6; James 3:9. Theologians have used various terms to describe what was retained and what was lost (respectively broad/narrow [Berkhof, Bavinck]; formal/material [Brunner]; structural/ functional [Hoekema]). These are not two images, but one image with two aspects. What theologians are trying to grapple with is the fact that man lost something at the Fall but is still thereafter in God's image. The Reformed 'restoration hermeneutic' takes the passages in Ephesians and Colossians and says 'this is what is renewed, therefore this is what was lost.' The image of God truly so called, 'the strict and proper acceptation of the phrase' in Thornwell's words,<sup>4</sup> is 'holiness', original righteousness or what Edwards calls 'moral excellency'.<sup>5</sup> This was lost at the Fall but man is still in God's image in a broader sense.

What is this 'broader' sense? It is the 'entire endowment of gifts and capacities that enable man to function as he should in his various relationships and callings' (Hoekema).<sup>6</sup> These include his spiritual capacity, moral

nature, rational powers, conscience, the ability to choose, creativity, the ability to rule, the capacity for relationships, emotions, communication, love. The exercise of dominion may rightly be said to be foremost among these capacities as it is specifically mentioned in Genesis 1 and expounded in Psalm 8. This 'broader' image remains, though scarred, shattered and terribly deformed by the Fall. But the narrow image has been lost altogether. Now how are we to understand this? Was holiness a 'faculty' that was lost? As a man might lose a kidney or the power of reason? No; at the Fall, no faculty of man was lost. That is the weakness of the Roman Catholic position - original righteousness as a 'super-added gift' which enables man to keep his unstable nature in check, but which was lost at the Fall. The narrow image - holiness - is in fact not so much a faculty or capacity but the way in which man in perfection related to God. According to Jonathan Edwards, not only did man possess those *faculties* of understanding and will wherein he resembles the Godhead (the *natural* [broad] image) but his exercise of those faculties in humble love and obedience was a mirror of the divine glory (the *spiritual* [narrow] image)<sup>7</sup>. Man can only be what God intends him to be if he is holy, that is, if he is exercising all the capacities that God has given him in perfect conformity to the will of God. The narrow image, which Hoekema calls 'functional', as it consists in the *use* that is made of the faculties of man in the broader image, is therefore lost when man disobeys. The narrow image is therefore 'dynamic' as it is not a faculty but the maintaining of a relationship through perfect obedience, exercising that perfect propensity for perfect obedience that Adam enjoyed - his original righteousness. Adapting Hoekema's language, the image of God is both structural (what man is, the broader image) and functional (man living obediently in relation to God, the narrow image). As a bird was meant to fly, even if the wings are in perfect condition, without flight the bird is not fulfilling its purpose. The narrow image is not just the capacity for a right relationship with God - sinners retain that - but the maintaining and enjoyment of that right relationship. This dynamic nature of the image has not perhaps been

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emphasized enough though it is by no means a new idea. Man must live a life of perfect love to God, not just have all his faculties.

Thornwell and Calvin alike assert the *universality* of the image in human life. Thornwell says of Adam: 'The law was the bent of his being...with reason enlightened in the spiritual knowledge of God...with a will prone to obey the dictates of reason thus enlightened and therefore in accordance with the spirit of divine law. He knew his relations to God, his relations to his wife...and his relations to the world; and knew them with that spiritual apprehension which converted his knowledge into one continued act of religion'.<sup>8</sup> Calvin writes: 'the likeness of God extends to the whole excellence by which man's nature towers over all the kinds of living creatures. Accordingly, the integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word [likeness/image], when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all his senses tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to the exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his maker'.<sup>9</sup> (Calvin often spoke as if the image in totality was lost at the Fall but he also makes it clear elsewhere that he regarded the image as continuing).

Man was therefore made to resemble and to represent God in every area of life; to love and worship God in all of life, in all of his being, body, mind, emotions, will. This can be summarised as living in conformity with the will of God in a threefold relation: to God, neighbour and the created order. When he fell, all of his being and all of life was affected. 'Depravity' was 'total'. What is to be restored must be in each relation.

## What happened at the Fall?

### (1) The Nature of the Fall

Man disobeyed God. His continued blessedness and role in creation was made dependent on obedience to a command. He had all the capacities required to obey. Why he did not is beyond us to fathom. What he lost was 'righteousness'. As a result we are a race dead in sin. But what was at the heart of losing the heart of the image

of God? Genesis 3 points to the sowing of mistrust in God; the idea that he could not be trusted, that he was not loving. Or that love was the 'appearance' God was projecting, but not his reality. The conviction of God's love is the essential precondition to maintaining the image. Once that is lost, trust is lost and disobedience follows almost automatically. Faith is the presupposition of obedience.

It is to the ensuing disobedience itself, however, that the Bible traces sin. The very heart of our identity is obedience to our Creator. We are essentially moral beings. What do we mean by 'moral'? That God is a 'moral' being – he is holy and requires above all else from his creatures conformity with his character; as Creator he justifiably issues commands; we are to obey; there is absolute right and absolute wrong; disobedience is sin; we are accountable; faith entails obedience; love for God will be shown by obedience; persistent and habitual disobedience is evidence of a heart still in fundamental rebellion; there is a judgement to come; God is our judge. This is what it is to live as moral beings.

David Wells<sup>10</sup> and Dick Keyes<sup>11</sup> make the point that we have lost public discourse in terms of morals and replaced it with discourse framed in psychological and emotional terms. '...the older quest for spiritual authenticity, for godliness, has often been replaced by newer quests for psychological wholeness' says Wells. This has permeated the church. Feeling good has become more important than meeting God. Creating a relaxed and amusing atmosphere is more important than the serious business of self-examination in the light of God's Word.

The tragedy is, that without a moral discourse, we lose the context in which to find our humanity. As Wells points out, there are consequences:

(a) character takes second place to personality. Words such as honour, reputation, morals, integrity, manly, good are (unless they're interpreted psychologically) replaced by words like stunning, creative, charisma, forceful, fascinating, magnetic, to describe desirable qualities. These are non-moral. So attention turns from being something in relation to timeless values or virtues to

being appealing to others. What we actually are is less important than our performance before a public that mostly (we hope) judges the exterior – or, at least, the image we project.

(b) guilt is replaced, if at all, by something like shame, not an objective reality but a feeling, not a reflex of our relationship with God but of our relationship with others – social, not moral.

(c) virtues have been replaced by personal values which are little more than preferences.

The overall picture is of a society identifying itself by images because what we are seen to be by people is everything. Like Saul we fear the people, unlike David, we do not fear God.

## 2. Consequences of the Fall

Man is a ruined temple, broken down and decayed, but sufficient remains to hint at the splendour that once was. The effects of the Fall are that man now uses all his capacities (the broader image) in sinful and disobedient ways. All he has and does is against his Creator. What is the significance of the image of God now?

(a) **Idolatry.** The heart of man, as Calvin describes it, is a veritable idol factory. Cut off from God we desperately search for something else to worship. We cannot escape what we are, even in our sinful state; we are worshippers. But neither, Scripture would suggest, can we escape being in the image of our god. ‘Their idols are silver and gold, the work of man’s hands....Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them’. (Psalm 115:4,8). What we worship, that will we come to resemble; the worshipper of money, success or power suffers a diminished humanity. We may add that what we worship we also represent to the world. We become the ambassadors of our gods. The great god is self as the hero of Camus’ novel *The Fall* discovers: ‘I am not hard-hearted; far from it – full of pity on the contrary and with a ready tear to boot. Only, my emotional impulses always turn toward me, my feelings of pity concern me. It is not true after all, that I have never loved. I conceived at least one great love in my life, of which I was always the object’.<sup>12</sup> What was meant to be the image has become

god. And so we make god in our image and remake ourselves in the image of our god. Who can deliver us from this circle?

(b) **Identity.** ‘Made in God’s image’ is the Bible’s answer to the question ‘Who am I?’ Having lost the image we have lost the knowledge of who we are. Is not this why ‘style’ is so important? We are radically lost, our true ‘substance’ lost or obscured. David Wells writes: ‘A century ago, the answer to the question, “Who are we?” would have been one thing, but today it something entirely different. “I am my genes” some say, as they surrender themselves to biological fate. “I am my past”, “I am my self-image”, “I am my gender”, I am what I have”, “I am what I do”, “I am whom I know”, “I am my sexual orientation”, say others who think that there are other kinds of fate or that identity is either something we do or something we can construct. And what we once would have said – “I am one who is made in the image of God” – does not translate into the language of modernity’.<sup>13</sup>

People need to know who they are but without God there is no adequate sense of identity that can do justice to what they are. Identity is therefore located in something we have, wear or do; something we want to be seen to be; some projection – be it ‘bad’ or ‘good’ in conventional moral terms matters not provided it gives me an answer to the question ‘who am I?’ Moreover it is important that *other people* see me in this way. I must project an image; what others think of me is all important. ‘People’ rather than God are the audience for my life’s performance. Appearance – style – becomes everything – because after all, man looks on the outward appearance. So what if God looks on the heart? He does not exist; even if he does, what has he got to do with me? Image is everything. But that I am an image means nothing.

What’s more – don’t you dare attack my sexual orientation, or my preferences, or my culture or what I do or the way I dress. Attack these and you attack what and who I am. I can no longer be distinguished from my constituent parts, my components, my faculties, gifts, capacities and accoutrements. For, lacking as I do a real

sense of identity apart from or deeper than these, these are me. Tolerance of me while criticising my behaviour, choices and morals is, to me, incomprehensible. I am those things. Reject my image and you reject me. I really am that frail. The outward appearance is who I am and if you cannot accept this, you do not accept me. But at the same time I long – and demand – to be accepted for what I am – warts and all.

(c). **Ignorance.** We do not know ourselves. With apologies to John Calvin in the opening paragraph of his *Institutes*, ‘Nearly all the folly we possess, that is to say, true and sound folly, consist of two parts: the ignorance of God, and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern’. We are ignorant of ourselves; thinking we are wise, we become fools. We have exchanged the Truth for a lie (Psalm 106:20; Rom 1:25). True knowledge is part of the renewed image. But the knowledge of God is also the way to the renewing of the image.

(d) **Implications in the New Testament.** Explicit references to creation in the image of God are not common in the New Testament but are significant.

- James 3:9 – it is wrong to curse people who are made in God’s likeness [*kath homoiousin theou*] because to bless God and curse what he has made is the height of inconsistency because the creature evidently bears some of the glory of the Creator. The clear implication is that even fallen man bears something of the glory of God because he is in God’s image and is therefore to be treated with profound respect. Listen again to Calvin.<sup>14</sup> ‘We are not to consider what men merit of themselves but to look upon the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honour and love. Therefore whatever man you meet who needs your aid, you have no reason to refuse to help him... Say “he is contemptible and worthless” but the Lord shows him to be one to whom he has deigned to give the beauty of his image...’.

- In his discussion of head-coverings in 1 Cor 11:7 Paul calls man the image [*eikun*] and glory of God, and woman the glory of man. The implication appears to be that man reflects God in his lordship and in this way is the ‘glory’ of God in a way that the woman is not. Both

are equally in God’s image but man is God’s glory in the sense that he reflects God’s dominion and authority in a way that the woman does not. She meanwhile is the glory of man (that is, reflecting him by her existence and role in creation). Again, the ‘image’ has implications for Christians in that it upholds the order of creation.

- In Acts 17:28f the word ‘image’ is not used but the idea of affinity to God is clear; we are offspring of the one God. The implication of verse 29 is that if we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the God who ‘fathered’ us can be represented by inanimate objects, ‘an image formed [*xaragmati*] by the art and imagination of man’. The concept of being God’s offspring is used in an evangelistic context to remind people of their inherent relationship to God as creatures, and as a rebuke for worshipping idols. In context, its main purpose for Paul is as a rebuke. What we were (and are) stands over us as a rebuke to what we have become: idolaters. We should be able to infer something about God from what we are, but instead we make images of him from metal and stone.

## Restoring the Image

Most important in the NT usage of ‘image’ is the theme of renewal of the image. The ‘restoration hermeneutic’ relies on the renewal of the image to infer the content and meaning of the original image. This tacitly assumes that we can only see what humanity should be in Christ. The image is renewed in Christ. He is the ‘image [*eikun*] of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15; also 2 Cor 4:4). According to Hebrews 11:1-3 he is the ‘radiance’ of God’s glory, the ‘express image’ or ‘exact representation’ [*xarakteer* – stamp, impress, as of coin or seal] of his nature, his very being [*hupostasews*]. The ‘exact impress’ is that which corresponds to the original so that thereby the person is known. ‘As Image, Christ is the visible representation and manifestation of the invisible God, the objective expression of the divine nature, the face of God turned as it were toward the world, the exact likeness of the Father in all things except being the Father. Thus we receive “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”.’<sup>15</sup>



'What God essentially is, Christ makes manifest'.<sup>16</sup>

Christ is eternally the image of God; he can never be not the image. He is the image of God in his pre-incarnate state (Heb 1:3) also in the incarnation (Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4).

He is the image inherently; we, derivatively. He *is* the Image of God; we are created in that image. In the incarnation we see striking evidence of man being made in God's image, for how could God have revealed himself fully in his Son if there were not correspondence between our nature and God's? He is the 'facsimile' of God and also the 'prototype' of humanity within the Godhead.<sup>17</sup>

In Christ being fully man and fully God we have the answer to Calvin's conundrum: does the knowledge of God or of ourselves come first? In Christ we find both the knowledge of God and of ourselves, true God and true humanity.

Christ was God and fully obeyed God. There was never any possibility of his sinning and no possibility therefore of there being any breach between the narrow and broad image. His work is called, in Romans 5:18, his 'one act of righteousness' (*henos dikaiumatos*). He maintained throughout his life but especially and characteristically at the cross his love for and obedience to God and did so from the heart (John 4:34; 8:29; 17:4; Heb 10:7). Thus a perfect image of God was maintained and a perfect righteousness wrought to be 'reckoned' through faith to those who believe. The righteousness of God as man, that is the righteousness of Christ, should perhaps be seen not as a substance or a faculty or even a quality but as an act, the act of obedience which Adam failed to offer God, an act that was human but of infinite value because also divine. It is perfect love which is not static but dynamic, active, the expression of authentic faith or trust. By that act all who believe are constituted righteous, by imputation, by federal relation to Christ – made what they are not by nature.

In Christ's being the image of God we see also the goal of regeneration: to be conformed to his likeness (Rom 8:29) and to be like him – 'just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven' (1 Cor 15:49; cf 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2). In

Christ we are renewed in righteousness, holiness and knowledge. The image of God in this sense is dynamic not static. To 'image' God is to live a life of love, imitating God. The goal of redemption is to be like God.

## What then should the church do?

1. Remember that (a) some appearance/image is inevitable as the genuine expression of reality; not artificially projected but the outshining of our being and behaviour. If I appear competent/wise/loving/generous it should be because I really am, not because I am 'putting it on', but (b) 'image' is wrong when created consciously to obscure reality or project an alternative or even contrary and therefore deceptive 'persona'. This is the essence of hypocrisy.

2. Image and reality will never wholly coincide in this life; perfect integrity is possible only in heaven.

3. Christians should be able to 'dare to be sinners' with each other, acknowledging what we are though not glorying in it, and not feeling the need to project perfectionist images. We fear God not man. Our attitude should be 'I do not fear your condemnation because although I am not perfect I am right with God.' We do not glory in our sins but we know that what counts is that the blood of Jesus has cleansed us from them all.

4. Be careful to try not to project or impose any images in preaching and church life. Looking at your life or church, and listening to your sermons, what would people think 'justifies'? Even if we preach the gospel of justification through faith by grace alone, what are people hearing and seeing? Are we pressurising people to conform on inessentials? Dr. Lloyd-Jones tells a story of a man who was converted. He had a big 'handlebar' moustache. One day the Doctor was indignant to see that this man's moustache had gone. He thought some busy-body Christian had been telling him that 'Christians do not have moustaches like that'. That was not the way of sanctification. Francis Schaeffer used to say, 'You cannot be the Holy Spirit for someone else'. What unrealistic images do we project and what unbiblical standards do we impose? Preachers in particular may do so unwittingly – by their style more than by their 'substance'.

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5. Preach God. The only way for the image to be restored is by the knowledge of God in Christ.

(a) Be convinced and convince the people of the seriousness of preaching and listening.

(b) Present God as the 'audience' for our lives. Inculcate a true fear of God, a reverent awe of God as the one who knows all, sees all and will judge all; the one who sees the heart. 'Fear him, ye saints, and you will then / Have nothing else to fear'. Integrity begins with finding our identity before God.

(c) Preach the love of God. A God to whom people are attracted. Love is the perfect expression of the image and it is God's love that calls it forth.

(d) Preach the moral God, the God of absolute standards, of holiness, law and justice. The gospel can only be understood in the moral context of human existence. Remember Paul in Athens – Acts 17:30,31 – preaching to pagans, he concludes with a call to repentance based on the coming judgement.

(e) Preach Christ and not yourselves, 2 Cor. 4:4,5.

(f) Remember that in all preaching and leading of worship, style as well as substance is important. We need what someone called both a 'divine reverence' and a 'human freshness'. We do not encourage reverence by being inhumanly sombre; nor a godly joy by being jocular and light-hearted.

6. In sharing God's image with all humanity we have the best possible 'point of contact' with unbelievers. In Acts 17:22-3, 27-9 Paul makes use of 'points of contact' in creation and Fall (man's religious nature, practices and ignorance and our being made in God's image) as he confronts the Athenians with the (redemptive) truth of God. Surely no cultural differences can be as great as the similarities between human beings who share all that is contained in the divine image and the plight we share as sinners ignorant of the living God?

**Some questions for discussion.**

1. In what ways is 'projecting an image' inevitable? Would you draw any distinctions between style, appearance and image?

2. What are some of the consequences of the prevalence of images over reality in our relationships with other people?

3. Do Christians project images of the Christian life which are not realistic? How? In what ways may these be damaging?

4. How does 'the fear of the Lord' in everyday life eliminate hypocrisy and bring about integrity?

5. How may we promote the recovery of a moral framework for thought and life?

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1. Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

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4. J.H.Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, (Banner of Truth 1974) Vol 1, p236.

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8. Thornwell, p 237-38.

9. Institutes I.xiv.3. (Ford Lewis Battles translation).

10. *Losing our Virtue*, (IVP, Leicester 1998) p 16.

11. Two essays on 'Image and Reality in Society' in *What in the World is Real?* (Communication Institute, 1982).

12. Quoted from *Worship by the Book* ed. D.A.Carson, (Zondervan, 2002), p 240.

13. Wells, p 13.

14. Insts. III.vii.6.

15. International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia on *Image of God*.

16. F.F.Bruce, cited in the ISBE.

17. But to say with Barth that humanity finds its original nature only in Christ and not in Adam is to go too far because Adam is called the first man, Christ the Second man; Christ takes on human nature in the incarnation (Phil 2:7; Heb 2:14,17).

The doctrine of adoption is in the process of a long overdue comeback; one that promises a more exact understanding of what the Bible (specifically Paul) teaches: Eph. 1:5; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:15, 23. As a Reformed/reforming Christian I welcome this, for no other wing of the church has done as much with the doctrine in either the pre- or post-Reformation eras (see, most notably, Calvin and the Westminster Standards). And yet, over recent centuries, the Calvinistic tradition has lost sight of adoption, chiefly because of our understandable, if somewhat short-sighted, preoccupation with our defence of justification. We have rightly stressed what we are saved from, but at the expense of what we are saved to.

To be clear about Paul's teaching we need, first, to cease the well-worn (Puritan) practice of confusing Paul's language of adoption with John's references to the new birth (notably Jn 1:12-13; 3:1-21; 1 Jn 2:28-3:3). The terms they use construct two distinctive filial or familial models (robust metaphors), which convey differing yet supplementary concepts of our salvation. Whereas John's model speaks of the birth of the children of God (*tekna tou theou*) into the kingdom – emphasising their subsequent growth into the image of the Son (*huios*) – Paul's refers to the adoption of God's (mature) sons into his family, and indicates the new status they have in Christ, and all that goes with it: acceptance, assurance, liberty, prayer, obedience and hope (the inheritance).

While the underlying concepts of each model (new life and free life respectively) contribute harmoniously to the one gospel, systematicians of our tradition, following the example of the Puritans, have mistakenly assumed that to express the unity of these concepts requires the conflation of their models. This is not so. We only have the right to mix biblical models when the Scripture itself does so, although to cease the practice will require a (much-needed) fresh approach to the systematisation of the Bible's theology; what elsewhere I have called 'biblical dogmatics'.

Clarity in understanding Paul's adoption model is gained, secondly, by grasping the coherence of his unique fivefold usage of *huios* (adoption as son). What determines the

importance he places on adoption is not the number of times he uses the Greek term, but the manner in which he utilises it. In fact, the five texts may be understood as markers along the line of redemptive history from the first to the last things (protology to eschatology). Each of these texts we shall consider in turn: Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:15-16; 8:22-23.

## The Planning of Adoption

'Sonship', counsels Herman Ridderbos, 'is not to be approached from the subjective experience of the new condition of salvation, but rather from the divine economy of salvation, as God foreordained it in his eternal love (Eph. 1:5), and realized it in principle in the election as his people.' Stated simply, adoption originated in the mind of God the Father.

It was for no other reason than 'the good pleasure of his will' (the *efficient* cause) that the Father predestined us to adoption. Notwithstanding all the perfection and fullness of reciprocated love that passed eternally between the persons of the Godhead – such that God need never have loved outside of himself in order to remain love – he voluntarily condescended to extend his love to the very 'offspring' (Acts 17:28) that would break loose from him and become 'sons of disobedience', 'children of wrath', inhabitants of the household of the living dead, and slaves to the Prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:1-3).

In predestination (the *material* cause of adoption) the Father named for himself a seismic family (Eph. 3:15). By, or literally through (*dia*), Christ (v. 5; cf. v. 7), he determined the transferral of the elect from the devil's household into his own. In time, the sons of disobedience would through faith (the *instrumental* cause) become the sons of God and experience his warm paternal embrace (*eis auton* v.5). Enough to say that the gospel begins with grace, but culminates hereafter in glory (the final cause): ours, but ultimately our Father's (v. 6).

## The Privilege of Adoption

What was divinely planned in ages past was realised in history through the unfolding of God's covenantal

dealings with his people. To Abraham was given a divine promise that he would, through Christ (Gal. 3:18, 29), inherit the world (Rom. 4:13). Yet this promise only anticipated the adoption. In Romans 9:4 we learn – through the correspondence of two of Israel's six privileges under the old covenant: the adoption (*bé huiothesia*) and the giving of the law (*bé nomothesia*) – that it was not until Sinai, subsequent to Israel's redemption, that Yahweh adopted (the inaugurated nation of) Israel as his (corporate) son.

This thought would have sounded familiar to ancient Near Eastern ears, accustomed as they were to the employment of father-son imagery in the drafting of covenants. At that time, religions customarily regarded their gods as having consorts who bore them sons. Yet Yahweh, being without equal, had no consort, and no 'son' either. He thus, sovereignly and graciously, chose out insignificant Israel (Deut. 7:1, 7) to adopt as his own. But Israel was not to demean this adoptive sonship by comparing it negatively to the 'natural' sonship the surrounding people groups were said to enjoy to their gods. So special was Israel to Yahweh that he was treated as a firstborn son, replete with all the rights of primogeniture (Exod. 4:22; cf. Jer. 31:9). In Yahweh Israel found a Father dedicated to his welfare. Subsequent centuries were to prove this dedication, in the face of Israel's multiple childish rebellions (Hos. 11:1ff.; Mal. 2:10ff.).

## The Reception of Adoption

With the coming of Christ (Gal. 4:4-5), Israel finally came of age. The Son's redeeming work at Calvary not only freed believing Israelites from the ceremonial laws (which had been used by the Father to educate him in his youth [Gal. 3:23-25; 4:1-3]), in fulfilment of Isaiah 56:1ff., Christ opened up God's household to the believing Gentiles he set free from their prior enslavement to pagan deities (4:8; cf. Eph. 2:11-22).

The Father adopts his redeemed by uniting them to Christ. By placing us in the Son (note *huiothesia*: *huioi* [son] plus *thesia* [from *tithemi* – 'to place']), we too become sons (hence Paul's use of masculine expressions, his reference to 'daughters' [2 Cor. 6:18] and 'children'

[Rom. 8:16, 17, 21; 9:8] notwithstanding). By this union we share with Christ an identity of relation to the Father, and enter into membership of his family (Eph. 2:19). Into our hearts the Father pours the Spirit of His firstborn. He it is who empowers us to call on God as our Father, irrespective of our ethnic origins (note the multi-cultural use of the Aramaic 'Abba' and the Greek '*pater*29r' [Father]). In fact, nothing demonstrates the profundity of our union with Christ more than this vocative we use when we pray. It is the same as our brother used in Gethsemane (cf. Gal. 4:6 with Rom. 8:15 and Mk 14:36)!

## The Assurance of Adoption

The Father's adoptive act (acceptance) has brought us into the privileged adoptive state (sonship) we now experience. Whereas in Galatians 4 we are said to have the Spirit because we are sons, in Romans 8 the apostle says that we are sons because we have the Spirit (8:14). The Spirit of adoption ('sonship' [NIV]) assures us of our relationship to the Father. He does so, first, by counteracting the encroachment of the fear-producing spirit of bondage (cf. Gal. 5:18). Second, he helps us to enter boldly into our filial relationship. Having placed on our tongues, once-for-all, the filial language of prayer, the Spirit of the risen Christ (cf. Rom. 1:3-4), who resides in our hearts ever after, remains available to us as we learn how to cry (*kerazō*) with confidence to our Father (Gal. 4:6 and Rom. 8:15). He witnesses supernaturally and personally with our spirits (*summarturei*) that we are authentic children of God (*tekna theou* [v. 16]). This is not divine revelation, as he does not witness to our spirits. Nevertheless, his witness fulfils the biblical requirement of a dual/multiple testimony for the establishment of a truth (cf. 2 Cor. 13:1; Deut. 17:6, 19:15). This testimony was, incidentally, also required in the validation of contemporary Roman practices of adoption.

But why, having made so much of the maturation of the sons of God in the new covenant era, should Paul describe us in Romans 8 as children (*tekna* [cf. Phil. 2:15])? Is not the term more characteristic of John? True, but it is said that a Roman adoption was, existentially, like a new birth. The former slave was no longer just existing, but

alive and in possession of all the rights of his new family: freedom from debt and a share in the inheritance – hence Paul's talk elsewhere of the Spirit as the downpayment/guarantee or pledge (*arrabôn*) of the inheritance (Eph. 1:14). The divine inheritance is unique. It does not, and cannot, require the death of the Father. Neither does he become decrepit or dependent on his children. There occurs no role reversal. His immortality knows no aging process. Thus, no matter how mature the sons of God become in these last days, they remain forever *tekna*, dependent on their heavenly Father.

### The Consummation of Adoption

Adopted in principle from eternity past (Eph. 1:5); in the presence of God, when at Calvary the Son broke the chains of our enslavement; and in our consciences the moment we believe and are united to Christ in His Sonship; amid our present filial privileges and responsibilities (which space precludes us from unpacking), we continue to await expectantly the public proclamation of our adoption. 'For we know', writes Paul, 'that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body' (Rom. 8: 22-23).

In Romans 8:17-23 Paul teaches, first, that the adoption coincides with glory. The pattern of Christ's life – suffering now, glory later – is repeated in our lives. And while we know more about our sufferings than we do of the glory (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15), the apostle promises four things: (1) God's people shall be glorified together with Christ; (2) the worst miseries of the present time cannot compare with the goodness of the superlative blessings of the coming glory; (3) the glory will be revealed in the sons of God; (4) it will shine forth in our full, perfect and eternal liberty (vv. 17, 18, 21).

Secondly, the adoption will entail the unveiling ('revelation') of God's sons (v. 19). Some we think are brethren shall sadly turn out to be sons of disobedience, while others we fear are children of wrath shall be

unveiled as the Father's (*cf.* Eph. 2:1-3). Blessed with a few droplets of the Spirit (Calvin), we groan with creation (as in labour rather than the throes of death), straining our necks to see who truly belongs to him. The adoption, that shall reveal all, will vindicate the patience and perseverance God's authentic sons have shown amid the divine testing and diabolical persecution of the present age. Then, and only then, shall we be released from the current futilities. Our persevering shall have reached its end (that is, its termination as well as its telos [vv. 24-25]).

Thirdly, the consummation of adoption shall entail a commensurate consummation of our liberty (vv. 20-21). Presently, we are free only in part, and in our souls alone. What is more, the freedom we have may be undermined (*cf.* Gal. 5:1). When, however, creation is at last delivered from its enslavement to corruption, we shall know full, perfect, and eternal freedom in both our bodies and our souls. Redemption accomplished, both cosmically and psychosomatically! All enslavement shall be history. The full sum of the inheritance will be ours.

For now, we yearn for a better day, and shall continue to do so even as we sleep through Jesus (1 Thess. 4:14):

The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, *waiting for the full redemption of their bodies*, which even in death continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their souls. (Westminster Larger Catechism [Ans. 86])

The terminus of NT hope is not then, heaven in its ethereal intermediate state – where our short-sighted hopes often lie – but heaven in its final form: a redeemed creation full of divine presence, purged of the corruption of the present order, and home to all God's family. Job well done, the Father's perfect and unending family reunion begins. Its focus will be his glory; its promise – our enjoyment with Christ of the inheritance that grace alone requires our eternal Father to share; but its consolation will be our consummate psychosomatic liberties (v. 21) – of which, for now, we can but dream.

Few topics are as hotly debated among conservative evangelical Christians as the place of the law of Moses in the life of the believer. More often than not the focal point of the debate has been the Ten Commandments. These were the subject of Table Talk No.4 (November 2001), in which the author outlined several divergent views including his own.

One major reason for our differences is that we seldom establish a proper theological framework for discussion. The right framework is the relationship between the old covenant and the new. It will be instructive to compare these two covenants with engagement and marriage.

When a couple decide to marry, they usually express their desire tangibly in the form of an engagement ring. The ring points to a commitment which though significant and real, is not complete. Only marriage will make it complete. As soon as the marriage takes place, the engagement period ends, never to be revived. The engagement ring will nevertheless be kept as a permanent reminder of a promise now fulfilled. Such fulfilment is symbolized by the wedding ring. The marriage continues an existing relationship, but it is at the same time a genuinely new experience.

This illustration tells us about continuity and discontinuity, promise and fulfilment. All these features can be seen in the relationship between old covenant and new. How they work will now come to light as we explore one classic case: the law of Moses. The central, coordinating theme in what follows will be that of fulfilment.

"Fulfilment" is a thread that runs right through the New Testament. When Jesus inaugurated the new covenant era, he thereby signalled the arrival of *the age of fulfilment*. It brought to fruition all that had been anticipated in the age of promise – the period governed by the Mosaic law (otherwise known as the old covenant).

We who enjoy the privilege of living in the age of fulfilment have corresponding responsibilities. One of

them is to *fulfil the law* (Rom. 8:4, 13:8-10, Gal. 5:14 see Greek text/AV translation). We need to recognize that *fulfilment* (a profoundly theological term) is not the same as *obedience*. They are nevertheless closely related in the sense that obedience is the natural sequel to fulfilment. Once we grasp what fulfilment means *theologically*, it should lead to obedience as a *moral obligation*.

Fulfilment draws attention to the movement from the old covenant to the new. Numerous examples could be given to show that such movement frequently entails some re-shaping of old covenant perspectives to produce the "form of teaching" which we must obey as new covenant believers (Rom. 6:17). This teaching comprises "new treasures as well as old" (Matt. 13:52), the old being the spiritual core of the old covenant, which still holds good under the new.

My aim in this article is the limited one of explaining the fulfilment process in relation to the law and its implications for our Christian lives. We will tackle this task by setting out the development of biblical teaching step by step from Moses to the apostles. Here are a few points which we will need to bear in mind along the way:

**First**, the Bible habitually describes the old covenant as God's law, the law of the Lord, the law of Moses or simply "the law", without distinguishing between moral and ceremonial aspects. Such distinctions may be helpful for discussion purposes; but biblical usage conveys the impression of a single unified code. The Mosaic law incorporated the Ten Commandments, which were the heart of the old covenant (Ex. 34:28, Deut. 4:13) and therefore inseparable from it.

**Second**, the old covenant stemmed from and always looked back to a unique event – the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. This historical association indicates that the law of Moses was designed specifically for God's old covenant people. It therefore belonged in its entirety to the old covenant era and was *timebound* in this sense. But in a more limited way it was also *timeless* inasmuch as

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some parts of it consisted of or embodied abiding moral precepts which remained intact under the new covenant. These timeless aspects can be understood in terms of continuity between the old covenant and the new; the timebound elements represent discontinuity.

**Third**, full weight should be given to Jesus' key statement that the two greatest commandments in the law are those urging wholehearted, unqualified love for God and neighbour (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:34-39). Such a verdict becomes even more important when we accept that everything else in the Mosaic law, as well as the Old Testament prophets, is derived from these all-embracing moral principles (Matt. 22:40). This means among other things that *the two greatest commandments are more fundamental than the Ten Commandments*. They also merit the description timeless. Indeed, the continuing validity of "Love your neighbour as yourself" is well illustrated by its repeated use in the New Testament. No wonder love has such a high profile in the apostolic writings (e.g. John 13:34, Rom.13:8-10, 1 Cor. 13, Eph.5:2, Col.3:14. 1 Thess. 1:3,3:12,4:9-10, James 2:8. 1 Pet. 4:8, 1 John 3:11-23. 4:7-21).

**Fourth**, what the Bible tells us about the law is woven into the unfolding story of our salvation. Like all stories, the one told in God's Word is characterized by progression and change. It should therefore come as no surprise to discover that these two features are also evident in many biblical themes, including the law. Progression and change can be seen most clearly in the Ten Commandments, which are treated by the apostles in a number of different ways. Some are quoted verbatim (Rom.13:9); others are quoted with significant modifications or omissions (Rom.7:7, Eph.6:1-3). A few only appear in the form of allusions. It is, for instance, possible to detect the First Commandment behind John's exhortation not to love the world or anything in it (1 John 2:15-16). Despite this diversity there is one common factor - a *continuity factor*. For each of the Ten

Commandments, what carries over from the old covenant to the new is the inner spiritual kernel or moral instruction pertinent to God's people in every age. These constitute the *timeless* aspects of the Ten Commandments.

**Fifth**, although "law" in the New Testament usually means the law of Moses, there are several cases where the meaning is either patently different or not immediately apparent. One such case is the reference to "laws" (plural) in Hebrews 8:10. How are we to interpret the affirmation "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts"? This was a prophecy uttered in the age of promise and coming to pass in the age of fulfilment. The most natural interpretation is therefore to take "laws" here as ethical precepts appropriate to a new covenant setting.

All the above points are important for a proper understanding of the law. We will now see how they find expression in our summary of biblical teaching. It is essential to take the summary as a whole, rather than piecemeal, in order to gain a panoramic view and appreciate how it all fits together.

1. In delivering Israel from Egypt, God established a relationship with his people based on sovereign grace (Ex. 20:2). The divinely appointed expression of that relationship was the law of Moses (or old covenant), and the Israelites promised to keep its many commandments and ordinances (Ex. 24:3-8).

2. The greatest commandments in the law were: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18). The entire old covenant depended on those two moral requirements (Matt. 22:34-40). As abiding spiritual principles they were valid *for all time*. The highest expression of love for God and neighbour *at that time* was in the Ten Commandments.

3. The Old Testament prophets ministered to the Israelites within the framework of the law, sometimes

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rebuking the people when they disobeyed it (Is. 24:5, Jer. 11:1-10, Ezek. 16:59, Hos. 8:1). The prophets could therefore be described as God's old covenant policemen, who arrested the people by their preaching.

4. God's people were under the authority of the law and the prophets right up to the time of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:13). This is why Jesus said unequivocally, "The law and the prophets were until John" (Luke 16:16a - literal translation).

5. John the Baptist, being the last of the Old Testament prophets and also Jesus' forerunner, stood on the threshold between the old covenant and the new. He marked the movement from one to the other by heralding God's heavenly kingdom at the dawn of the new covenant era (Luke 16:16b, Matt. 3:1-2). Jesus then carried on what John had begun (Matt. 4:17, 23).

6. Despite the radical change introduced by John and Jesus through their preaching of the kingdom, the law of Moses continued to be in force throughout the transitional period of our Lord's earthly ministry (Matt. 8:1-4, 23:1-3). There was therefore a three-year overlap between old and new.

7. The overlap period ended when the law was, metaphorically speaking, nailed to the cross at Calvary (Col. 2:14). It was not thereby destroyed or abolished. But the verb used by Paul in Ephesians 2:15 shows that it was rendered inoperative. The reason? Jesus was "the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4), i.e. both its termination and its goal. The law had been no more than a "shadow" pointing forward to the substance, which is found in Christ (Col. 2:16-17, Heb. 10:1).

8. Christ came not to overthrow the law but to *fulfil* it (Matt. 5:17). Several examples of fulfilment are presented to us in Matthew 5:21-48. They all involve doing to others what we would have them do to us, which is the spiritual essence of the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12). They also show how the enduring principles of love for God and love for our neighbour should be applied in a

new covenant setting.

9. One conclusion that we can draw from the story so far is that we are not subject to any part of the law of Moses *as it stands in Exodus-Deuteronomy* because we are not Israelites living under the old covenant. Paul's argument in Galatians 3:15-25 shows that the law was an interim measure between Abraham and Christ the promised Seed, and was "added.. *until* the Seed... had come" (Gal. 3:16-19). The cryptic Greek text of verse 24, properly understood, conveys essentially the same message: the law was a "custodian" restraining God's people "*until Christ*" or "*with a view to Christ*". It would be perfectly legitimate to combine these two possible meanings. Paul would then be saying in different language what he later wrote in his letter to the Romans about Christ as both the termination and the goal of the law (Rom. 10:4 - see point 7 above). The law's custodial role ended when the age of faith in Christ began (Gal. 3:22-25). Being united to Christ in his death (Rom. 6:3-8), we are dead to the law and serve God in the new way of the Spirit rather than the old way of an external written code (Rom. 7:4,6, Gal. 5:18). The Spirit empowers us to keep God's new covenant laws, which are written not on stone but on our hearts (Ezek. 36:26-27, 2 Cor. 3:7-8, Heb. 8:10).

10. Many of the laws we are to obey reveal continuity from old covenant to new. Thus stealing, lying, slander and revenge were sinful in Moses' day and are still sinful now (Lev.19:11,16,18, Rom.12:19, Eph.4:28, Col. 3:8-9). The underlying reason for these and other continuities is that they all express the permanently valid commandment "Love your neighbour as yourself". This commandment encapsulates the "righteous requirement of the law", which is to be *fulfilled* in those who walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4, 13:9).

11. Paul summed it all up by affirming that *the law is fulfilled through manifestations of Christian love* (Rom. 13:8,10). In practical terms, such fulfilment entails refraining from adultery, murder, theft and covetous



desires - unchanging spiritual maxims drawn from the Ten Commandments - and in addition keeping "whatever other commandments there may be" that fulfil the crucial law "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Rom. 13:9, Gal. 5:14). To "serve one another in love" and "live a life of love" (Gal. 5:13, Eph. 5:2) is the heart of new covenant morality. It implements Jesus' "new commandment", based on his own supreme example, that we should love one another (John 13:34).

12. This new commandment is the bedrock of the law of Christ, to which Paul willingly submitted (I Cor. 9:21). The love it enjoins is down-to-earth and robust, being defined solely by the standards of God's Word, not by any notions of "loving conduct" espoused by the world around us. One way to fulfil the law of Christ is to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). There are many other ways, all equally practical and presented to us in the ethical teaching of Jesus and the apostles (e.g. Matt. 7:1-5, Col. 3:5-14, Heb. 13:1-5, James 2:1-13, 1 Peter 3:1-12, 1 John 3:16-18). Such teaching fixes for us our new covenant moral boundaries. These are sometimes the same as old covenant boundaries. But they may be different. The Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Commandments are left unchanged in the New Testament (pure continuity). But the Fifth and Tenth Commandments are modified in a manner that befits the new covenant era (continuity only where the basic moral principles are concerned, otherwise discontinuity).

That completes our step-by-step summary. It tells us that, if we display practical Christian love, we will *fulfil* the law of Moses and at the same time obey the law of Christ, which is to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34). This fundamental and comprehensive law will itself be *fulfilled* when we obey the moral teaching of Jesus and the apostles in all its ramifications.

How should we respond to this exposition?

Here is just a handful of suggestions:

a) Let us always remember that the old covenant

represents the "engagement period" of God's people. Believers today wear the "wedding ring" of the new covenant and cannot move backwards to an engagement status without running counter to the biblical flow of promise and fulfilment.

b) Let us take seriously the crucial importance, underlined by Jesus himself, of the two greatest commandments, which involve love for God and neighbour (Matt. 22:34-40). Our approach will be truly biblical when we treat these, rather than the Ten Commandments, as the foundation for all Christian ethical conduct.

c) Let us handle the Ten Commandments in the way that the New Testament handles them - in terms of continuity and discontinuity. It is not difficult to ascertain that both aspects are present if we compare the original Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 with their New Testament counterparts.

d) Let us repel any accusation that we are being "antinomian" (against law) if we oppose the idea that the Ten Commandments constitute God's moral law and the rule of life for Christians today. By adopting Paul's position and joyfully accepting that we are subject to the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21), we will actually be more "law-abiding" than anyone who tries to keep the Ten Commandments.

e) Let us, if we have teaching responsibilities, give clear direction on the proper Christian response to both old covenant and new covenant law. Instruction along the lines proposed in this article ought to arm believers with a theologically coherent understanding of these issues, thereby providing a firm foundation for Christian discipleship.

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*This and other issues are fully discussed in the author's book In Pursuit of the Truth. It is available for £6.30, post free, from 41 Barnmead, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1UY.*

"We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were **eyewitnesses** of his greatness."  
(2 Peter 1:16)

With this statement, one observer of Christ's life and actions declared the special relation that eyewitnesses bore to the information they imparted.

We are indebted to these eyewitnesses for information on the historical events and meaning of the gospel. Most of the New Testament writers were either direct eyewitnesses themselves or had ready access to others who qualified as such. Without this eyewitness data, there would be little or no "good news" to report.

## Their Relation to the Gospel Records

According to New Testament sources, the core content of the gospel is the material regarding the person of Jesus Christ – his life, teaching, actions, character, death, burial, and resurrection. The factual, real-world stuff at the foundation of gospel truth comes only from historical documentation, and that translates heavily into the need for supporting eyewitness data.

I. Howard Marshall states the situation with respect to the gospel records when he explains: "though the purpose of the Gospels was primarily theological, their character is in no sense unhistorical. What they described was not invented but really happened. The writers did not make the story up out of their own heads in order to have a vehicle for conveying doctrinal propositions. The heart of the Christian message was that God had acted in history in Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

Included in the gospel's main proclamation concerning Christ is its focus on his redemptive achievement. This saving activity, in turn, is portrayed as inseparable from certain specific events – especially his reconciling death and authenticating resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 5:8; 1:4; Acts 17:3, 18; 1 Thess. 4:14). The historicity of these events relies at least partly on dependable

eyewitness testimony and accurate recording of same. Some of the events reported in the New Testament were observed by literally thousands of people (Matt. 14:13-21; 15:29-38; Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-9; John 6:1-10). These persons, indeed, were all eyewitnesses of these particular occasions. Regarding those crucial post-resurrection appearances of Christ, we are told that just one such occasion alone was observed by more than 500 persons (1 Cor. 15:6). Altogether, there are an impressive number of persons and groups who qualified as "witnesses" to the gospel related events (Acts 2:32; 10:39,40; 13:30,31; 22:15; John 15:27).

Sometimes, however, we reserve the term "eyewitness" for those who may have had a more in-depth or long-term acquaintance with the persons and events involved. In this category, of course, would be included Christ's disciples – that group of his closest observers. Also, there were those who went to some effort, first, to investigate these happenings, and then to record their experiences. The gospel writer Luke, for example, informs us that "many have undertaken to draw up an account of things that have been fulfilled among us just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses" (Luke 1:1,2).

Among the primary New Testament writers, there are six who are of particular interest: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul. Of these, three (Matthew, John and Peter) were themselves direct eyewitnesses of Christ's life, death, and post-resurrection appearances. Concerning Jesus, they could claim that "we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have **touched**" (1 John 1:1). In short, what they proclaimed was "what we have **seen** and **heard**" (1 John 1:3) on the basis of firsthand acquaintance.

Three other key writers (Mark, Luke, and Paul) did not witness all these activities themselves; however, they had access to (and used) genuine eyewitnesses for their information. With respect to Mark, he was intimately acquainted with Peter's story of the life and work of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> and subsequently benefited also as a traveling

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companion of the apostle Paul during part of the latter's first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). In the case of Luke, those selected as his informants are described as eyewitnesses "from the first" (Luke 1:2) who could facilitate a careful, investigative report which covered "everything from the beginning" (Luke 1:3), that is, a complete account and not just partial segments of the story.<sup>3</sup> As to Paul himself, his extensive travels and contacts gave him access to a whole multitude of eyewitnesses, including at least one very lengthy, in-depth consultation with eyewitnesses Peter and James (Gal.1:18,19).

## Limitations and Criteria

Critics of eyewitness testimony, of course, are prone to point to the potential limitations of this kind of testimony. They cite such things as the problems of inconsistent or conflicting statements, the influence of character flaws on a person's ability to tell the truth, and the adverse impact of "motives" on witnesses.

Admittedly, these are recognized concerns, for example, with which court judges and juries must deal. Thus, legal counsel is usually retained to protect the legal and testimonial interests of the parties involved. Cross-examination of witnesses and presentation of other corroborating or refuting evidence are employed to sift out the details. An attempt is made, wherever possible, to arrive at decisions which are based on a representation of the factual situation beyond reasonable doubt. Historians, too, must keep these matters in mind when they develop their assessments.

Problems notwithstanding, use of eyewitness testimony is a beneficial and even critically necessary part of the historical/legal investigative process. Coady readily acknowledges that eyewitness testimony needs to be subjected to critical scrutiny and rejected where found to be mistaken or spurious. Nevertheless, he concludes, that "just as we cannot dispense with observation and experimental data in natural science, so we cannot do without testimonial data in history"<sup>4</sup>

What, then, are some of the criteria which can be used to determine if a person is to be considered a genuine eyewitness? First, an eyewitness must be in a position to have had the **opportunity** to observe the alleged events and persons. Testimony by direct observation is that which comes from an individual who Schum identifies as having "direct sensory interface" with the possible events.<sup>5</sup> Put more simply, Newman and Newman insist a primary witness "needs to have been where the action was."<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, indications of one's **ability** to take advantage of the opportunities afforded him strengthens his potential usefulness as a witness. His training or track record may play a helpful part here. Simon Greenleaf, Harvard law professor, mentioned the eyewitness' "accuracy of his powers of discerning, and the faithfulness of his memory in retaining the facts."<sup>7</sup> In this connection, Greenleaf cited the example of Matthew whose vocation as a tax-collector accustomed him to habits of investigation and detailed scrutiny, and to Luke whose everyday profession as a physician called for exactness of observation.

Also, where more than one witness is involved, the number and consistency of **independent** witnesses is important. The ideal situation is to obtain separate testimony by different witnesses who – while they may differ in minor details – yet furnish corroborating information on key matters of substance. Helpful, then, would be separate witnesses who provide "at the same time such substantial agreement as to show that they all were independent narrators of the same transaction, as the events actually occurred."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the **vividness of details** and naturalness of their portrayal contributes to the reliability of the eyewitness testimony.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, Doremus A. Hayes observes that the stories related "in our Gospels have an air of soberness and reality about them .... These are plain matter-of-fact people telling just what happened to themselves .... They furnish just such testimony as the facts would warrant, and such as plain people convinced

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beyond any question or doubt would give. They have all the signs of veracity.”<sup>10</sup>

## **Eyewitness Testimony in Proclamation and Narrative**

Analysis of the speeches of Peter in the book of Acts yields some clues about the role of eyewitness testimony in the early expansion of the Christian enterprise. Besides (a) brief summaries of Israel's redemptive history and (b) challenges to repentance and faith, these speeches set forth key information on the person and work of Jesus Christ – information obtained from primary, eyewitness sources.

Here, we notice Peter's repeated reference to the fact that he himself and many others were eyewitnesses of what he preached about Christ, especially in regards to events related to Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:32; 4:33). “We are all witnesses of this” (Acts 3:15), he claimed, and furthermore “we are witnesses of everything he did in the country ... and in Jerusalem” (Acts 10:39).

That they were eyewitnesses is one of the main motivating forces behind their convincing proclamation of the gospel. “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20), they explained. This witnessing nature of their preaching put the greatest possible emphasis on the factual content of their preaching. Canadian scholar Allison A. Trites maintains that “it was of supreme significance to the New Testament writers that the apostolic teaching was not based on a collection of myths, but on the experience of eye- witnesses.”<sup>11</sup>

Former University of London legal scholar and Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Norman Anderson, observed that Jesus “confided the testimony to who he was, what he had done and what he had taught to ... eyewitnesses.”<sup>12</sup>

Christianity is intensely preoccupied with the matter of truth. The biblical documents, accordingly, often furnish compelling evidence in support of Christ's claims. Historian and legal scholar John W. Montgomery argues that “This is why the New Testament makes so much of the eyewitness contact” that the early believers had with Jesus.<sup>13</sup> The prevalence here of eyewitness testimony and the independent reporting it yields are significant indeed. Montgomery says the New Testament documents “can be relied upon to give an accurate portrait of him [Christ],” and that this portrait cannot be rationalized away by wishful thinking or literary manoeuvring.<sup>14</sup>

Credible eyewitnesses can provide accurate information which, in turn, can be reliably recorded for public review. This is precisely the case with respect to the documentation supporting the New Testament narratives. As to the primary object of the eyewitnesses' inquiry, Charles H. Hayes noted:

“Men heard him [Jesus] speak, saw him act, and could declare to the world what kind of person this was whom they knew as a man knows his friend.”<sup>15</sup>

“From the observation of these facts, visible to their eyes, tangible to their hands, audible to their ears... [they] drew their conclusions concerning him.”<sup>16</sup>

## References

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2. A. T. Robertson, *Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 7, and *Epochs in the Life of Simon Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 265.
3. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1946), 29. Also see the discussion on Luke sources by A. T. Robertson, *Luke the Historian in the Light of Research* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 48-49.
4. C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 248. Legal researchers concede that the legal system too can neither afford to exclude eyewitness testimony or to ignore it. See Elizabeth F. Loftus & James M. Doyle, *Eyewitness Testimony*, 3rd ed. (Charlottesville, VA: Lexis Law Publishing, 1997), 8.
5. David A. Schum, *The Evidential Foundations of Probabilistic Reasoning* (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 94. Trites concurs that qualifying eyewitnesses need to "have an immediate relationship to the events that they describe." Allison A. Trites, *New Testament Witness in Today's World* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1983), 29.
6. Robert P. Newman and Dale R. Newman, *Evidence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 83. Also see Loftus & Doyle, *Eyewitness Testimony*, 333.
7. Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 31. [reprinted from 1874 edition].
8. Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony* 32, 42. Cornell University's Max Black concurred that "an individual observation ... is said to be publicly verified when it has been so confirmed by a sufficient number of other observers." Black, *Critical Thinking* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1946), 328.
9. Arne Trankell says, "Witness testimonies in which observations of real events are described thus often deviate from constructed lies by their greater richness in detail." *Reliability of Evidence: Methods for Analyzing and Accessing Witness Statements* (Stockholm: Beckmans, 1972), 125. As to the resultant gospel narratives, Craig Blomberg sees them as "vivid but uncluttered, full of incidental details, ordinary people and psychological realism ...." *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 234.
10. Doremus A. Hayes, "The Resurrection Appearances of Christ" in *Great Sermons on the Resurrection of Christ*, ed. Wilbur M. Smith (Natick, MA: W. A. Wilde, 1964), 71. Likewise, Cambridge University's Frederick W. Farrar characterized the writers of the New Testament accounts as men who were "preeminently truthful, preeminently soberminded." *The Witness of History to Christ* (London: Macmillan, 1872), 50.
11. Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 225.
12. Norman Anderson, "The Historical Basis: Is It Convincing?" in *Jesus Christ: the Witness of History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 25.
13. John W. Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1978), 38. Peter Jensen, Australian scholar, observes that "the witness of those who knew him [Jesus], and of those who met the ones who knew him, is of prime importance." Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 56. Trites agrees that "the value attached by the New Testament itself to eyewitnesses places the greatest possible stress upon the historical facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus." *Witness in Today's World*, 136, 137.
14. John W. Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1965), 40.
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16. Ibid., 363. Dallas Willard, University of Southern California professor, adds that the authors of the Bible "were quite capable of accurately interpreting their own experience and of objectively presenting what they heard ...." Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), xvi.

'Spirituality', like 'piety' and 'godliness', is a comprehensive word. It expresses the totality of a Christian's devotion, experience, life-style and priorities. The different words represent different eras in Church history, with different nuances of meaning and emphasis. In this article the word 'spirituality' is used in the sense of a believer's dealings with God. Howel Harris is chosen as representing the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, in many ways not typical, but one in whose life are clearly visible leading features of the movement.

Harris, who lived from 1714 to 1773, claimed to be, along with George Whitefield in England and Daniel Rowland in Wales, the first to be used in the work in Britain. For nearly four decades from his conversion in 1735 he was involved in evangelism, decision-making, the solving of problems, leadership liaison, and far-reaching personal experiences. The literary legacy which he bequeathed to posterity, some three hundred diaries and four thousand letters, provides an insight into his spiritual progress, as well as a historical resource for evaluating that Awakening's distinctive features. Consideration of spirituality brings into focus many issues which were prominent in his own time, and are still relevant today.

## A survey of Harris's life <sup>1</sup>

Ten years after his conversion, Harris said that in the early days of his Christian life he was not satisfied to go to bed at night without having drawn somebody to God.<sup>2</sup> As a result, he visited the farms in the neighbourhood, and 'exhorted' people to turn from sin and believe the Gospel. He met with no little success, and began to gather those who professed conversion into little groups for mutual encouragement and instruction. Members of his family, however, were mystified, and counselled caution and reflection. The local vicar also was opposed to him, and he found but a few kindred spirits, widely scattered both within the Anglican church to which he belonged and among the Nonconformists or Dissenters.

Public activity was complemented by private review. Harris began to keep a diary, initially, he tells us, to

record among other things "what passes between God and my soul ... and how I spend my time." Years later he wrote of his diaries: "saw wisdom enough in God to gift some person, when I am in the grave, to draw somewhat out of them that may be of use to the Church."<sup>3</sup> In them the hours are counted in the margin to monitor diligence and usefulness. Fears, frustrations, failures, conversations, sermons, plans are all recorded in greater or lesser detail, depending on inclination and the constraint of time. Comments tumble over one another, written with white-hot, spontaneous intensity, in a rushing scrawl. What comes through is honesty and accountability, a striving for holiness, a concern for personal relationships, a growing acquaintance with his own heart, and an uncompromising, one might almost say apostolic, commitment to labour for the Gospel.

Within a few years he had established contact with others who were being used of God: Griffith Jones, Daniel Rowland, George Whitefield, and the Wesley brothers. His evangelistic journeys took him ever further afield as the work grew, with periods of revival in which increasing numbers came to faith in Christ. At the same time problems multiplied: problems of organization and discipline, of ecclesiastical identity and spiritual discernment, of personal relationships and theological definition. In Wales the influence of Harris was always prominent, and his impact on the chief revival centres in England, Bristol and London, was notable. Although refused ordination by the bishop to whom he applied, he preached in the open air, organized "society" meetings independently of parish church services, and persisted in his itinerant activities. He only stopped short of administering the sacraments.

Early in his spiritual life Harris became convinced of the sovereignty of God in salvation, and of the doctrines of grace. The preaching of Rowland and Whitefield confirmed him in this. Their Methodism, too, with its emphasis on experience, was in line with his own convictions. His affinities with the Methodism of the Wesleys, and of the Moravian, John Cennick, were less

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keen and did not endure. All the Methodists gave priority to preaching and stressed the importance of nourishing its fruit in close and disciplined fellowship, and the Welsh Methodists enjoyed recurrent periods of such revival. The Deism and Moralism which had prevailed thus gave way to a vital Christianity.

For a decade from the late 1740s Harris was estranged from the work on account of theological aberration and personal issues. His unguarded phrases about the sufferings of God, his increasingly overbearing manner and a misguided dependence on the spiritual counsel of a woman other than his wife created grave difficulties. They brought about his withdrawal from the work and the setting up at Trefeca of a self-sufficient community containing a number of his followers. Physical exhaustion may have contributed to this; for several years Harris remained essentially a private figure. Later he felt constrained to join the Militia as an expression of his Protestantism, on condition that he was allowed to preach.

The 1760s witnessed Harris's return to active participation in another period of revival, but for the rest of his life his contribution remained subdued and guarded. However, one of Harris's long-standing ambitions was realized during this period: a "school of the prophets" was established at Trefeca to train men for the ministry. The project derived considerable support from the Countess of Huntingdon, and for many years the Anniversary of its opening was a great preaching occasion for both English and Welsh leaders of the Awakening. In spite of declining health, his spiritual vigour remained undimmed to the last.

Harris's dealings with God took place, in the main, in the context of involvement rather than withdrawal, of activity rather than stillness, of a battlefield rather than a cloistered cell. His contemporaries consistently esteemed him highly for his devotion to the Saviour, his zeal in the work of the Gospel, his fearlessness in the face of persecution and his organizing ability. All these had their source and motivation in his unquenchable thirst for God's

presence and power in his own life as well as in his public work, and it is because of this that his contribution to the Great Awakening was significant and lasting.

### Leading aspects of Howel Harris's spirituality

An Anglican by conviction as well as practice, Harris's spirituality was profoundly influenced by the *Book of Common Prayer*, which organized personal as well as corporate devotion around Scripture lessons, the Christian festivals, and the Apostles' Creed. A 1742 diary entry records his joining with a family "in reading morning service", and twenty years later at home he "discoursed at noon and night on the Lessons". The work of John Pearson on the *Creed*, and of John Ellis and John Rogers on the *Thirty-nine Articles* confirmed him in his conviction "that our Church is a pure Church, that I could undertake to prove what it holds. I stay not in it because I was brought up in it, but because I see it according to God's Word." The Prayer Book's succinct prayers, the Collects, in particular, in the words of Gordon S. Wakefield, provided "a spiritual reservoir" akin to the Psalms.<sup>4</sup> It was a liturgical and sacramental spirituality, providing an ordered, uniform framework for devotion. If Harris deviated from Anglican practice in his evangelism, he profited from and commended its structured devotion.

In the matter of personal dealings with God certain matters have priority. This is evident when we consider the by-paths which have manifested themselves in the history of the Church in this respect. By some, a speculative exercise of the intellect, along Gnostic lines, was thought of as an ascent to God and godliness. The mystics perceive spirituality in terms of "purification", "contemplation", and "union" as three distinct, consecutive steps on the path to God. For others, progress in the Christian life is measured in terms of "experiences", which are then deemed to provide an index of spirituality. This brings us to a vital question, as relevant in our day as in Harris's: how do we establish and measure genuine spiritual life and progress in the

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soul? In these matters the question of authority and revelation is crucial.

### Authority and revelation

For Harris, unquestionably, that authority lay in the Bible, “God’s Word”, “God’s Book”. Here are some representative remarks: “On my brother speaking contemptibly of the Bible, I was enabled to tell him plainly that he was an enemy of Jesus Christ”; “I have done nothing but preach the Bible”; “Spent the evening reading Dr. Owen on ‘The Authority of the Scriptures’”; “the Scripture is the test to try all”.<sup>5</sup> Such was his conviction, what of his practice? How did Scripture permeate his devotion, guide his judgment, influence his relationships, and determine his preaching?

It almost goes without saying that Harris’s theology was orthodox. It certainly was biblical in its source, Protestant in its repudiation of Popery, Puritan in its striving for reformation, and Evangelical in urgency and application. Harris read Puritan books, and advocated the use of the Westminster Assembly’s Catechisms as well as the Thirty-nine Articles and the Catechism of the Church of England.<sup>6</sup> In a letter of the greatest doctrinal significance, Harris challenges Charles Wesley to think biblically: “I am full of pride in my understanding, being ready to bring Scripture [in subjection] to my notion and experience, and not to bring them to the law and to the testimony. It is by the Word we are to try the spirits.”<sup>7</sup> It is on that basis that he proceeds to reprove Charles for holding the possibility of falling from grace, for Arminian expressions in some of his hymns, and in a loose use of the expression “Christ died for all”, which implied universal redemption and free will. Christian doctrine is not derived from Christian experience, but from biblical truth. True spirituality stems from a mind governed by the Word of God, and Harris’s spirituality, therefore, was grounded in, and molded by, propositional truth.

The conviction that Scripture alone should determine belief, experience, and behaviour was a far cry from the spirituality of mystics, fanatics, and Quakers. The latter

short-circuited Scripture with their speculative contemplation, subjective fantasies and ‘inner light’. A local magistrate once accused Harris of being a mixture between a Presbyterian and a Quaker with the remark, “you pretend to the Spirit”, (that is, to extraordinary revelations and to immediate inspiration). Harris’s reply was, “I hope you don’t make a jest of the Spirit of God.... you and I must have the Spirit of God.” More specifically, on another occasion at the home of the Countess of Huntingdon, the following incident took place: “Had a dispute with my Lady’s chaplain....about the unction in us above the scripture, and was enabled to oppose it strongly.....My Lady yielded that the scriptures are the outward means the Spirit uses to reveal spiritual things to us, and that the Spirit never shows us anything but according to the scriptures.....When the chaplain insisted on the Spirit above the Word, I could not help declaring that I had heard before he was a mystic, but now found him to be so, and that this is Quakerism, all the Reformed divines testified against it.”<sup>8</sup> Freshness must be distinguished from immediacy. In God’s dealings with the soul there must be freshness, wrought by the Spirit, in and through the Word. Immediacy lays claim to inspired revelations of God directly to the soul, apart from that Word. True revival experiences partake of the former, but not the latter.

Nevertheless this was an area which caused considerable misunderstanding, debate, and opposition to the Methodists. They were condemned as “enthusiasts”, religious fanatics pretending to immediate revelations from God, as religious anarchists bent on overthrowing order, and as frenzied extremists who must be stopped at all costs. The Deists of the day, whose only yardstick was reason, vilified their emphasis on God’s revelation; the religious establishment regarded their zeal as a spurious claim to supernatural activity. Harris defended himself against such a charge by his brother by saying “that in the hour of death and the Day of Judgment ... my strict adherence to Jesus Christ ... will appear to be no enthusiasm, but a nobler choice to remove the affections



from the creature to the Creator.”<sup>9</sup> One of the early opponents of Methodism defined enthusiasm in this way: “a person’s having a strong, but false persuasion, that he is divinely inspired; or at least, that he has the Spirit of God some way or other; and this made known to him in a particular and extraordinary manner.”<sup>10</sup> A more explicit example of the repugnance with which enthusiasm was held is Bishop Butler’s interview with John Wesley in 1739, during which the bishop made the famous remark: “Mr. Whitefield says in his Journal, ‘There are promises still to be fulfilled in me’. Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing - a very horrid thing!”<sup>11</sup> Wesley’s reply to one who charged Whitefield with enthusiasm was simply this: “Whatever is spoken of the religion of the heart and of the inward workings of the Spirit of God, must appear enthusiasm to those who have not felt them.”<sup>12</sup> For Wesley, enthusiasts were those who, “first .....think to attain the end without the means ..... Again, they think themselves inspired by God, and are not.... But false, imaginary inspiration is enthusiasm. That theirs is only imaginary inspiration appears hence: it contradicts the Law and the Testimony.”<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Lavington’s pamphlet of 1749, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared*, was answered by both Whitefield and Wesley. Whitefield’s answer sets out the Methodist endeavours for a lively faith and personal experience: “To awaken a drowsy world; to rouse them out of their formality, as well as profaneness, and put them upon seeking after a present and great salvation; to point out to them a glorious rest, which not only remains for the people of God hereafter, but which, by a living faith, the very chief of sinners may enter into even here . . . to stir them up to seek after the life and power of godliness, that they may be Christians, not only in word and profession, but in spirit and in truth.”<sup>14</sup> Thus Whitefield countered the criticism with an emphasis on real, intimate fellowship with Christ as the hallmark of true faith: “The letter-learned scribes and Pharisees of this day, look on us as madmen and enthusiasts; but

though they make so much noise about the word *enthusiast*, it means no more than this, one in God; and what Christian can say, he is not in God, and God in him?”<sup>15</sup>

Yet, given Harris’s passion for freshness and relevance, his theology could never be an end in itself. While it was objectively true, and capable of formulation and expression, it was also a fluid theology, dynamic rather than static, progressive rather than settled. His habit was to “discourse where the Book [that is, the Bible] opened”. Subjective constraints determined his emphasis at any particular time: “The first four years the Lord sent me to thunder the Law, and to bring people to leave outward sin and perform duties. The next four years I was sent to preach the Gospel and faith, assurance and free grace.... and now these last six or seven years since I have preached the Person and death of Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

On occasions this created difficulties in debate, and Samuel Mason, one of Harris’s correspondents felt compelled to ask for precise statements of his position: “When you write in answer to us, use no ambiguous words, but words that may convey a clear idea, and as Scriptural as may be, and words used in divinity whose sense is known; for I observe when people advance new doctrines, they also advance new and strange words and phrases, whose sense and determinate idea is known to none but themselves.”<sup>17</sup> Later, in the Trinitarian controversy between him and the other Welsh Methodists, his doctrinal imprecision led him into the heresy of Patripassianism. His speaking of “that Blood infinite and the Blood of God”, and a “dying, bleeding God”, brought upon him the censure of his fellow-labourers, and for a time, estrangement from them.<sup>18</sup>

Even more serious were the practical effects of this lack of discipline. Harris always recorded his dreams, as if they had real significance for him as a Christian, or for his Christian work. His dependence on the ‘prophetic’ insights of a woman, Mrs. Sidney Griffith, in the late 1740s exacerbated his estrangement: “Of Madam Griffith, whether she be of God or not, that such things

had been in the Old and New Testament. Of Deborah, the women ministering to Christ, and going with Paul"; "I had access to God on account of Mrs. Griffith"; "Merely in obedience to conscience and God, He has made Madam Griffith a new threshing instrument". Whitefield was uncompromising in his opposition to the whole affair, as Harris noted in his diary: "he said he did not approve of Madam Griffith being with me, that it was contrary to God's Word." <sup>19</sup> Scripture alone must be the rule of faith. Deviation from it is a subtle temptation. The appeal of direct access to inspired and authoritative revelation from God is, to human nature, irresistible. But it is also deceptive and dangerous. True spirituality flourishes only on an entire, sustained, and consistent submission to the Word of God.

### The doctrines of grace and holiness

Next in the matter of spirituality come the doctrines of grace and holiness. "Continual need we have of watching over ourselves", writes Harris in 1740, "and the difference between notional faith and real faith." <sup>20</sup> As for the latter distinction, he countered one who "sets faith wholly in believing the testimony God gave of His Son as a proposition", by insisting "on an appropriation of Him to us, too." <sup>21</sup> Among the Methodist doctrines denounced by the critics were, "The gross Antinomian doctrine", and "depreciating good works, and teaching Justification by Faith alone". <sup>22</sup> It was quite true that the Welsh Methodists believed in justification by faith, and they defended their position from the teaching of the Thirty-nine Articles, as well as Scripture. <sup>23</sup> Harris heartily concurred with Rowland's treatment of the subject in a sermon on 1 John 2:2: "We see here also God's children at times do admire their happiness, not in their sanctification, but in their justification .....The inside of God's people is the best in all ages .....It is not our grace and holiness that God praises in the Song of Solomon, but our imputed righteousness.....Righteousness imputed is like the sun; thereon God looks - hence is sure foundation of

a witness; but sanctification is like the moon, changeable, and so the witness arising hence is uncertain." <sup>24</sup>

As for Antinomianism, it was a charge which Harris vigorously opposed. But it was not always easy to avoid the Scylla of Legalism on the one hand and the Charybdis of license on the other, as Harris himself observed: "Spoke to the brethren, the one against Antinomianism, and another against legality." "Recommended Bunyan's Law and Grace to them". <sup>25</sup> As part of the Welsh Methodists' effort to clarify the place of the Law, they arranged for the Scotsman Ralph Erskine's *Law-death, Gospel-life: or the Death of Legal Righteousness, the Life of Gospel Holiness* to be translated into Welsh. <sup>26</sup> At a later period, the hymn-writer of the Welsh Awakening, William Williams, dealt with the issue in two chapters of his work on Christian experience, *Theomemphus*. <sup>27</sup>

There was another subtle danger. The believer might be tempted to rely on the experience of joy and sense of assurance which followed justification. Experience meetings could degenerate into a hotbed of subjectivity, leaving the soul at the mercy of fluctuating feelings, whether of others or one's own. The Scripture statement, that "we are justified freely by His blood" speaks of a finished atonement and a full acquittal as the only grounds for true enjoyment of God. Harris was careful to preserve this emphasis, urging one of his correspondents to "beware of resting on anything short of Christ. We are apt to lean on broken reeds of frames [feelings], graces, longings etc. It is good to have thirstings after Christ, but it is not good to rest until they are fulfilled..... Give yourself to the utmost for Jesus Christ, to glorify Him in all manner of ways.....the more you will lay out for Christ, the more He will pour into your soul. In this is He glorified in you, in bearing much fruit indeed." <sup>28</sup> Harris spoke sadly of another, "how he is fallen from the cross and following frames", and was greatly alarmed at some of Wesley's people, that "they live in their frames" <sup>29</sup>

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## Experience and Discipleship

This raises the vast subject of Christian experience and discipleship. The Great Awakening was nothing if not experiential in its emphasis. Truth must be experienced. True spirituality finds expression in everyday living and disciplined fellowship. But how is genuine experience evaluated? What criteria should determine its progress? How is its development disciplined? What is the place of the means of grace? What ingredients are necessary for worship, and devotion? In all these respects, the Welsh Methodists were predictably orthodox. Their evangelism was dominated by preaching, their worship and devotion were influenced by the Anglican Prayer Book, they insisted on Bible study, prayer, and attendance at the sacraments. But what were their distinctives? Let me highlight some of them.

For Harris, true dealing with God demanded freshness and reality. Personal communion and devotion, guidance when confronted with choices in particular situations, and public preaching, should always partake of life and authority. "June 18th. 1735, being in secret prayer, I felt suddenly my heart melting within me like wax before the fire with love to God my Saviour... There was a cry in my inmost soul, which I was totally unacquainted with before, Abba, Father! Abba, Father! I could not help calling God my Father; I knew that I was His child, and that He loved me and heard me." "The fire of the Lord came down amazingly; was obliged to cry often, Allelujah! Hosannah!"; "to 2 in the morning like a drunken man. Could say nothing but Glory! Glory! for a long time." "The Lord came, overpowering me with love like a mighty torrent that I could not withstand, or reason against, or doubt." <sup>30</sup>

Harris's favourite expression in seeking for guidance is "laid it before the Lord", and this he did for minor as well as major issues, from buying a watch and whether to drink tea, to getting married, and whether to join publicly with John Wesley. Of his own will on any matter, he records that by faith he learned at an early

stage in his Christian life "to give it up to Thee to choose." Only then was he free to follow "the four ways of knowing God's will: by His Word, Providence, People and Spirit." <sup>31</sup> Thus subjective constraints were not without objective criteria, usually in the form of providential circumstances: "Crying to go (to London) to strengthen his (Whitefield's) hands ...the outward providences concurring, having money, and settled the societies all, and no present call for me, have determined me." <sup>32</sup> But Harris was not always consistent in submitting to the objective authority of God's Word in the matter of personal guidance, and both Rowland and Williams accused him of being an "enthusiast, saying I have God's mind". <sup>33</sup>

A similar insistence on freshness is apparent in Harris' appetite for lively, biblical sermons. Reporting to Whitefield on one occasion, he said, "Such a sermon I never before heard as Brother Rowland preached . . . so much of the powerful working of the Holy Spirit I think has never been known among us." <sup>34</sup> On another occasion Harris could say "The power that continues with him is uncommon. Such crying out and heart-breaking groans, silent weeping, and holy joy, and shouts of rejoicing I never saw.....you might feel God there among them, like a flame." <sup>35</sup> In his own public ministry of "exhorting" he resolved "not to speak of what we have heard from the Lord, but what we have *now*, afresh from him." <sup>36</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, to find Harris denouncing "the doctrine of building souls on past experience", and commending Whitefield's early insistence on "the continuing believing, and not living on past experiences". <sup>37</sup>

In the "societies", those typically Methodist gatherings of the converts of the revival, the emphasis was on simplicity and openness. Harris was notoriously outspoken in his dealings with the experience and behaviour of others, and he expected them to be so with him. Spiritual reality was not fostered by reserve or pretence. With typical frankness he writes to Charles Wesley: "Let us look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Let us look at Him as searching and trying our hearts. Let us speak

and write [as] in his presence, and then we will bear with one another and deal faithfully. Be not surprised, my dear brother, or offended at my simplicity. Let me tell you in the Spirit of my dear Lord my whole heart.”<sup>38</sup> And to another correspondent, “How hard it is to gain simplicity and to keep it.....pray for me, that I may know nothing but simplicity and love.”<sup>39</sup> And again, “O dear, dear friend, have a watchful eye over me to help me with your warm prayers.....and seasonable reproofs and admonitions.”<sup>40</sup> Whitefield’s wife reproved him for his “stiffness and positiveness”; while her husband, at various times, reproved Harris for his “heat”, although he “spoke well of my honest heart and good judgment”; and again, “The Lord keep you and me, my dear brother, from a hot, rash, positive, overbearing temper. This I think is the predominant failing in my dear brother Harris.”<sup>41</sup> For his part, Harris was ready to acknowledge this tendency: “I often act and often speak in my own dark, rash and selfish spirit.” “Told them of my heat, it is what I mourn over, and beg their prayers against.”<sup>42</sup> But the alternative, no “plain dealing”, he regarded as a serious deficiency among the Dissenters.<sup>43</sup>

Harris’s reproof on occasions, however, bordered on the domineering. “Having kept a private general society ... where I was more cutting and lashing than in public, showing how the wrath of the Lord [is] kindled here, and his curse is gone through all Wales, and burns like fire, and is not yet returned.”<sup>44</sup> Especially was this true during the late 40s, when the disruption in the Welsh Methodist ranks was imminent. In particular, he criticized the other leaders for their “lightness” (or frivolity), behaviour which had always been anathema to him: “We are about soul’s work, eternity work, and God’s work; there is no jesting with God.”<sup>45</sup> He was not slow to defend himself: “What they think is harshness in me is not my sin or anger, but my created nature, a rough voice and a rough appearance is created [natural] to me; my soul is love, I speak in love.”<sup>46</sup>

Methodist discipline in the society meetings assumed both a willingness and an ability to articulate their

experiences. This they referred to as “opening the heart” Whitefield’s statement of this is found in his 1740 *Letter to the Religious Societies*:

The only end which I hope you all propose by your assembling yourselves together, is the renewing of your depraved natures, and promoting the hidden life of Jesus Christ in your souls.....None but those who have experienced it, can tell the unspeakable advantage of such a union and communion of souls. I know not a better means in the world to keep hypocrisy out from amongst you. Pharisees and unbelievers will pray, read, sing Psalms; but none, save an Israelite indeed, will endure to have his heart searched out.<sup>47</sup>

Harris saw it in a similar light: “set all to relate to each other what God has done for their souls, to bring Satan’s work to light; it is good to expose them, to bring the Lord’s work [to light] is good, [in order] to bring Him praise, and to encourage others on.”<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, the danger of an excessive subjectivism was always present, and oversight of these meetings required wisdom and maturity. Nevertheless, the societies provided opportunities for oversight in spiritual matters which the parish churches, in particular, lacked. It was by this means that genuine conversions were distinguished from the spurious, growth in grace was encouraged, and spiritual leaders were nurtured. It was Griffith Jones, a senior parish minister, who alerted Harris to the dangers of resting on experiences, and of making them an index of spirituality: “Heard Mr. Jones preaching on the disciples calling fire from heaven. He showed the spirit of error, 1. When we lean on our own experiences before the Word; 2. On our own understanding to read and apply the Word above the judgment of others; 3. When we set up little things or even great truths any further than they affect us.” Another occasion was more private: “He said we were charged as going to Quakerism and all errors, and to leave the Bible and to follow our experiences. I said that was not true, but what is the Bible but a dead letter to us till we do experience the work of the Spirit in us, not one or the other separately, but both together.”<sup>49</sup> It was a salutary observation.

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Fellowship and discipline have their part in nurturing spirituality, but their full benefit is reaped only when God's Spirit and God's Word are given their rightful place.

### **Revival and order**

Given the extraordinary success of the Gospel in Harris's day, characterized by several revivals, and the proliferation of society meetings, it was inevitable that questions should arise about revival and order. A hallmark of the Welsh Methodists was that they hungered for more of God. Their spirituality was characterized by a longing to press on into God's presence, and to bring Him with them to their people. They monitored the remarkable conversions that took place, the impressions made on God's people, and the influences on their lives. They witnessed the transformation of whole communities. But this plethora of divine activity was inseparable from the problems that accompany new and vigorous life. They were problems of new life not of decay, of multiplication not of diminution, of revival not of declension. It was easy, therefore, for others to criticize zeal as fanaticism, elevated spiritual experiences as emotionalism, and heavenly disorder as ecclesiastical anarchy.

Harris's zeal was proverbial. "O may the Lord fill us all so with His power that we may never rest day or night, but continually go about with our lives in our hands, calling poor sinners to come to Christ, and building the lambs up in Christ." "On the way I was made as bold as a lion, filled with zeal to press on my brethren with me to lay aside days for prayer; and to engage every man of their congregations, endowed with grace, love, humility, prudence and gifts, to go about from house to house, that all may know of Jesus Christ, since the devil is so busy." <sup>50</sup>

It was not only theory for Harris, but practice: "It is now nine weeks since I began to go round South and North Wales, and this week I came home. I have visited in that time thirteen counties, and traveled most of 150 miles every week, and discoursed twice every day - sometimes three or four times a day. In this last journey I have not taken off my clothes for seven nights, traveling from one morning to the next evening without any rest above 100

miles, discoursing at midnight, or very early, on the mountains in order to avoid persecution." <sup>51</sup> Godliness needs exercise, and by the grace of God it grows and matures in the context of multiplied labours, spiritual conflicts, and used opportunities.

In all these labours, Harris always referred to himself and other unordained laymen as 'exhorters'. The Methodists sought to maintain discipline regarding their fitness for the task, both spiritually and educationally, but did not always succeed. Their critics regarded them as "bold, visionary rustics", "illiterate mechanics, much fitter to make a pulpit than to get into one". <sup>52</sup> When challenged about his itinerancy by a parish minister, Harris "assured him that I did not come to weaken his hands, or to draw any away from church, nor met at the time of divine service; and that I was sure he would not seem to border so near on self-sufficiency as to say that there was no need of help. People can never be helped too much and too often to repentance." <sup>53</sup>

A fuller defense of Harris's position was made to the curate of his own parish: "You seemed to [think it] unlawful for a layman to preach, but who [ordained] Apollos? He said, Was not he ordained? I said, no. Who deputed those prophets in Moses's time, who prophesied in the camp without proving their mission by miracles, and Moses said, Oh, that all God's people were prophets? He asked what was meant by prophets there. I said, Teachers to teach the way of God, and open the Law. What, said he, is meant by God's people? I said, Such as had grace. I then said that all the disciples on St. Stephen's persecution went to preach, and they were not all ordained; and our own Church holds that in case of persecution a layman may preach, for that is distinct from giving the Sacraments, and that none should give them but such as were ordained. He said, But now there is no necessity. I said, There never was more. What is all the drunkenness, etc. about? He asked could I turn them. I said, I must do my best ... that my aim was to do good, to draw sinners from sin to Christ." <sup>54</sup>

This reminds us of the principle of urgency in the matter of reaching the unconverted, an urgency which constrained Richard Baxter, the eminently successful Puritan minister, to reason thus: "The commonness and the greatness of men's necessity, commanded me to do anything that I could for their relief, and to bring forth some water to cast upon this fire, though I had not at hand a silver vessel to carry it in.....We use not to stand upon compliment or precedence, when we run to quench a common fire ... If we see a man fall into fire or water, we stand not upon mannerliness in plucking him out, but lay hands on him as we can without delay."<sup>55</sup>

It is true that God has set in His Church officers, called by Himself, approved and ratified by His people, for the work of the ministry, and to build up believers. (Ephesians 4: 11-12). Men are also called by Him to take the Gospel to unevangelized areas, as, for example Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13: 1-3. Such are set apart and sent by God and acknowledged in an orderly fashion by the Church. This order is to be preserved as an ideal to be aimed for in every age. The public ministry of unordained of laymen has to be defined within these terms. The state of the Church in his day showed grave spiritual declension, and for him this was warrant enough to modify the normal demands of order.

Harris regarded his awakening gifts as a commission, given and withdrawn at will by God. He did not intrude into the office of the ministry, for example, in the matter of administering the sacraments. He saw his labours as being in submission to, as well as complementing, those officers in the Church who were clearly called of God. Furthermore, most of the time he accepted that the fruits of his labours were subject to evaluation and approval by the regular officers of the Church. For their part, contemporary ministerial leaders acknowledged his gifts and labours as being from God and to His glory by giving him opportunities for public ministry of the Word. In doing so, they would have agreed with Richard Baxter's argument in the previous century, "it's better that men should be disorderly saved, than orderly

damned, and that the Church be disorderly preserved than orderly destroyed."<sup>56</sup> The alternative to order need not always be disorder. Sometimes it can be order of another kind. In this respect the Methodists created their own, and for this Harris showed both genius and energy.<sup>57</sup> Issues of life and death take precedence over those of order and regularity. True spirituality holds together in dynamic tension both the apostolic injunction "Let all things be done decently and in order", and the apostolic experience "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 14:40; 9:16).

### Conclusion: Eternity in view

In conclusion, we note that Harris matched zeal for souls with anticipation of glory. While he was "never better than when on full stretch", he had eternity in view. "What have we to do with fine buildings?", he asks, "We are travellers, we'll make shift for a night."<sup>58</sup> Along with anticipation went assurance, a matter of considerable debate throughout the period of the Great Awakening. "What though the outward man decays, when the inward man puts on the Lord of Glory, and when tastes of heaven are given us, we have no appetite to earthly things. Inward supports will make us bear anything, for Christ bears in us and for us. All is ours, let us study nothing but to glorify Him while we breathe..... He called us when dead in trespasses and sins, and will not change His mind, and sin, men, or devils shall not separate us from Him, because His arms are about us."<sup>59</sup> Harris's dealings with God, therefore, were leavened with a lively hope. It was this which imparted urgency to his labours, resolve to his strivings for holiness, and joy to his heart: "I must have the Saviour, indeed, for He is my all; all that others have in the world, and in religion, and in themselves, I have in Thee; pleasures, riches, safety, honour, life, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, bliss, joy, gaiety, and happiness..... And if a child longs for his father, a traveller for the end of his journey, a workman to finish his work, a prisoner for his liberty, an heir for the full possession of his estate; so, in all these respects, I can't help longing to go home."<sup>60</sup> This is evangelical spirituality.

## References

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4. HVL.32; HRS. 136; HHDR. 38,41; MS.i.66; 432; 463; HVP.31-2; Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers, *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, New York, Crossroad, 1991, p.262.
5. HVP. 5, 327; HVL. 204; HVP. 214,330; HRS. 170. See also Chapter 10 'The Bible in the Great Awakening', in Eifion Evans, *Fire in the Thatch: The True Nature of Religious Revival*, Bridgend, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1996, Chapter 10; and HH.7, n.14.
6. See Eifion Evans, 'Howel Harris and the Printed Page', CH. 23 (1999), 33-62; HVP. 324-31; CH.I.49. Studies on Puritan piety include Richard Lovelace, 'The Anatomy of Puritan Piety: English Puritan Devotional Literature, 1600-1640' in Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*; and J. I. Packer on 'The Spirituality of John Owen' in *Among God's Giants: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, Eastbourne, Kingsway Publications Ltd, 1991(Chapter 12).
7. MS.ii.25.
8. MS.i. 421; HVL. 153. Harris refers to the chaplain as a "Mr. Hutchinson". Whitefield was appointed one of the Countess of Huntingdon's chaplains in 1748.
9. MS.i. 100. For the Methodists' rebuttal of criticism see Eifion Evans, 'Early Methodist Apologetic', in *Fire in the Thatch*, Chapter 8.
10. Quoted in Albert M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, London, The Epworth Press, 1960, pp.33-4.
11. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, edited by Nehemiah Curnock, 1909, London, Charles H. Kelly, vol. ii p.257, fn.; The Bishop of London had issued a 'Pastoral Letter' in the same year with much the same indictment. See DR.96.
12. *ibid.* p.319.
13. *ibid.* p.130.
14. Quoted in Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, vol. ii 1890, p.221.
15. Sermon on Heb 4:9, in *George Whitefield Sermons*, New Ipswich, New Hampshire, Pietan Publications, vol. iii 1994, p.294.
16. HVL. 23, 42, 84; HVP. 207: this was written in December, 1751. Dr. Tudur Jones notes that "Systematic Theology was not Howel Harris's strong point, and the details of his credo developed and changed through his contacts with a variety of people and his own intense personal experience. Nevertheless, he moved consistently within the orbit of Calvinism." ("The Evangelical Revival in Wales: A Study in Spirituality", in James D. Mackey, *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*, Edinburgh, 1989, p.242.)
17. MS.ii.19. Samuel Mason was a bookseller and printer, a Calvinist, and member of Whitefield's London Tabernacle.
18. HVL. 236, 167.
19. HVP. 212, 166-7, 196; HVL.14. For a discussion of the separation between Harris and the other leaders, see HH, Chapter VI, 'Dividing Times', and GT, Chapter 8, 'The Prophetess'. For Harris's dreams, see GFN, 8-9.
20. MS.i.257.
21. HRS.161.
22. Theophilus Evans, *History of Modern Enthusiasm*, 1752, p.78.
23. HVP. 31-2, 145.
24. DR. 195-6.
25. HVP. 142, 328. Harris is referring to *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, by John Bunyan.
26. CH. 4 (1980), 28; the matter is discussed in DR. 247-9. For Erskine, see Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*, Edinburgh, and Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1993.
27. Translated into English, with notes, and published in 1996 under the title *Pursued by God* (Eifion Evans, Bridgend, Evangelical Press of Wales). See chapters 15 and 16.
28. MS.i.281, 280.
29. HVP.207; HRS. 74.
30. *A Brief Account of the Life of Howell Harris Esq.*, Trevecka [Wales], 1791, p.15; HVP.118; HVL.108, 225.

31. HVL. 42, 47, 51, 58, 109, 141, 181; HRS. 46; cf. HVP. 171, where Harris adds "other ways God reveals His will, - by dreams, union, the ministry of angels, the people, and Urim." Presumably he referred to former times, although Harris, like John Wesley, was not averse to using the lot. Harris used it at the College in 1769 to decide which two students should take the Gospel to the East Indies; and John Wesley, decided to preach and print his sermon on 'free grace' on the same basis. See HRS.234; *The Letters of John Wesley*, London, vol.i, 1931, p.303; *Journal*, vol.ii. 184, n.1.

32. HVL.39.

33. HRS.149.

34. STL.i.159; Rowland was preaching on Nehemiah 13:29, and had applied the message to all conditions of men: "If you are a backslider, read Hebrews; if devotional, read the Psalms; if you are prone to be rebellious, read Joshua and Judges; but if you would accomplish great things, read Nehemiah." John Morgan Jones a William Morgan, *Y Tadau Methodistiaidd*, cyf. I, Abertawe, 1895, tud. 283. See also Eifion Evans, 'The Sources and Scope of Daniel Rowland's Sermons', CH. 18 (1994), pp.42-55.

35. STL.i.81.

36. *Last Message and Dying Testimony*, quoted in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris*, p.54.

37. HVL.149, 209.

38. MS.ii.24.

39. MS.ii.28,29.

40. MS.i.304.

41. HVL.86, 241; *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, x. 24, quoted in HH.51.

42. STL.i.23; HVL.242.

43. HVL.209.

44. MS.i.468.

45. HVL.8. For the disruption, see DR. 269-80; HH. 45-57; and GT. 170-94.

46. HVL.143.

47. DR.87. For the Rules of the societies see DR. 175-85, and also *Fire in the Thatch*, Chapter 7, 'Adding to the Church - in the teaching of

the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists'.

48. MS.ii.7; William Williams's contemporary, classic work on the subject was translated into English with the title *The Experience Meeting*, by Mrs. Lloyd-Jones, and published in 1973 (London, Evangelical Press).

49. HVP.63, 116; for Griffith Jones, see DR Chapter 14, 'A Father in Israel'.

50. STL.i.48; MS.i.417.

51. *A Brief Account*, pp.195-6. A similar summary is found in STL.ii.21; and HH.33.

52. Quoted in Richard Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications Issued During the Eighteenth Century*, 1902, pp.56,100. See also Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, chapter 4, 'Satire of Methodist Preachers and Preaching'; HH. 11-14, and DR index s.v. 'Lay-preaching'.

53. MS.i.455.

54. D. E Jenkins, *Calvinistic Methodist Holy Orders*, Carnarvon, Connexional Book-Room, 1911, p.27. Writing to Whitefield early in 1745 Harris speaks of certain parts of Wales where "there is much of the divine fire kindled where lukewarmness had prevailed, and they meet at 5 in the morning, and in some places are kept up all night in prayer and praise. This revival the Lord did [commence] by means of (seemingly) a very mean, unlikely instrument, an exhorter that had been a cobbler. Now, no-one is more enflamed and more owned to quicken others than he is." STL.i.159-60.

55. *A Treatise of Conversion*, in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, Ligonier, Pa. Soli Deo Gloria, Volume 2, 1990, p.399, 'Preface'. It was originally written in 1657.

56. Quoted in GFN, 42.

57. See for example HVL.61,62; STL.i.82.

58. HVP.10, 17, 39, 328; HRS.17.

59. MS.i.360. For the issue of assurance, see DR index. For a discussion of Reformed and Puritan insights into assurance see Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism and the Dutch Second Reformation*, American University Studies, Series VII, Volume 89, New York, Peter Lang, 1991.

60. *A Brief Account*, pp.100-01.



The task of the Christian Minister is an exacting one. For those who have never been called to the full time task of preaching, it may appear a relatively easy thing to preach each week, given that the scriptures are so vast and varied. Yet therein lies the problem, not only how one should seek to regularly minister from God's word, but also how to do it whilst retaining a freshness and vigour for the commission that God has given to his servants?

Every true minister of the gospel is made not manufactured, although he can be moulded. Living in an age of rapid change it is tempting to try other methods, yet the time honoured one of the *foolishness of preaching* (1 Corinthians 1:21), remains the best way to communicate God's mind to sinful man. Therefore the preacher should have confidence that God knows the best way for him to communicate his revealed truth each week, in the sure knowledge that he will always see his word hits the target (Isaiah 55:11).

Many different aids are available to the preacher, yet books remain one of the best resources, especially those written by fellow preachers. The following selection come from preachers with different backgrounds and experiences, and have been produced to stimulate and encourage the busy pastor.

**James M. Garretson, *Princeton and Preaching; Archibald Alexander and the Christian Ministry*.<sup>1</sup>**

This is a beautifully written volume that the careful reader will greatly enjoy but also derive great profit from as it has such a rich content.

Using the life and works of Archibald Alexander to illustrate what preaching can be, the author has divided his material into eleven parts. It begins with a life of Alexander, and then goes through the usual topics, but in a most interesting and stimulating fashion.

It is full of wise instruction. In relation to the call to the ministry we are told that Alexander considered: 'Grace was more important than gifts; character more important than miraculous phenomena. What mattered most was whether Christ was forming himself in the character of those who believed they were called to serve in the Christian ministry. Character, in turn was evidenced in doctrinal fidelity and biblical piety' (38).

Although it refers to a past age the prayerful reading of this book will do preachers great good and undoubtedly benefit their hearers.

**Peter Jeffery, *Preachers who made a difference*.<sup>2</sup>**

A brief introduction to the lives of a number of famous preachers, from Hugh Latimer to Lloyd-Jones; written in a pithy way to stimulate and encourage the reader to learn more about them, and the message they proclaimed. It would be a useful tool to give to any who show an interest in becoming preachers.

This book comes with a CD of extracts from the writings of those mentioned, except for Lloyd-Jones, which seems a peculiar omission.

**Michael J. Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching, Hearing, Speaking and living the Word*.<sup>3</sup>**

Michael Quicke appears to have written a book with the Preacher/Teacher of a large congregation in mind, one who is probably in a team ministry and is required to produce only one sermon per week. For it encourages the preacher to 'memorize the sermon structure,' which, unless you are extremely gifted, is not easy to do, especially if there are three or more messages to deliver each week.

The book is divided into two; the first part is called, 'Preaching Realities', and goes through the basics of looking at the background of preaching and how the message of the Bible should be conveyed in the twenty-first century, suggesting the use of modern equipment to engage the hearer. 'Electronic technology has to become as much part of our church experience as pipe organ technology' (118). What happens to those who are unable to obtain or use such items is not mentioned.

Part two is called 'Preaching Opportunities', and is based around 'the preaching Swim' - which is an illustration that will probably be lost to land lovers, - a total engagement with the act of preaching. This is explored in five stages and seeks to help the preacher to improve his work in the study and pulpit. Stage 1 Immerse in Scripture, Stage 2 Interpret for today, Stage 3 Design the sermon, Stage 4 Deliver the sermon, and Stage 5 Experience the outcome.

The author seeks to ground his method in an all encompassing circle, hence the title of the book, and fig 2 on page 51 illustrates the Dynamics of a 360 degree preaching event, that begins, ends and is empowered by the triune God. At times it feels like his thesis is being forced into this model but the book does nonetheless

contain many useful passages. Coming from a professor of preaching in the United States it has a number of diagrams and charts that may help in the seminary class room, but some will find these off putting.

With many fine phrases and ideas this is a work that would benefit a number of preachers. Quicke assumes that women will also be preachers (88).

**Roger Standing**, *Finding the Plot, preaching in narrative style*.<sup>4</sup>

This book is a plea for narrative preaching to have a greater emphasis in Church life than it appears to have at present. There are four parts; Part 1 What's so special about narrative? Part 2 Preaching in a narrative style, Part 3 Narrative sermons, and Part 4 Preachers insights.

A great deal comes through in other books but is given a particular value here. It was difficult not to become wearied by the end of the book with over emphasis of this topic and many of the sermon examples are what would be expected.

The fault may lie with the reviewer but it would have greatly enhanced the value of this work if the Old Testament had been dealt with rather than the New. For many preaches struggle with the narrative of the Old Testament, particularly books like Kings, and Chronicles. Great though Dale Ralph Davis commentaries are on these books, they are not designed to be read out loud to the congregation, so greater help in understanding and preaching from the Old Testament would have been most useful.

**Greg Scharf**, *Prepared to Preach; God's work & ours in proclaiming his word*.<sup>5</sup>

The author teaches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and has produced a stimulating volume. He divides his work into four parts; Part 1 Preparing to prepare, Part 2 Preparing yourself to preach, Part 3 Preparing your mind, your body, and the congregation, and Part 4, Preparing the message God gives you to preach.

Much of the material in this book is replicated elsewhere, but is worth reading for the gems that are contained within it. Chapter 10 on Preparing your body to preach, deals with physical fitness, personal appearance, hygiene and diet; it is a great checklist that all preachers would do well to take heed to so that the message and not the preacher is remembered after the sermon.

This might well be a good book for ministers to work through at a fraternal.

**Edgar Andrews**, *Preaching Christ*.<sup>6</sup>

The majority of chapters of this book originally appeared as monthly articles in the Evangelical Times. In thirteen helpful chapters the author works from 'What shall we preach,' to 'Christ in all the scriptures.' For many preachers the things discussed in this volume will not be new, but they would make a helpful contribution to any preaching classes that they run.

One small point, the varying nature of the illustrations are irritating; they undoubtedly had a place in the newspaper, but are not so compelling in a book.

**Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson**, eds., *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching*.<sup>7</sup>

A large volume in every way, which will certainly test not only the pocket, but also the manual dexterity of the reader! It is an eclectic mix of styles and contributors with Robinson and Larson acting as editors, also adding a few items themselves. The list of writers, all one hundred and nine of them, might be a little surprising, it includes Timothy Keller, Dick Lucas, David Jackman, Jay Adams, Warren Wiersbe and Bill Hybels, and many professors of varying types, but there is also a comedian and several writers in residence. Whilst it is helpful to hear what others feel or think about preaching, in a work of this type it would have been better to have limited it to those who actually preach.

It is divided into eleven parts, the first one is; 'The high call of preaching,' and it goes through various stages to finish with 'Evaluation.' Not only are there chapters on topics related to preaching but also interviews with preachers which gives the book an uneven feel.

Some highlights to whet the appetite are: 'Preaching through personal pain' by Daniel T. Hans. He begins with these heart rending words; "Two days ago my daughter Laura died," and then works out the implications of this using Job as a template. 'Life in Leviticus', by Rob Bell, is a challenge to preach a series through one of the least understood but very important books of the Bible. He did so when he planted a church, and it was enthusiastically received. Also well worth reading is; 'Preaching Hell in a tolerant age' by Timothy Keller. This is a masterpiece of persuasive argument, and

it is a chapter that all should read, for it shows how this serious subject can be handled sensitively and winsomely.

This is a book mainly for reference or dipping into, and considering its size more suitable for the seminary rather than the manse. Although sensible use of the accompanying CD would be useful in a preaching class run by Pastors in their churches as it contains fourteen sermons by some of the contributors.

**Roger Wagner**, *Tongues Aflame, Learning to Preach from the Apostles*.<sup>8</sup>

Roger Wagner has written a most stimulating book on preaching that encourages the reader to engage with the scriptures and to look at the apostolic example of preaching that lives. This work is divided into two main parts; Part 1, Characteristics of the Preaching in Acts, and Part Two, A closer look at the sermons. Part 1 contains things that can be found in other volumes, but, Part 2 is most helpful in considering afresh the mighty sermons of the early church.

Many striking phrases leap off of the page; 'If you are going to lead men and women into an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, you must make repentance from sin a prominent theme in your sermons, as the apostles did. In expounding and applying the scriptures you must help your audience see itself as God does' (166).

This book also contains timely practical advice on how to say 'no' to unwanted intrusions into the most essential things; 'You have many duties included in your 'job description' as a local pastor in addition to preaching – you are a counsellor, an administrator, an ecclesiastical judge (i.e. in the conduct of church discipline), a youth leader, a consultant on interior decoration, a hospital visitor, a handyman, etc. No doubt you would say, in theory, that preaching is your most important task. But, in practise, is it?' (297).

With so many good books on preaching around, the reader may feel like passing this one by, resist the temptation, get a copy, read and let this wise author powerfully present to you the reason why having tongues aflame is an achievable object.

**Stuart Olyott**, *Preaching pure and simple*.<sup>9</sup>

Like the author this work is concise and precise. For such a small book a great deal of information is conveyed in a

most helpful way to the reader.

It is divided into three parts, the first one asks and answers the simple question, 'What is preaching?' Part two 'What makes good preaching?' is the bulk of the work and considers no fewer than seven sub-headings. Part three contains two brief sections, a suggested method of sermon preparation and then an appreciation of the life of Hugh D Morgan. The advice on sermon preparation is most helpful, except that it would have been valuable if the author related how he coped with the stress of sermon preparation in a busy pastoral situation. For taking time over sermon is often a luxury that many pastors long for but do not have.

If it were in my power, I would get a copy of this book into the hands of every preacher not only for their encouragement but also to enthuse them afresh in sermon preparation and delivery.

It would have been helpful to have had a CD of the preaching of Hugh Morgan with this book for he died 14 years ago and therefore many will not have heard him or realised why the author holds him in such high esteem.

**Bryan Chapell**, *Christ-Centred Preaching, Redeeming the Expository Sermon*.<sup>10</sup>

This book deals with the science of expository preaching. It has been passionately written and conveys the author's enthusiasm for this form of preaching.

There are three main parts to his book and a significant section called Appendices. Part 1 Principles for Expository preaching, Part 2 Preparation of Expository preaching and Part 3 A theology of Christ-centred messages. Written by someone who teaches in the classroom, included are tables of terms, diagrams and formulas that some may find intimidating, but a thoughtful and prayerful reading will reap rewards. Each chapter has a helpful outline showing where the author will take the reader, and a goal for the chapter – this helps to focus on what is being taught and how it fits into the whole work. The chapter concludes with a series of questions for review and discussion – the author assumes that this will be used as a text book. Then a series of exercises are meant to be worked through to see how much has been learnt by the preacher. These exercises would ideally work best in a group situation where friendly but firm correction could be applied.

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In many ways the best section is Part 3 on Anthology of Christ-centred messages, for most preachers, if they are honest, struggle not only to see Christ in all the scriptures but also suffer from not seeing him in the right way nor presenting his place in the Old Testament in a correct fashion. Chapter 11 in Part 3, Developing Redemptive Messages is a powerful corrective to poor preaching and like other items mentioned above, deserves to be read by all preachers..

Of the books reviewed, this is the most intellectually satisfying, because it stretches the preacher to consider what he is doing and how what he has read should be achieved. If every minister were able to work thoughtfully through this volume, then the quality of expository sermons must increase to the glory of God.

A.W. Tozer, *Rut, Rot or Revival*.<sup>11</sup>

Reading sermons by preachers that God has blessed is always profitable, and Tozer was one who was always stimulating. This selection has been compiled from sermons preached in Toronto, and illustrate well Tozer's gift for getting to the heart of the message and for putting into practice the advice contained in the books above.

## Conclusion

These books have all been written by those who enjoy the privileged position of being Lecturers, Itinerant preachers or Pastors in large Churches.

One glaring omission is the lack of material written by anyone who pastors a Church with a regular congregation of fifty or less people. This is an area that needs to be addressed, for the majority of Churches are small and the Pastor has of necessity to be a jack of all trades. So the sad reality is that he is probably too busy to read this review let alone write a book!

Perhaps then there is a brave publisher who will be bold enough to approach such a man, so that a full and rounded picture can be obtained of how men in those situations manage to compose and preach their material, and it can then be added to all the other fine volumes available.

One reason that preachers do not read enough is a lack of finance, but with many fine resources available like the local or The Evangelical Library that should not be an excuse used by anyone today for not obtaining the volumes listed above.

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**Abbreviations:** ANE: Ancient Near East(ern); BM: British Museum; BST: The Bible Speaks Today; CFP: Christian Focus Publications; EP: Evangelical Press; EVV: English Versions (of the Bible); IVP: Inter-Varsity Press; MSS. manuscripts, NICOT: New International Commentary on the Old Testament; NT: New Testament; OT: Old Testament; TOTC: Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; WCS: Welwyn Commentary Series.

Prior to 1980, it was not easy to find a single work from an evangelical perspective on many books of the Old Testament (works in the TOTC series and early NICOT commentaries excepting). The situation is now very different: there may be four or five readily-available commentaries on a given passage, ranging in character from the scholarly and technical to the pastorally applied, which makes a third edition (2003) of **Tremper Longman's** *Old Testament Commentary Survey* <sup>1</sup> most welcome. There has also been a deepening interaction with the OT from a traditional evangelical approach which often looked for little beyond messianic predictions. There is now appreciation of the many more levels on which the OT speaks to the Christian and regard for the distinctive features of the first three quarters of the Bible. While there are now far greater resources at our disposal for study of the OT, there is also a greater spectrum of opinions and approaches to the OT within evangelicalism, on issues such as the six-day creation of Genesis, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the single authorship of Isaiah, or a fifth-century date for Daniel.

## Hebrew Language

A second edition of **John Dobson's** *Learn Biblical Hebrew* was issued in 2005 <sup>2</sup>. This comes with an audio CD, a valuable addition for those seeking to learn the language by themselves. The publicity makes much of Dobson's use of recent theories of learning in his approach and the book comes with hearty endorsements from Bible College students who have found the book helpful in overcoming their difficulties in language learning. The emphasis is on

user-friendliness and memorability: those looking for a rigorous, systematic approach will be frustrated by this book, as will those who want a reference grammar (neither of which it claims to be). Dobson wants us to learn the grammar through the language, not vice versa. His analysis of verb forms in Hebrew narrative (pp. 229 ff) is particularly clear and practically helpful for exposition, as is his treatment of poetry (pp. 279 ff). At the other end of the spectrum is **Sue Groom's** *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, 2003 <sup>3</sup>. This is a book for those who already have a good working knowledge of Hebrew and wish to read more widely about textual, linguistic and interpretative issues. It will also appeal to those with no Hebrew (all of which is translated into English in this book) but who are interested in biblical hermeneutics.

## Old Testament Archaeology and History

**Kenneth Kitchen's** *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 2003 (4) is a magnum opus, the distillation of a lifetime's study by an evangelical scholar world renowned for his robust and passionate defence of the historicity of the OT. Those who have heard Professor Kitchen lecture on this subject will need little persuasion to buy the book. His engaging enthusiasm is palpable, even in print, as is his frustration and impatience with the shoddy thinking and ideological preconceptions underlying many of liberalism's attacks on the Bible's historicity. This book is more than a gripping read, however: the depth of research and systematic presentation of material will make it a reference work for those with any interest in OT history and archaeology.

On a more popular level is **Peter Masters' Heritage of Evidence in the British Museum, 2004 <sup>4</sup>. Many will be familiar with the articles by Dr. Masters on this subject which have appeared more than once in *The Sword and Trowel*. His material has been revised and updated in the light of changing displays in the British Museum, and is presented in an attractively illustrated and inexpensive paperback book. Like *Through the British Museum*, by**

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Brian Edwards and Clive Anderson, 2001<sup>6</sup>, this book could serve as a pocket guide to the BM's collection of biblical material as well as providing historical evidence for Bible study and apologetic use.

It is one thing to argue for the historicity of OT texts on the basis of archaeology. It is another thing to handle those texts correctly in the light of their historical context. Both issues are addressed in a stimulating collection of essays edited by David M. Howard and Michael A. Grisanti, *Giving the Sense: Understanding and using OT historical texts*, 2003<sup>7</sup>. The book is billed as 'cutting edge essays by OT scholars' and it does not disappoint. As with all collections of essays (this collection is a *festschrift* for Eugene C. Merrill), one must accept some variation in approach, and the brevity of the essay format (although the latter might commend itself to the busy reader). The book progresses from general theoretical issues about how to approach OT history, through a consideration of how archaeology bears upon key periods of that history, to some specific questions such as the date of the Exodus and the seemingly implausibly high numbers found in some OT narratives. There are also studies of particular OT narratives from a literary viewpoint. If this seems overly scholarly, it should be noted that the final section of the book comprises helpful and practical essays on preaching from OT historical texts, helpful for any Christian interested in expounding the OT.

### Biblical and Theological Studies

Peter Enns', *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the problem of the Old Testament*, 2005<sup>8</sup> is written with a clarity which expertly steers the non-specialist reader through involved areas of debate and with an honesty which demands a serious and respectful response. Enns suggests a way forward from the old liberal/conservative controversy, rejecting the false dichotomy of whether the Old Testament is a collection of ANE writings or the word of God. He addresses the question of how it can be *both*: for him, the Bible is the

word of God; the question is *how* it is the word of God. He addresses three challenges to a simplistic conservative view of Scripture:

- i. the discovery of ANE texts which bear striking similarities to some passages in the OT questions the *uniqueness* of the OT.
- ii. there are apparently different viewpoints represented within the OT, raising questions about its *integrity*.
- iii. the sometimes surprising use made of the OT in the NT raises questions about its *interpretation*.

Enns does not merely raise thorny (and, to some, perhaps embarrassing) questions. He suggests an answer in his incarnational model for OT interpretation. This means regarding the way in which the Word of God was enfleshed in Jesus Christ as a paradigm for the way it is communicated in the OT. Just as the Word of God became an authentic first-century Jewish man, mediating eternal truth through contemporary language and culture, so God speaks through the language, culture and milieu of the ANE in the OT. Enns argues further that the NT writers saw the whole of the OT fulfilled in Christ: his life was not simply foretold in individual predictive prophecies; the whole sweep of Israel's history, the questions raised by it, and the central themes of OT theology are answered in him. The apostles' use of the OT, therefore, is neither cavalier nor shallow, but rich and deep. This may prove to be more than a fascinating, insightful and provocative book. It may open a debate about the OT within evangelicalism. It is not the final word in that debate. It leaves questions unanswered, most especially the question of the historicity of Genesis 2 and 3. If the author of Genesis exploited (and critiqued) contemporary ANE mythological explanations for the origin of the universe (Gen 1), to what extent is this true also of the Eden narratives? On this question hangs our view of man, the fallen nature, and our need of salvation in Christ (Rom 5). We need to see how Enns's incarnational model applies to those critical chapters before we can assess it fully. My fear is that this book will not be received with the necessary circumspection, and

controversy surrounding it may simply divide the evangelical camp into those for whom 'evangelical' necessarily means a classical, pre-modern view of how the Bible is Scripture, and those who are open to the possibility that the Bible itself may redefine our understanding of what Scripture is.

Some of the issues dealt with by Peter Enns are also discussed in **Tremper Longman's** *How to Read Genesis*, 2005 <sup>9</sup>. The similarities and crucial differences between Genesis and ANE literature are considered in the first part of the book. Then follows a section-by-section guide to Genesis. There are some fascinating insights, such as Longman's recapitulation of Fokkelman's analysis of the Babel story (pp. 119 ff), but the modest compass of the book means that it seldom goes beyond the level of an overview or introduction. As an overview, it is extremely effective, however, and Longman concludes with ten pages on 'Reading Genesis as Christians'.

A far more exhaustive book is **Palmer Robertson's** survey of the OT prophetic movement, *The Christ of the prophets*, 2004 <sup>10</sup>. As well as covering the ground from Moses to Malachi thoroughly, there are also welcome and apt tangents of contemporary application. This book provides the kind of overview which most Christians will never hear from the pulpit or Bible study (where the focus is on an individual book, prophet or passage). It is the sort of overview which every preacher needs to have in mind, and this book should be of particular value to ministers and preachers who have not had the opportunity of a course of study on the prophetic movement. Like Kitchen (\* above), Robertson has little time for the liberal challenges to the evangelical view of the OT and deals with them robustly and combatively. There is also no doubt that this is a *Christian* book, written from a new covenant perspective. The mark of a great teacher is to make profound and complex issues seem simple and obvious. Robertson does this, although his very thoroughness would make the book heavy-going for a recreational or devotional reader.

## The Law and the Prophets

Four welcome new additions to IVP's BST series of commentaries have appeared in the last two years (11, 12, 13, 14). **Motyer's** *The Message of Exodus*, 2005<sup>11</sup> began life as sermons and Bible studies in a local church and for that reason its contemporary and christological application is strong. Motyer's scholarship is also in evidence: he is especially good on Exodus's place within the sweep of Scripture as a whole. His trademark emphasis on structural analysis (familiar to us from his commentary on Isaiah, IVP, 1993) makes this a difficult book to dip into (try, for example, to find his comment on 34:6-7). It is better *read* rather than *consulted*. **Derek Tidball** meets head-on the difficulties many have with *Leviticus* in his work, subtitled 'Free to be holy', 2005 <sup>12</sup>. He argues persuasively and enthusiastically for a positive view of the teaching of Leviticus, whilst also showing how vitally it underpins the Christian Gospel. This book calls for Leviticus to be brought out of the closet and preached. I have a minor quibble with **Mary Evans** on *1 and 2 Samuel*, 2004 <sup>13</sup>: the subtitle, 'Personalities, potential, politics and power' may describe the *content* of the books of Samuel, but it is not the '*message* of Samuel'. Evans rightly says that the 'author's interests and concerns... provide a firm control' in our interpretation of individual stories within the book (p.17). She identifies four overarching themes in Samuel (pp.20-22), but the *message* could be drawn out still more clearly, in the way that Motyer (pp.20-23) and Webb (pp.32-43) do for Exodus and Zechariah. This is not to dismiss Evans's clear, reliable and thoughtful analysis of 1 and 2 Samuel. The 'Questions to Ponder' at the end of each chapter mean that this commentary might also function as a Bible Study book or daily reading aid. For me, the pick of the recent BST commentaries is **Barry Webb** on *Zechariah*, 2004 <sup>14</sup>. Webb handles this often enigmatic book with great perspicacity and verve, steering the reader through the density of Zechariah's symbolism and expertly handling the Messianic aspects of chapters 9-14. His final section, dealing with the NT perspective on

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chapters 12-14 combines caretul exegesis with Christian fervour.

Three works on Isaiah deserve mention. **Allan Harman's** CFP commentary, 2005 <sup>45</sup> hardly needs any further endorsement than the comments on the cover from Grogan, Currid and Motyer, the last of whom states 'His work has made me wish wholeheartedly that I could start all over again'. This is praise indeed, but it is entirely merited. It is a considerable achievement to produce a one-volume commentary on Isaiah which feels comprehensive, profound and yet accessible. Harman also never loses sight of how the NT writers (and Jesus himself) interpreted Isaiah and that provides his hermeneutical horizon, not just the exile and restoration in the 6th century BC. Motyer also praises Harman's 'robust' and 'unanswerable' defence of the unity of Isaiah. In this regard, it is appropriate to note the paperback reprint of **Hugh Williamson's** 1994 academic work *The Book called Isaiah* <sup>46</sup>. Williamson, an avowed evangelical, accepts the historical-critical methodology, defending it against the more recent emphasis on analysis of books of the Bible in their final, canonical form. He therefore accepts the triple authorship of Isaiah, but argues for a major role of the exilic 'Deutero-Isaiah' in editing the work of the original eighth-century prophet. Williamson argues that this second Isaiah saw the oracles of 'Proto-Isaiah' coming to fulfilment in his own time, and that he consciously built upon those oracles in his own. Williamson therefore draws out the many points of contact between chapters 1-39 and 40-55 effectively and persuasively. Other evangelicals will see evidence of single authorship in this thematic unity, rather than of sympathetic editing by a later author. They will also find his methodology and acceptance of multiple authorship troubling. A refreshing antidote to points of scholarly controversy might be found in **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones's** sermons on Isaiah 40, *The All-Sufficient God*, 2005 <sup>47</sup>

## Psalms and Proverbs

A number of works by evangelicals on the Psalms have come out in the last couple of years. Before considering them, it is worth noting the reprinting in paperback of **Sigmund Mowinckel's** *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* <sup>48</sup>, first published in English translation, 1962), a seminal work in the study of Psalms, which still exerts its influence today. The new publication also includes a 14-page introductory essay by James Crenshaw.

*Interpreting the Psalms* edited by **Johnston and Firth**, 2005 <sup>49</sup> is a fine collection of Psalms studies. After essays dealing with the current state of Psalms scholarship and the ANE background to the Psalms, the others are grouped in sections dealing with key themes in the psalms (distress, praise, king, cult, etc.), modes of communication within the psalms (teaching, ethics, body-idioms, torah-meditation) and the interpretation of the psalms by the Essenes, NT writers and in the Targums. None of the essays will be read without profit. The chapter by Gerald Wilson on the final composition of the psalter is particularly stimulating. He shows how certain key psalms are placed to establish the structure of the collection and how this structure provides a framework for understanding the book and the individual psalms (having read this essay, Psalm 73 will take on a much deeper and fuller meaning!). Gerald Wilson is also the author of the NIV Application Commentary on the Psalms (vol 1: 2002), the second volume of which we await with interest.

*Crying out for Justice*, by **John Day**, 2005 <sup>20</sup> is a 200-page study of the problematic 'imprecatory psalms' which contain curses and cries for vengeance. The book's subtitle, 'What the Psalms teach us about mercy and vengeance in an age of terrorism' suggests that there are compelling reasons today to think again about these psalms, although it is more the increasing hostility towards Christian faith in the post-Christian West and persecution in other parts of the world which Day has in view than terrorism specifically. Should Christians always



'turn the other cheek' when faced by systematic oppression by societies and cultures? The contemporary situation provides piquancy to this book but it does not drive it. It is first and foremost a balanced and convincing treatment of imprecation in the psalms. Day begins by showing the inadequacy of previous explanations of these psalms: that they are expressions of rage that a believer may feel, but ought not to; that they reflect OT mentality, now superseded in Christ; that the words are really only appropriate for Christ to utter on the cross. Instead he argues that these psalms are rooted in God's law, covenant and character, that their theology is also found in the NT, and that if there were 'times to curse' in OT days, there are still today. Having dealt with these general issues, Day examines in detail the three most extreme and typical imprecatory psalms, 58, 137 and 109 before examining NT examples of imprecation. This is an excellent book which does not apologise for these psalms, but provides a credible understanding of them. It restores the imprecatory psalms to the psalter and judiciously shows how they might have relevance for the 21st century Christian.

Bruce Waltke's massive, two-volume work on Proverbs for the NICOT series, 2004-5 <sup>21</sup> and Gary Brady's *Heavenly wisdom* in the Welwyn series, 2003 <sup>22</sup>, are both substantial works in terms of size as well as depth of insight, although those insights reflect the differing aims of their respective series.

Waltke's work – the distillation of 25 years study of Proverbs – will surely establish itself as the scholarly work on Proverbs, for its expert interaction with the scholarly literature and painstaking treatment of each verse from the Hebrew. For all its massive erudition, however, Waltke's book is written from a concern for our age, in which folly is alive and well and in which biblical wisdom is needed more than ever. His introductory section (I, pp. 1-170) considers the questions of authorship, composition, structure, and literary forms within the book. The greatest part of the introduction, however, is devoted to the theology of Proverbs and this

concludes with a section on 'christology' (pp. 126 ff) which addresses how Proverbs ought (and ought not) to be viewed from a new-covenant perspective. In particular, he exposes the inadequate foundations of the popular view that Prov 8 refers to Christ (the NT does not say this), whilst asserting that Wisdom there can be legitimately regarded as an OT type of Christ. Brady (pp. 203 ff) expounds Prov 8 as the wisdom that is found in Christ, but also stops short of identifying Wisdom with the person of Christ. Such a nuanced position is surely right. Brady's book lacks the introduction of Waltke's, but it is cleverly and perceptively structured as a consideration of the 'grammar' of wisdom (Prov 1:1-9:18) and its 'vocabulary' (Prov. 10 onwards). Brady writes with great richness, casting his net wide to draw in apt parallels and illustrations from many areas of life. Like the authors of Proverbs itself, he is interested in everything. Both detailed exegesis and richness of exposition are necessary, but I suspect that most Christians, with limited time, shelf-space and funds, will opt for Gary Brady's *Heavenly Wisdom* to place alongside their battered copy of Kidner (TOTC, 1964). At the same time, they will be glad to be near a library where a copy of Waltke can be consulted. Proverbs is not an easy book to understand or expound (nor, I suspect, is it an easy book on which to write a commentary!). Let us hope that these two excellent expository tools mean that the spiritual and practical wisdom of Proverbs enjoys an airing from pulpits, in Bible studies and application in the lives of God's people. Let us hope, more generally, that the recent deeper evangelical engagement with the OT leads to a renewed confidence in, and desire to preach from the Scriptures which Jesus and his apostles knew and expounded.

Reviewer's top five titles: Kitchen <sup>4</sup>; Enns' <sup>7</sup>; Webb <sup>13</sup>; Harman <sup>14</sup>; Johnston & Firth<sup>18</sup>.

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