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EDITORIAL

The Affinity Theological Study Conference is just around the corner, taking place on 1-3 March 2017. The topic for the conference is "The Christian Church: its Mission in a Post-Christian Culture" and with that in mind I'd like to share a few thoughts in this editorial on gospel preaching in a post-Christian context from Acts 17. The situation Paul encountered in Athens was, of course, quite different to our own. Athens was a pre-Christian culture waiting for the gospel to explode whereas our culture is very much post-Christian. That said, there are plenty of parallels between Paul's situation and our own. Much like our own cities, Athens was full of idols (17:16) and the dominant philosophies that Paul encountered (17:18) had striking similarities with the prevalent worldviews of our own day.

The Epicureans believed that the gods were made up of tiny little atoms that floated between the atoms of other things. In other words, they were removed from the world and did not interfere with humans. Epicurus advocated living life in a way that maximised pleasure and minimised pain. The Epicureans were functional atheists – the Oprah Winfreys of their day. The Stoics, by contrast, conceived of the whole universe as being structured around the principle of reason. They thought that everything in the world could be explained by reason and spoke in high moralistic terms about the need to tame our emotions and passions because they were out of step with reason. The contemporary equivalent would be the New Atheists of the Richard Dawkins mould. These two worldviews were very different on a number of levels but they had one thing in common – they both rejected claims to exclusive truth. From the perspective of both worldviews, the claim that Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life" was both narrow and intolerant. The parallels with our own situation are clear and so it is helpful to examine in detail how Paul sought to engage with his questioners.

The first thing to notice is that Paul was both distressed and proactive. The temptation when the church is on the back foot in society is to wring our hands in despair and lament the fact that we have lost our position of influence. But that was not the approach of the apostle Paul; he was "greatly distressed" at the fact that Athens was awash with idols (17:16). In fact, the word used there, *paroxynō*, carries the sense of being "provoked in spirit" and may indicate that Paul was both distressed about the idolatry but also concerned for those who had rejected the one true God. Whatever the motivation, it drove him to action: going and preaching the gospel in two very different venues. Firstly, he preached in the synagogue (17:17), as was his custom (see 14:1); but then he preached also in the market-place – the hub of social activity where people met, socialised and disseminated news.

For centuries in the West the church has relied upon the fact that church attendance is a social norm; people would come to church with little or no invitation because it would be socially advantageous. That is no longer the case in a post-Christian culture and the *Field of Dreams* approach to evangelism: "build it and they will come", no longer works. Instead we must revert to Paul's strategy of going and telling people the good news about Jesus in the places where we find them.

Paul's engagement with his pagan hearers landed him in trouble and he promptly got labelled a "babbler" (17:18). The word used there, *spermologos*, pictures a bird picking up seed. The accusation is that Paul formulated his message by assembling the scraps of other people's beliefs, putting them together to produce a hybrid monster religion. And notice the target of their ridicule, his "preaching the good news of Jesus *and his resurrection*" (17:18). His strange ideas lead to him being brought before the Areopagus – a city council with real power. This would have been intimidating for Paul. The council had power to try crimes and regulate city life; but Paul saw it as an opportunity and set about doing two things: engaging the council's worldviews and subverting them with the gospel.

The commentators are divided as to whether Paul's opening statement in vv. 22-23 is intended to be affirming or rebuking. On balance, I think it is probably the former. He is recognising that the Athenians are *homos adorans* – worshipping men – and affirming their desire to worship. That is right and proper and indeed it is evidence of common grace. But Paul immediately moves to challenge the object of their worship and points them to the "God who made the world and everything in it" and who is necessarily self-sufficient (17:24-25). Paul engages and then he subverts. He then proceeds to buttress his argument by quoting from the revered Greek poet – Aratus of Soli (315-240 BC). Paul lifts Aratus out of his pantheistic context and uses him to affirm a biblical truth: that we have a common ancestor (Adam) and are all made in the image of the *one* true God. Thus Paul affirms one Athenian belief in order challenge another – the Athenians' worship of man-made images (17:29). Again, we see Paul engaging his hearers in order to subvert their worldview. This is nothing less than a biblical precedent for pre-suppositional apologetics and it has much to teach us as we face the challenge of reaching a secular post-Christian culture.

Our friends, colleagues and neighbours read their lives through the lens of a worldview that they are neither conscious nor aware of. That lens has been developed through a complex mesh of interlocking influences from their education, media and upbringing. Our role is to unveil that worldview (to help them to see that they are indeed wearing worldview glasses), to engage with it and ultimately to subvert it by showing its internal inconsistencies. This requires hard work: listening well, and creative thinking. We will need to identify what Charles Taylor refers to as "cross-

pressures" – areas of their life where they encounter a dissonance between what they think and what they experience (*Secular Age*, 2007, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 726-727). Tim Keller has done excellent work in helping us to think through where these areas are in the post-Christian experience (see in particular Keller, *Preaching*, 2015, London: Hodder & Stoughton, pp.121-156). Having thus identified and subverted his hearers' presuppositions Paul moves on to apply the gospel.

I would like us to notice two things that are central to Paul's presentation of the gospel but often omitted in contemporary evangelism: wrath and repentance. It is interesting to observe what brings Paul's speech to a grinding halt. On the face of it, it appears to be his mention of the resurrection (v. 31). But Paul points to the resurrection simply because it provides "proof" that God "has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed". Post-Christian culture has rejected the very concept of sin. Commenting on the situation, James Emery White writes:

> We're not sinners at all anymore. As many have observed, we're just "mistakers". And we're even starting to lose that. Lately, we don't even want to call a sin a mistake. We want to turn everything we do into a virtue. So lust becomes "sensuality", and anger just means being honest with your emotions". (http://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/dr-james-emery-white/mistakers-in-the-hands-of-an-absentee-god.html).

In a culture that has jettisoned the concept of sin, it is unsurprising that we have also rejected the concept of God's wrath or judgment against it. Just like the apostle Paul, Christians today need to hold their nerve and keep preaching the bad news alongside the good news of the gospel. And we need to be clear on what we are calling people to do. At City Church Manchester, we regularly hold interviews with those interested in applying for church membership. One of the things we ask applicants to do is to present a ninety-second gospel presentation. It is striking how often repentance is left off. In our zeal to emphasise the gospel of grace, we too often give the impression that we are calling on people simply to believe, rather than to "repent and believe". Our concern in relation to grace is, of course, misplaced since both repentance and faith are works of the Spirit. Moreover, now, more than ever, we need to be clear with people about the cost of following Jesus in a post-Christian culture.

The theme of cultural engagement is taken up in the first article in this issue which is the second-part of Ted Turnau's dialogues concerning cultural engagement. The characters we met in the last issue return to a round table discussion where they review the strengths and weakness of each other's approaches. Ted then presents his own approach which focuses on imaginative cultural engagement using arts and entertainment. He explores a number of scenarios and gives some recent examples of where Christians have creatively used the imagination to "plant oases".

The second and third articles address the doctrine of creation. David Green highlights how the church's focus on origins has caused it to neglect the biblical emphasis of God's "present continuous" activity in the world and the way that this displays his glory. David seeks to address this by pointing to ways that a biblical doctrine of creation gives significance to what we call "everyday life" and encourages us to consider what a distinctly Christian approach to living in the world looks like. In the third article, John James challenges the view that the intent of Genesis 1 was to establish the age of the earth. He reviews the history of interpretation of Genesis 1 and demonstrates how the rise of modern geology did little to alter the predominant non-dogmatism regarding the age of the earth. John argues that the current dogmatism is a response to the atheistic worldview that has come out of Darwinian evolution and argues that this response is picking the wrong battle against scientific naturalism.

In the fourth article, Stephen Clark examines the relationship between Word and Spirit against the background of recent publications by myself and Bob Letham. He challenges the portrayal of Martyn Lloyd-Jones' views on the matter and defends the concept of "immediate regeneration" by reference to the Pajonist controversy, the teachings of Herman Bavinck and of a number of other Reformed theologians. Stephen concludes that Word and Spirit are distinct, yet inseparable, in preaching but notes that the Spirit operates asymmetrically either in blessing or judgment. In a brief response, Bob Letham highlights that Stephen's focus in his article is on the saving work of the Holy Spirit whereas he and I were addressing the inseparability of Word and Spirit in preaching in our publications. Bob concludes by agreeing with Stephen that the Spirit accompanies the Word "invariably and asymmetrically".

It has been wonderful to welcome Matthew Evans as the new Book Review Editor for Foundations. In this issue, we have reviews of books on the Psalms, marriage and divorce, the conscience, Newton on the Christian Life, eternal subordination, and the incarnation. It is our hope that these reviews will point readers to profitable avenues for further study and reflection.

Plans for the next issue are already well advanced and we plan to focus on the topic of church planting. As always, we welcome correspondence on any of the articles featured in Foundations and also welcome submissions for future issues.

Ralph Cunnington
November 2016

Foundations 71 (November 2016): 5-25

DIALOGUES CONCERNING CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT (PART TWO)

Ted Turnau[*]

In this two-part essay, the author addresses the subject of Christian cultural engagement in a post-Christian context. In Part One (*Foundations 70*), the author establishes that cultures of the West can be characterised as post-Christian. He then explores the issue of engagement through a series of dialogues with different characters: 1) the Knight, who represents a political approach to cultural change, 2) the Gardener, who represents the Benedict Option espoused by conservative writer Rod Dreher, and 3) the Member of the Loyal Opposition, who represents the posture of "faithful presence" espoused by sociologist James Davison Hunter. Part Two (in *Foundations 71*) gathers the various characters for a round-table discussion. After pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of each, the author lays out his own approach which focuses on imaginative cultural engagement using the arts and entertainment. He explores the issue of same-sex marriage as a case study, and the reconciliation between gay activist Shane Windemeyer and American Christian businessman Dan Cathy as an example of winsome engagement in which each discovered a common humanity in the other. Our goal is a cultural engagement that is an analogue to that kind of winsome reconciliation that creates space within which estranged parties can meet, or what the author calls "planting oases". He then briefly considers two examples of this in the work of J. R. R. Tolkien, and U2's Superbowl performance in February 2002.

Scene IV: Round-Table in the Drawing Room

The scene opens with an establishing shot of an English manor (think: *Brideshead Revisited* or *Downton Abbey*). Dissolve to a crane shot of four figures observing each other sitting around an antique Edwardian cherry table in a richly furnished parlour. Thick burgundy wall-to-wall carpeting, a gigantic and ornate marble hearth surrounds a fireplace whose flames cast a warm glow over the room. Gilded mirrors and oriental prints adorn the ancient oak-panelled walls. The works. It is obvious that this is the kind of room where Matters of Great Import are decided. Imagine the room in which the culminating scene in a murder mystery unfolds, when Poirot gathers the

* Ted Turnau is a lecturer in cultural and religious studies at Anglo-American University and Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. He also teaches on popular culture and Christian worldview at Union School of Theology (formerly WEST). He has written a book on popular culture and apologetics called *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective*. He is happily married to Carolyn and has three children: Roger (25), Claire (21), and Ruth (17). He also has two cats named Saffron and Loki and a rabbit named Shadow.

suspects and walks everyone through the options until he names the real killer. *That* room.

Sitting around the table: the Knight in a dark 3-piece suit and power tie, the Gardener in more casual clothes appropriate for manual work (she's immaculately clean, but one can see dirt under her fingernails), the Member of the Loyal Opposition, still wearing his light blue oxford shirt and khakis, and Turnau in jeans, some random tee-shirt (connected with *Godzilla* or *Firefly* fandom), and a hipster-esque flannel overshirt.

Turnau: Thank you for all coming on such short notice to a meeting that very well might contain a good deal of monologue on my part. *(Knight, Gardener and MLO groan, roll their eyes, and mutter discontentedly.)*

Turnau: Hey! It's *my* imaginary movie. I'll chew the scenery as much as I like! At any rate, I wanted to tell you all that I think each of your approaches has something to offer, and each makes critical mistakes.

Sir Knight, I deeply appreciate your passion and the way you intentionally engage cultural issues in a way that strives to be biblical. I believe your insistence on politics as *the* fulcrum that will change the direction of culture is mistaken, as is your sometimes uncritical nationalism, triumphalism and dreams of restoring a Christian empire. But let's face it: we are political creatures, and Christians shouldn't simply absent themselves from the political process. Perhaps we can learn how to do politics in a new key, so to speak.

Mrs. Gardener, from you I learned the importance of preserving habits of the heart when they are in danger of being worn away by the corrosive patterns of late modern society. Intentional community, the church as she should be, is a vital and irreplaceable element in preserving the faith in a post-Christian world. I believe however that we can have intentional community, preserve what needs to be preserved, *and* vigorously engage the surrounding culture. In fact, I think such engagement sharpens and deepens our Christian commitments. Outreach and "upreach" toward God reinforce one another. Cultural engagement can be done as worship, making the gospel shine before our eyes as we hold it out to others.

And Mr. Loyal Opposition, from you I learned the virtue of quiet faithfulness and working for the common good within the cultural spaces where God has placed each of us. But while I don't want to "despise the day of small things" (Zech 4:10), I also don't want to plan only for small things. We can and should perhaps expect more, and speak out prophetically and imaginatively where we can.

Call me a naïve, sentimental fool…

MLO: *(Sotto voce.)* Naïve, sentimental fool. *(Beat. Turnau glares at him.)* What? You *literally* asked for it.

Turnau: *(Continues undaunted.)* Call me a naïve, sentimental fool, but I still think that change in culture is possible. God can transform things, and he can use us to do it. There are elements each of you brings to the table: strong proclamation, intentional community, quiet faithfulness in culture. Real cultural engagement is going to need to draw from each of your wells. But it seems to me that all of you are missing a vital piece of this puzzle crucial to cultural engagement.

(Dramatic pause.)

The role of the arts and entertainment! Imaginative engagement with popular culture!

Knight: Popular culture? That black beast that has polluted the minds of our young for too long? That Babylon that we can't reform, only boycott?

Gardener: I'm inclined to agree with the Knight (amazingly). Popular culture is precisely *why* we need a strategic withdrawal. It infiltrates the soul and destroys real Christian culture. It undermines real worship with its seeker-sensitive worship-as-entertainment, church-as-business model.

MLO: It's a plebian waste of time that only leads to the trivialisation and loss of meaning in real culture.

Turnau: I get it. I know you all have problems with it because you see it as a corrupting influence, a corrosive bile that erodes spiritual seriousness. But by being dismissive or alarmist about popular culture, you're missing a big part of the real problem, and a big part of the solution. Let's take the same-sex marriage debate as a case-study.

[Title appears on screen for three seconds, documentary style.]

Popular Culture, Imagination
and the Same-Sex Marriage Debate

Before I launch into my exposition about the same-sex marriage debate and cultural engagement, I want to say something that I shouldn't need to say: Christians should avoid homophobia like the plague, right? Hateful, mocking, or dismissive attitudes toward LGBT people should have no place within the Christian community. Agreed?

Gardener: Agreed.

MLO: Agreed.

Knight: Agreed. But I've been called homophobic for just taking a stance that gays disagree with. What about that?

Turnau: I completely understand. It's impossible to please everybody, especially in a heated cultural debate such as this. I'm talking about "so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18). I believe it is possible to profoundly disagree with some of the cultural positions the LGBT community take, *and* respect them. More than that: to love them (more on engagement in love a little later). What they call us is not up to us, right? But for our part, we want to love and respect them, right?

Knight: Got it.

Turnau: Now that that's out of the way, I can begin. *(Knight, Gardener, and MLO settle into their chairs.)*

In a recent essay, legal scholar Hunter Baker, like a lot of Christians, looked on in bewilderment at the lightning-quick shift in public opinion. "I can't easily explain how something that was an overwhelmingly dominant view for thousands of years has now become the greatest black mark against the church, but it has."[1] Something that seemed so solid – the traditional definition of marriage – suddenly collapsed and was remade before our eyes. Surveys support this feeling of cultural whiplash. There has indeed been a rapid sea-change in public opinion from 1996 to 2015:

- In 1996, when asked the question "Should marriages between same-sex couples be valid?" 68% of Americans responded no, and 27% responded yes.
- In 2015, they were asked the same question, but the positions had flipped: 37% said no, and 60% said yes.[2]

In less than 20 years, the approval rating for same-sex unions more than doubled, and the negative rating almost halved. Approval rates rose in virtually every demographic group regardless of age, religion (including Evangelicals), sex or political affiliation.[3] Within the last 10 years (2005-2015), approval rates climbed from 37% to 60%.[4] The data is, at first glance, baffling. How could a reversal of such an ancient and established perspective be abandoned virtually

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[1] Hunter Baker, "Can Christians Change the World after Obergefell?" in *Revisiting 'Faithful Presence':* To Change the World *Five Years Later*, ed. Collin Hansen (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2015), available online at https://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/eBooks/Revisiting 'Faithful Presence'.pdf (accessed 2 December, 2016).

[2] Justin McCarthy, "Record High 60% of Americans Support Same-Sex Marriage", *Gallup* website, 19 May 2015, available online at http://www.gallup.com/poll/183272/record-high-americans-support-sex-marriage.aspx (accessed 2 March, 2016).

[3] "Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage", *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life,* 29 July 2015, available online at http://www.pewforum.org/2015/07/29/graphics-slideshow-changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/ (accessed 2 March 2016).

[4] McCarthy, "Record High".

overnight? The shift in public opinion was simply too fast to be a generational change.[5]

Gardener: Oh, do let me guess – popular culture played a significant role, yes?

Turnau: Absolutely. It's not the whole story, but we'll start with gay involvement in the entertainment industry. James Davison Hunter says this about the gay community: "At most 3 percent of the American population, their influence has become enormous… far disproportionate to their size."[6] He mentions popular culture in passing, but it seems to me that gays in the entertainment industry have played a key role in the public acceptance, legalisation, and eventual celebration of same-sex unions.

I won't make you sit through a detailed history of gay representation, how the "love that dare not speak its name" morphed into an overall cultural acceptance (and even celebration) of same-sex relationships as the new normal.[7] But here's the big picture: for the last 20-plus years, the number of gay characters portrayed in film and television (followed by comic books and popular song) has climbed steadily, and as a parallel development, approval ratings for same-sex marriage climbed steadily as well.[8]

These new roles for gays were not stock characterisations, whether of the effeminate, over-the-top camp comic relief (such as the homeless cabaret singer in 1991's *Fisher King*) or the terrifying lesbian killer-whore (as in 1992's *Basic Instinct*). Rather, these new gay characters were smart, serious, playful, witty, sympathetic, supportive, successful, complex – characters like lawyer Will Truman (from the American situation comedy *Will and Grace*), councilman

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[5] I am speaking specifically to the American situation, but a parallel rapid transformation in cultural norms has occurred in Britain. See Brendan O'Neill, "Gay Marriage: The Fastest-Formed Orthodoxy Ever?" *Spiked-online,* 31 March 2014, available online at http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/gay-marriage-the-fastest-formed-orthodoxy-ever/14855#.VtlfZfkrJD8 (accessed 4 March 2016). Hopefully, my comments apply, *mutatis mutandis,* to the UK (just change "Hollywood" into "the BBC").

[6] James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20.

[7] For a list of significant moments of gay representation in television and film, see Scott Collins and Meredith Blake, "Years before Court Ruling, Pop Culture Shaped Same-Sex Marriage Debate", *Los Angeles Times,* 27 June 2015, available online at http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-st-0628-media-gay-marriage-20150628-story.html (accessed 2 March 2016).

[8] See Angela Wattercutter, "How Pop Culture Changed the Face of the Same-Sex Marriage Debate", *Wired,* 27 June 2013, available online at http://www.wired.com/2013/06/pop-culture-same-sex-marriage/ (accessed 2 March 2016). A graph featured in the article (and provided by GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) showed a steady increase in gay characters in television, from 26 in 2003, to 111 in 2012. And with the rise in number of gay characters, the approval rating for same-sex marriage also rose steadily.

Harvey Milk (from the eponymous film), rodeo cowboy Jack Twist (*Brokeback Mountain*), talented singer Blaine Anderson (from *Glee*) and many, many more. In other words, these were ordinary (or extraordinary) three-dimensional people just like you and me, but they happened to be gay. And these characters were caught up in plotlines that had viewers rooting for them, identifying with them. The American audience became familiar with gay faces (both fictional and real, as certain celebrities came "out of the closet"), and what had been widely seen as a perversion was humanised into simply an alternative orientation.

Representation in popular culture *matters.* According to a GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) survey conducted in 2008, 34% of the respondents said seeing same-sex characters on television helped change their views (and 29% were influenced by seeing gay characters in films). In a 2012 survey by the *Hollywood Reporter,* 27% of responders said that seeing LGBT characters on television shows influenced them to support same-sex marriage (6% said it influenced them against it). For under-35 respondents, the percentage that was influenced to be pro-same-sex marriage was much higher.[9] And once the tide of public opinion turned, so did the politicians. Days before President Obama came out in favour of same-sex marriage, Vice President Joseph Biden said in NBC's *Meet the Press* in 2012, "When things really began to change is when the social culture changes. I think 'Will & Grace' probably did more to educate the American public than almost anything anybody's ever done so far."[10] You could say that the same-sex wedding staged in the season finale of *Modern Family* in 2014 presaged the Supreme Court's 2015 *Obergefell* ruling in more ways than one.[11]

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[9] Tim Appelo, "THR Poll: 'Glee' and 'Modern Family' Drive Voters to Favor Gay Marriage – Even Many Romney Voters", *Hollywood Reporter* 3 December 2012, available online at http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/thr-poll-glee-modern-family-386225 (accessed 3 March 2016). Both surveys are cited in William Douglas Leslie Clark, "Pop Culture Helps Change Minds on Gay Rights", *The Seattle Times,* 1 January 2015, available online at http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/pop-culture-helps-change-minds-on-gay-rights/ (accessed 2 March 2016).

[10] Quoted in William Douglas Leslie Clark, "Pop Culture Helps Change Minds on Gay Rights", *The Seattle Times,* 1 January 2015, available online at http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/pop-culture-helps-change-minds-on-gay-rights/ (accessed 2 March 2016). *Will and Grace* was an American sitcom that ran from 1998 to 2006 which featured a gay lawyer (Will Truman) who shared an apartment with his best friend from college, interior decorator Grace Adler. It was the highest rated show that featured a gay main character.

[11] Kevin Fallon, "Modern Family's Big, Gay (and Important) Wedding", *The Daily Beast,* 22 May 2014, available online at http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/22/modern-family-s-big-gay-and-important-wedding.html (accessed 2 March 2016).

Knight: So what you're saying is: we need more Christian characters in movies and TV to recapture cultural momentum. We just need a healthy dose of representation of real Christians.[12]

Turnau: It's not that simple. Characters don't just leap onto the screen. They have to be created, to be written. Producers need to sign off on the idea that showrunners present. Writers need to come to agreement on what works, and what doesn't. It's a long process that requires many people who wield varying levels of creative influence, from network execs on down. If you look at these positions of creative influence, the LGBT community has had a really strong showing within entertainment.[13] There's just a huge talent pool of gay writers, directors and producers, people who are known and trusted by the heavy hitters of the industry.

Do you think this just happens? No. There is a process that takes decades. It starts with a substantial number of individuals who are dedicated to honing their craft and landing jobs. But that can only happen if there's "incubation", when the writers are surrounded by an enthusiastic and encouraging community that actually believes in what they are doing. In the conservative decades of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, gay writers were in college, sending out job applications, networking and finding connections in the industry, spending time, sweat, toil and tears trying to create something concrete out of their love of popular culture. I am certain that they met resistance and discrimination at the beginning.[14] But they had a slow, steady, long-term vision of creating an infrastructure, a network from within which they could eventually create messages and characters that would sway hearts, minds, and imaginations. It was a community effort over the long-haul.

All during this time, Christian leaders were raising the alarm about the "gay agenda".

Knight: *(interrupting)* Well, weren't we right? Wasn't there an agenda at work here?

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[12] This is the suggestion of Christian producer and author Bob Briner in *Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), especially ch. 5, "Television: Fade to Black".

[13] See, for example, Brian Jurgens, "The Backlot 40: Influential Gay Men in Television", *NewNowNext,* 23 October 2013, available online at http://www.newnownext.com/influential-gay-television-producers/10/2013/ (accessed 3 March 2016).

[14] There is still concern within the LGBT community that, for all the gains made in television, Hollywood's film industry still displays disturbing levels of homophobia. See Tim Teeman, "What Is Hollywood's Big Gay Problem? Money and a Cowardly Lack of Imagination", *The Daily Beast,* 27 January 2016, available online at http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/01/27/what-is-hollywood-s-big-gay-problem-money-and-a-cowardly-lack-of-imagination.html (accessed 5 March 2016).

Turnau: Yep, but at least they *had* an agenda, and a creative, culturally engaging agenda at that! Can Christians say the same? Not really. Our relationship with Hollywood has historically been marked with either a dismissive attitude, or suspicion bordering on loathing. And the Hollywood people know what Christians think of them because we aren't exactly soft-spoken when it comes to our cultural dislikes. Who could blame entertainment industry powers-that-be for making it hard for Christians? "Who'd want to hire a conservative Christian? Those people *hate* us!" Hate and suspicion: not typically great for opening up networking opportunities. (Coincidentally, that very strident opposition by high-profile Christians led to a lot of terrible stereotyping of Christians in film and television. Judgmental, holier-than-thou sour old women or psycho-killer Christians, anyone?).[15]

Even if we *could* develop a network, what would we have to offer? The Christian community by-and-large does not develop its creative talent. We don't give our kids dreams of being writers, creators, filmmakers, and showrunners. We discourage them from getting too cozy with the world because we're sure they'll be polluted in the process. There's little to no support, no network, no enthusiasm, no understanding of imagination and creativity. It will take generations to undo the damage and alienation we've created before we can even *start* from ground zero. That's why you don't find many Christians in Hollywood. A handful of actors, a few Catholic directors like Malick and Scorsese. *Ex*-Christians, lapsed Catholics, Protestants who walked away during university… you find a lot of those.

Gardener: Well of *course* you find ex-Christians in Hollywood! You move into the belly of the Beast and you will find your outlook much changed. Contact with that world corrupted them and undermined their faith, obviously.

Turnau: For some, that's probably the case. But perhaps they succumbed *precisely because* they had no community support! Look, Christian writers and other creatives aren't super-Christians. They need people to pray for them, friends to ask hard questions to keep them accountable, to encourage them and be on board with them as they try to be faithful *and* do the job they were hired for. They need a

[15] The stridently anti-gay rhetoric of many Christian leaders may also be responsible for turning off many of the under-30 population to Christianity. It is now cemented in the imaginations of many as the religion of intolerance.

supportive community.[16] For the most part, the Christian church hasn't been there for them. It doesn't even understand what they're doing in Hollywood in the first place.

Knight: But we do have creative people working in entertainment. Lots of them! And not in that moral cesspool called Hollywood.

Turnau: And where are all those Christian creatives working? In Christian-owned entertainment companies that are completely ignored by the mainstream culture. That's *not* being part of the overall cultural conversation. That's just making stuff to entertain your own people. It's the community talking to itself. It's fine for galvanising your own group, but really lousy for being heard by anyone else.

Gardener: That's because no one will let Christians into creative positions.

Turnau: And for good reason. Not only is there almost a century of hostility between the church and Hollywood, it's not as if a Christian writer fresh from college and looking for a job in television arrives at a level playing field. He will find the deck stacked against him in this post-Christian world of ours. The way most people around him see the world is diametrically opposed to his. They look at a Christian and see a dinosaur (and not a cool dinosaur like T-Rex or Velociraptor, either). They are suspicious of what they see as a fossilised morality. And that suspicion of Christians and Christian morality is socially entrenched, and has been for decades. So even if we manage to sneak a Christian or two into Hollywood, Trojan-horse style, it won't be enough. Not if we want them to be part of the larger cultural conversation.

MLO: So what else needs to be done? You are painting a pretty bleak picture.

Turnau: I mean to. So, two things need to be done. First, we need to recognise the cultural logic behind the current imaginary landscape. We need to understand the cultural currents that have been in place for a long time and within which something like same-sex marriage makes perfect sense.

Knight: What are you talking about?

Turnau: I'm saying that, in a sense, same-sex marriage was a done deal by 1950. *(The Knight scoffs.)* Hear me out. In the economically bountiful post-WWII era, people responded to the years of wartime depravation by a concerted effort to make themselves prosperous and at ease.[17] And that attitude changed things in academia and in

[16] One of the best parts of Greg Thompson's New City Commons white paper, "The Church in Our Time", is the way he underscores the need for the church to provide vocation-specific support for its members to find ways of being faithful *in the world.* See Thompson, 37-43.

[17] I realize that the post-war economies of the US and Britain were very different. For the States, it was a time of unparalleled prosperity shared over a huge section of the population. For

the therapist's (and pastor's!) office. A culturally significant number of scholars, psychiatrists and pastors stopped asking the complicated and difficult question of "What is true and good?" Rather, they asked the more immediate question: "What is good *for you?* What makes you happy and fulfilled?" According to Christian writer Joel Miller, Americans started redefining human nature: "We swapped the traditional American view, grounded in a certain pessimism inherited from the Protestant understanding of original sin, for the newly refurbished and Americanised psychotherapy."[18] The focus shifted from "What is true?" to "What makes for personal fulfillment?" So in the 1940s and 50s, these two innovations came together – the post-war commitment to comfort, and a redefinition of human nature and life's purpose – to form what historian Alan Petigny calls the "Permissive Turn".[19] It changed our cultural logic and paved the way for a later rapid shift in cultural norms. The "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and 70s was the natural unfolding of that cultural logic in the lives of the next generation. Same-sex marriage is simply the next step in that logical evolution. If the main goal of everyone's life is self-fulfillment, then why shouldn't we allow same-sex people to marry? It's fine, as long as they're happy, and as long as they don't infringe on anyone else's right to self-fulfillment, right?[20]

In a sense, America has been poised for same-sex marriage since 1776 when the *Declaration of Independence* announced the "unalienable rights" of everyone to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Knight: But the Founders weren't for subverting traditional marriage! They meant something completely different when they said "liberty" and "happiness."

Turnau: I'm sure they did. They probably had in mind something that entailed certain responsibilities to family, community and civic duty. "Happiness" would mean living life as it ought to be lived, loving

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Britain, it was a time of recovery and rebuilding. I would argue, however, the impetus toward consumerism and comfort was present in both contexts.

[18] Joel J. Miller, "Why the Gay Marriage Debate Was Over in 1950", *Ancient Faith* blog, 29 June 2015, available online at https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/joeljmiller/why-the-gay-marriage-debate-was-over-in-1950/ (accessed 4 March 2016).

[19] Miller draws heavily on the insights of Petigny's book *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[20] And one can see the current debates over transgender identity as moving along the same logic. Not even biology or nature should stand in the way of my personal pursuit of what feels fulfilling.

your neighbour, that somehow your wellbeing was bound up in your community's wellbeing.[21] "Liberty" within a democracy meant not just freedom *from* restraint, but freedom *for* a productive existence, freedom to pursue a life well-lived. But those definitions changed in later years (cue Hunter's "dissolution").[22] The meanings of those key words were held in check for a while by echoes of an essentially Jewish and Christian ethic (including sexual mores). But gradually, those definitions were displaced by something more fragmented, more self-focused. The rule of the Robber Barons and the rise of consumerism in the late 19th century took its toll, carving a landscape of consumer desire.[23] And during the 1950s, another seismic shift occurred at both the elite level (scholars, medical professionals), and within popular culture (images of prosperous, contented families abounded on television sitcoms and in advertising). The whole cultural narrative changed, and along with it, the logic behind cultural norms. Happiness and freedom now signify that each of us has the licence to live as he or she chooses, and no one can tell us otherwise. Because of that long-established shift in cultural logic, our arguments have to sail against a stiff wind, so to speak.

Knight: So argumentation is useless now? I mean, you make it seem so dire; an open-and-shut case.

Turnau: Well, I think we ought to modify our expectations in light of our current context. And we need to buckle down for a task that will take generations. One of those tasks is to radically challenge the prevailing cultural logic, to question happiness and freedom as they are currently understood. And that has to happen in the universities, in the therapist's office, in the churches, in recording studios, and in television, movie, and video-game scripts. It has to be a multi-pronged re-storying of our culture.

MLO: You mentioned two things. What's the second?

Turnau: *(Dramatically.)* And now I will show you a more excellent way: cultural engagement as love. What I mean is this: if we wish to really engage post-Christian culture, and those who create it and enjoy it, we must love both the culture and the people.

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[21] Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, "The Pursuit of Happiness: What the Founders Meant – And Didn't", *The Atlantic Monthly,* 20 June 2011, available online at http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/06/the-pursuit-of-happiness-what-the-founders-meant-and-didnt/240708/ (accessed 4 March 2016).

[22] See Turnau, "Dialogues Concerning Cultural Engagement", part one, Foundations 70, "Scene III: The Member of the Loyal Opposition's Dialogue".

[23] See William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

Knight: How can we as Christians love something that sows wickedness?

Turnau: Love doesn't mean agreeing with everything and everyone (otherwise, why would Jesus tell us to love our enemies in Matthew 5?). But it does mean that we're willing to enter into their worlds and listen, even as we seek change in the imaginary landscape that informs these post-Christian cultural narratives.

Once we see cultural engagement as an act of love, we will understand that cultural influence is *not* a zero-sum, winner-take-all game. We've been living so long in an "us versus them" mentality. Rather, we need a "we are for you" mentality. Without erasing the antithesis between our respective core commitments, we *can* engage those with whom we disagree in love. We can disagree with people without making them the "other", moral pariahs and lepers, lesser beings in our eyes. Rather, we recognise that we're *all* moral pariahs and lepers. We *all* need a Saviour. That's the gospel, right? We can bring healing by taking the low road of engaging in a humble, loving way.

[Onscreen title.]

The Story of Dan and Shane

Let me give you an example of what I mean by loving engagement: the reconciliation between Chick-Fil-A president Dan Cathy and gay rights activist Shane Windmeyer. Americans know (though people in the UK may not) how in 2012, Cathy responded to a reporter's question (in an interview for Baptist magazine no less) about whether he supported the traditional view of marriage and family. Cathy responded, "Guilty as charged". He elaborated,

We [that is, Chick-Fil-A] are very much supportive of the family – the biblical definition of the family unit. We are a family-owned business, a family-led business, and we are married to our first wives. We give God thanks for that… We operate as a family business... our restaurants are typically led by families; some are single. We want to do anything we possibly can to strengthen families. We are very much committed to that… We intend to stay the course. We know that it might not be popular with everyone, but thank the Lord, we live in a country where we can share our values and operate on biblical principles.[24]

[24] K. Allen Blume/Biblical Recorder, "'Guilty as Charged,' Cathy Says of Chick-Fil-A's Stand on Biblical and Family Values", *Baptist Press,* 16 July 2012, available online at http://www.bpnews.net/38271 (accessed 7 March 2016).

Those comments, plus his company's financial support of groups that support a pro-traditional family agenda, caused him to be quickly labelled "anti-gay" and "homophobic", and there was much media outrage. This despite the fact that he is the president of a fast-food chain who has little or no political influence, not a culture warrior to be feared. The LGBT community fumed and boycotted. Christians took umbrage on Cathy's behalf, snarled right back, and started anti-boycott campaigns to make sure they ate more Chick-Fil-A products than ever. But very quietly, something else was happening behind the scenes.

Months later, a *Huffington Post* article came out authored by Shane Windmeyer, head of Campus Pride, a university-based gay rights organisation (and one the groups calling for boycotts against Chick-Fil-A).[25] In the article, Windmeyer related how Cathy contacted him, seeking a meeting to talk shortly after the calls for boycotts began. Windmeyer, suspecting shenanigans, was hesitant. But Dan Cathy was relentless. He texted Windmeyer, emailed him, called him, invited him to football games and family meals. Windmeyer did meet with Cathy, repeatedly, but not once during all this time did Cathy ask for Campus Pride to stop boycotting. He simply wanted to get to know Windmeyer as a human being. Over the months, the hostility and distrust melted and a friendship formed. Dan Cathy listened to Windmeyer's complaints, and compromises were reached. Chick-Fil-A would no longer fund groups that Campus Pride considered anti-gay. And Shane Windmeyer showed exceptional bravery in writing a very public essay that spoke well of a man that his community would rather vilify (just read the comments beneath the story). Both men took enormous heat over their friendship, but both men showed courage, openness and humility. Neither compromised his principles, but both discovered a new-found respect for the other and common ground on which to meet. That is cultural engagement done in love.

Knight: But Cathy caved, and got very little in return!

Turnau: I wouldn't call it "very little". Look at what *was* accomplished through this relationship. Did Dan Cathy's engagement with Shane Windmeyer somehow make Windmeyer less vocal in his advocacy of LGBT rights? No. Is there still a deep divergence between their moral visions of what America should be? Yes. So was nothing accomplished? Not at all. Through a difficult process of listening and

[25] Shane Windmeyer, "Dan and Me: My Coming Out as a Friend of Dan Cathy and Chick-fil-A", *Huffington Post,* 28 January 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shane-l-windmeyer/dan-cathy-chick-fil-a_b_2564379.html (accessed 29 July 2014).

dialogue, both men had their imaginary landscapes broadened to accept the other as a human being worth listening to, worthy of respect and love. They will not agree on everything, but they have come to trust one another's integrity and good will. That is a huge step in the right direction. That kind of engagement has great potential to yield practical benefits in the long term for the good of the whole society, not just this or that particular interest group.

This type of winsome cultural engagement relinquishes claims of conquest over the land in the name of God. Christians need to wake up to the fact that we are not a moral majority. We are a minority voice in a land replete with a plurality of competing voices. Some of those voices are deeply disconcerting to us, and we understandably feel threatened. But they are *human* voices, voices worth engaging lovingly and respectfully. Our success or failure should not be judged on how well we have wrested the reins of power from our opponents to "recapture the culture". Our success should be judged by the humility with which we engage our opponents, how charitably we articulate our agendas, how gracefully we accept setbacks, how well we love our fellow citizens, and how well we demonstrate that we are *for* them, that we long to call them "friends". By taking the low road, we may find that we have more of an impact on the culture than by trying to coerce change through politics, or withdrawing into a safe-zone, or by simply keeping a low profile. We are not cultural conquistadors; we are not cloistered; we ought not to be passive. We are now the loyal, loving opposition.

Please note how Dan Cathy's engagement draws upon each of your perspectives. Sir Knight, did his action have a political significance? Absolutely. The discovery of common humanity between former opponents is a profound political achievement that paves the way for future dialogue. Mrs. Gardener, did the kind of habits of the heart learned in intentional community play a role in this exchange? Absolutely. The ability to extend grace in a humble, loving, persevering way develops only after years of Christian practice and discipline within community. Loyal Opposition Guy, was Cathy practicing faithful presence for the common good? Absolutely. The way Cathy stepped into Windmeyer's world and welcomed him into his world – that is absolutely practicing "faithful presence", living as if the gospel is real and can address the brokenness of society in a concrete way. But his love was also "prophetic" in the sense that it witnessed to both the brokenness and the remedy. What bothered him more than anything was the alienation and hurt that was in his power to heal.

And look at the fruit of that engagement. Whatever else Shane Windemeyer chooses to say about Dan Cathy, he can no longer call him a homophobe, a bigot, an idiot who just doesn't understand. He now calls him "friend". Cathy listened and loved well. That is a big part of engagement if we are going to be minority partners in the broader cultural conversation.

The moral: naked power politics that does not love our political opponents will not succeed. Withdrawal that does not engage will not succeed. Passively biding our time will not succeed. Lasting change comes only when we intentionally address the whole person, including the cultural and imaginative contexts of those who dwell across the cultural/political divide from us. The key lies in building bridges, not by forcing agendas.

Gardener: But how does this change the "imaginary landscape", as you call it? You presented some pretty compelling evidence that cultural works – characters in entertainment programming and such like – are instrumental in changing cultural logics and norms. How does a friendship with a gay activist change that?

Turnau: Well, on a small scale, a Christian man now shows up in at least one imagination as "human" and "relatable". Replicate that over and over and over again, not just with the LGBT community, but with transgender people and others we Christians generally find "outside the pale", and watch the cultural conversation change. Watch the Christian church shine with quite a different hue in the public square.

Gardener: But is it enough? Those popular cultural stories that create a new normal are still out there. The new norm stands, and that alone makes it harder to understand (much less believe) the Christian story.

[Onscreen title, three seconds.]

Loving Engagement in the Key of Imagination: Planting Oases

Turnau: You're right. We need to rethink the way we engage culture creatively, imaginatively. We need a change in attitude so that we support Christians who work in the arts and entertainment. And Christian creatives themselves may need to rethink what they are trying to create. What I would like to see is… *(hesitates, thinking how to proceed)…* you know that reconciliation between Dan Cathy and Shane Windemeyer I just talked about?

Gardener: Yes?

Turnau: I want to see imaginative, creative cultural engagement that can make an aesthetic analogue of *that* relationship. I want popular culture

made by Christians to do what Cathy did, and to do it *as part of the mainstream culture.* I'd long to see Christian popular culture that's not about winning a game of cultural tug-o'-war. Rather, our popular stories, songs, film, television and games should create spaces for conversation in which we discover each other's common humanity, broken and needy, but also full of depth and wonder, created for glory. I call this kind of imaginative cultural engagement "planting oases". Christians need to take the initiative in creating culture that, like an oasis in a thirsty land, invites the parched travellers of the post-Christian landscape into a cultural space that challenges and refreshes, rather than one that manipulates and repels by its strong-arm tactics. I want to see cultural works that are "aggressively gracious as we seek to be a counterculture for the common good".[26] We want to be distinctive, and yet draw in those who disagree with us rather than chase them away. In that way, we widen and deepen the imaginations of those who may have started out alienated from us. *That's* generative, prophetic, creative planting of oases.

Knight: But will these "oases" really make any difference? It seems so… I don't know… ethereal and insubstantial. Not like legislation or court decisions.

Turnau: I believe they will make a profound difference. You're right in this, however: typically, a single story or performance doesn't do that much. But over time, as more are created, they can have a cumulative effect as they form networks that open up alternative ways of being and imagining ourselves in the world.[27]

Don't underestimate the power of stories told, performed, sung, and played in culture. They may *seem* ethereal, but, as Hamlet said, "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." We gain identity according to the story we imagine ourselves to be in. We all have "narrative identities".[28] These circulating stories, performances, songs, images and games are the background against which laws are

[26] Vernon Pierre and Collin Hansen, "An Interview with Vermon Pierre", The Gospel Coalition, 17 November 2015, available online at http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/faithful-presence-needs-prophets (accessed 27 February 2016).

[27] For an example of networking between popular cultural works, see Steven D. Greydanus, "We Need to Talk about Cartoon Parents", National Catholic Register, 1 December, 2016, available online at http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/we-need-to-talk-about-cartoon-parents (accessed 3 December, 2016). Greydanus notes a common trope in CG cartoons which he calls "Junior knows best" in which the child has to break with tradition and parental authority to do some risky thing, and he/she is always right (ends up saving the village, etc.). This network of attitudes shapes the imaginary landscape of kids regarding how they understand parental authority and wisdom.

[28] For a philosophical exposition of this idea, see Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity", transl. David Wood, in David Wood, ed. *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1991), 188-99.

made or unmade, courts decide one way or the other, people fall in love and families draw together or fragment. Stories form the imaginary backbone of culture, or what I've been calling, the imaginary landscape. Stories are really, really important. A Native American proverb says, "Those who tell the stories rule the world."[29] And those who tell different stories well can change it.

MLO: It sounds as if you're overselling the power of narrative.

Turnau: Am I? Well, I *was* an English literature major in university. But don't take my word for it. The celebrated science fiction writer Neil Gaiman went so far to suggest that humans are life forms, hosts if you will, for the transmission of stories.[30] Stories shape how we believe and live in the world, and they seduce us into telling and retelling them:

> A lot of stories do appear to begin as intrinsic to religions and belief systems – a lot of the ones we have have gods or goddesses in them; they teach us how the world exists; they teach us the rules of living in the world. But they also have to come in an attractive enough package that we take pleasure from them and we want to help them propagate.[31]

Gaiman told about a Polish Holocaust survivor, his cousin Helen. Helen shared a story with him about how as a teen, she and a group of Jewish girls living in the Warsaw ghetto during WWII risked execution by reading a banned book, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind.* For them, the imaginative escape from the ghetto was worth risking death. The escapes we find in entertainment are anything but ephemeral and inconsequential. They are a powerful way of reshaping life. Gaiman concludes:

> We [writers] decry too easily what we do, as being kind of trivial – the creation of stories as being a trivial thing. But the magic of escapist fiction… is that it can actually offer you a genuine escape from a bad place and, in the process of escaping, it can furnish you with armour, with knowledge, with weapons, with tools you can take back into your life to help make it better… It's a real escape – and when you come back, you come back better-armed than when you left.

Helen's story is a true story, and this is what we learn from it – that stories are worth risking your life for; they're worth dying for.

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[29] The quote has also been attributed to Plato. On the power of stories, see Shane Snow's fascinating Tedx talk, "Those Who Tell the Stories Rule the World", available online at http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Shane-Snow-at-TEDxColumbiaColle (accessed 9 March 2016).

[30] Maria Popova, "Neil Gaiman on How Stories Last", *Brain Pickings,* 16 June 2015, available online at https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/06/16/neil-gaiman-how-stories-last/ (accessed 9 March 2016).

[31] Gaiman, cited in Popova, "How Stories Last".

Written stories and oral stories both offer escape – escape from somewhere, escape to somewhere.

Look at our culture now. It is as it is largely because of the stories that have shaped it – from history and novels to films, songs and video games. It all adds up.

Gardener: But what difference can Christian storytellers make, even in popular culture, when so much of the storytelling is dominated by those with a very different vision of what the world should be?

Turnau: No, you're quite right. Christians by no means have a corner on the story market. And at the moment, the times when recognisably Christian stories shine are rare. Most of the time Christian stories are aimed at Christians. But if we rethink what the imagination is, its power and uses in a post-Christian world, perhaps more storytellers will become involved, and we as a Christian community will begin to speak to people other than ourselves. Given time and God's blessing, those stories can form networks, and those networks of stories can gather momentum, become leaven in the imaginary landscape, breaking up the dry desert soil. They become another voice in the conversation, another motif in the cultural symphony (even if it's at times dissonant, and other times harmonising).

I'm not saying it's the whole solution, but I think imaginative engagement with culture needs to be part of the solution, and it's a part that I feel has been overlooked for too long.

MLO: Can you give us some examples of the impact of distinctively Christian stories in mainstream culture? This all sounds a little pie-in-the-sky, devil's-in-the-details. Bring the pie down to earth. Show us where the devil hides.

Turnau: Let me give you two brief glimpses. First, take J. R. R. Tolkien's books. They had, and continue to have, a very broad appeal. And yet they are distinctively Christian in how they address a whole host of issues – heroism, good, fellowship, evil and so on. They have had a tremendous impact on how people have thought about the nature of goodness and the natural world. Tolkien linked the two, goodness and nature. He spelled out goodness in his stories in terms of rich, vivid imagery drawn from the everyday, natural world – things like the Shire, gardening, a good meal with friends, a quiet green forest.[32] These things belong to a world worth preserving from the likes of the rapacious Saruman (or a rapacious consumer-driven industrial economy). In Tolkien's books, the landscape *is* a full-fledged

[32] See Jeffrey Bilbro (suspiciously close to "Bilbo"), "The Taste of Strawberries: Tolkien's Imagination of the Good", *Christ and Pop Culture,* vol. 2, issue 16 (November 2014), available online at http://christandpopculture.com/capc-mag-volume-2-issue-16-beautys-allure/taste-strawberries-tolkiens-imagination-good/ (accessed 5 March 2016).

character, a creature that resonates with goodness because of the One who created it. The popularisation of his trilogy in the 1960s galvanised many in America and the UK into action to protect the environment. It convinced them that nature was worth protecting. In a sense, the environmental movement got its imaginative impetus from a distinctively Christian way of seeing the world laid out for all to see in Middle Earth. Elves and hobbits saved the day.

What about other cultural issues? Could a talented Christian writer create a vision of sexual goodness and contentment that was equally distinctive and inviting? A work that could acknowledge sexual confusion, brokenness, rebellion and hurt, but somehow showed a path beyond it to healing and contentment? I don't know. It's quite a challenge. But that's what we need at the moment.

The second example of loving cultural engagement is more recent: U2's Superbowl XXXVI performance in February 2002.[33] In the wake of the World Trade Centre bombing in New York on 11 September 2001, people in the US were hurting, angry and grieving. Then, on the most widely watched annual television broadcast in America, four Irishmen stepped on stage and became the voice of our grief and simultaneously gave us hope in the power of a love that defeated death. The halftime show started with Bono in the middle of a sea of fans making his way to a heart-shaped stage, singing as he pushed through the crowd. That is to say, he began in a position of identification *with* the crowd; there was virtually no distance between performer and audience. He was one of them. Given how our culture holds celebrities as latter-day deities, Bono's choice to start in the sea of fans speaks volumes and echoes the incarnation, how God became one of us.

The first song U2 played was "Beautiful Day", a song full of energy and exuberance, even as it addresses how life can seem futile and grey. The lyrics affirm that there is indeed a wonder and beauty in everyday life that lies just beneath the surface, so beware of letting yourself become bitter and hardened. You will end up missing the beauty. The band then transitioned into "MLK", a funeral song written for the slain civil rights leader, wishing him a gentle rest. And while the band was singing, a screen descended and the names of those slain on September 11 began to scroll upward, heavenward. U2 was, on public television, laying our dead to rest. I remember watching it and feeling chills. Fans wept. With the

[33] If you haven't seen it, it's worth a watch: "U2's Powerful Tribute to 9/11 Victims", *Youtube.com,* available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBzdittT3c4 (accessed 5 March 2016).

seemingly endless list of names still scrolling, they began playing "Where the Streets Have No Name", a song about longing for a place where there is no hatred dividing people. Without naming it explicitly, the song affirms the hope of life beyond death.[34] At the end, Bono opened his jacket to reveal an American flag sewed into the lining. The message was clear: I might've been born in Ireland, but I am one of you. The whole show communicated not just solidarity, but empathy, love, a moving reminder of divine love incarnated, God with us.

Rolling Stone called it not only the best Superbowl performance ever, but

> one of the truly great live-TV rock & roll moments of all time... Only U2 could have made this so grandiose, yet so emotionally direct. Grown men wept buckets. Every daft ambition U2 ever had, every lofty claim they ever made, they earned tonight.[35]

Did everyone catch the Christian resonances of the performance? Probably not. But it's no secret that U2 is Christian, that their tireless campaigning on behalf of the world's poor comes from a Christian perspective. That night, they brought a country together into a place of healing and told them that love conquered death, that it was safe to lay their dead to rest, that they could place hope in a future in which they are not alone. That night, U2 planted an oasis. I could go on, but I'll return to examples (especially Tolkien) later in the book.

Knight: Wait, what? We're in a book? Since when?

Turnau: I thought I told you. You guys are fictional characters in a movie script that's within a book.

MLO: Does my agent know about this? Have we discussed residuals? I want gross points.

Turnau: You're a *fictional character*. You don't get residuals. Or points. Unless you're owned by Disney.

MLO: Oh.

Freeze frame. Triumphant music swells.

Conclusion

Voiceover *(either David Attenborough or Morgan Freeman):* Over the course of this video essay, we have explored options for cultural

[34] See *Song Meanings* for the lyrics, and pay attention to the discussion after the lyrics. Available online at http://songmeanings.com/songs/view/3998/ (accessed 5 March 2016).

[35] "Superbowl Shows Ranked from Best to Worst", *RollingStone.com,* 28 January 2014, available online at http://www.rollingstone.com/music/pictures/super-bowl-halftime-shows-ranked-from-worst-to-best-20140128/1-u2-2002-0479328 (accessed 30 May 2016).

engagement by giving voice and character to them: the Knight, the Gardener, and the Member of the Loyal Opposition. In bringing them to life, we were able to judge the strengths and weaknesses of each, perhaps shedding a little light through dialogue. Our journey concluded by presenting another path of Christian cultural engagement, a path that appreciated the other approaches, and yet went beyond them by focusing on lovingly engaging the imagination through art and entertainment. This is what Turnau means by Christian imaginative cultural engagement: creating works (and supporting the creators of those works) that address the imagination in a way that opens a space for conversation, reconciliation and relationship, imaginative works that resonate with grace. To do this, we need to be as committed to cultural change as the Knight, as committed to spiritual formation in community as the Gardener, and as committed to practicing faithful presence for the common good as the Member of the Loyal Opposition. But we also need to direct our gaze to the imaginary landscape, and to the works that form and shape it, such as popular culture. We need to be committed to creative work that seeks to reshape the imaginary landscape that lies back of the cultural conversations always taking place. Using the Christian imagination to love and heal a post-Christian world means planting oases in the wasteland.

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A THEOLOGY OF THE CREATED WORLD: NEGLECTED BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

David Green[*]

Both inside and outside Christian circles, "creation" is understood as a doctrine about origins. This has unhelpfully drawn attention away from the biblical emphasis on God's "present continuous" activity in the world and the display of his glory in creation. The biblical doctrine of creation has wide-ranging implications for how we understand ourselves and how we live in this world, giving significance to what we call "everyday life", encouraging a more integrated theological approach to life, and calling for greater engagement in the world in a distinctly Christian way. It also clarifies and enhances our self-understanding as human beings within the created order, and enriches the prospect of our place in a redeemed creation in the life to come.

If you were to ask anyone today – inside or outside the church – what they understand by a belief in "creation", they would almost certainly reply in terms of origins, defining it as the belief that God made the universe in six days. Most would go on to say that science has now disproved this, while evangelical Christians would argue to the contrary, that creation is consistent with the findings of science.

Having said that, within evangelicalism there is a spectrum of interpretations of Genesis 1, ranging from young-earth, six-day creation to some form of theistic evolution. On that spectrum are those who regard the days of Genesis 1 as epochs, and others who assume long gaps between them. Still others argue that the days are a literary framework to describe the origin of the world and do not therefore provide us with much detail about *how* God made the universe. Still others see them as six days of revelation rather than manufacture and, most recently, it has been argued that the creation week should be read as a seven-day temple inauguration ceremony. All these differing interpretations share a focus on the question of how the world came into being.

The purpose of this article is to suggest that in this preoccupation with origins, we have truncated what the Bible teaches about creation, and that a fully-orbed doctrine of creation has far-reaching practical consequences for

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evangelical Christians which merit further consideration. Our doctrine of creation may flow from and depend upon our belief about origins, but should go beyond it and be allowed to infuse the rest of our theology. The biblical doctrine of God as Creator answers more than the question of how the world came into being; it defines what kind of world we live in, what it means to be human, and how God is at work in the world.

God and Creation

When the Bible speaks about creation, the emphasis is not so much on a historical event but on a continuing process and this affects what we mean when we describe God as Creator.

> The biblical understanding of God as Creator is primarily concerned not with his creative act of bringing the world into being, but rather with his ongoing involvement in and with his creation.[1]

In other words, belief in God as Creator is "present continuous" rather than "past historic". Or, to put it another way, Jesus' simple but profound words in John 5:17 that, "My Father is always at work to this very day, and I, too, am working" is, at least in part, a statement about God as Creator. If this seems surprising, it is because we understand the term "Creator" differently from how it would have been understood in Bible times. When we read in Isaiah 40:28 that God is the "creator of the ends of the earth", we automatically assume that "creator" (Heb. participle, *bôrē'*) here means the one who brought the universe into being at the dawn of time (cf. Isa 42:5). The same is true of "maker" (Heb. participle,*'ōśēh*) in the phrase "maker of heaven and earth" in Psalm 121:2. Translators assume the same: the NKJV and ESV impose the past tense on the participle by translating, "who made heaven and earth".

The point I am making is more than a grammatical one that participles have no tense; it is the theological point that biblically, creation is something which God *does*, rather than merely something he *did*. This becomes more apparent when we consider that many uses of the participle "creator" do not refer to God as creator of the universe but as "your", "our" or "my" creator (Eccl 12:1; Mal 2:10; Isa 45:16). The same is true of the participle "maker": God is the maker of the individual (Isa 45:9, Job 4:17, 32:22, 35:10; Psalm 95:6). He is also the creator and maker of Israel (Isa 43:1 and 45:11 respectively, cf. Hos 8:14). Here, as when God is said to create new conditions and circumstances (Isa 45:8; Jer 31:22), a "clean heart" (Ps 51:12) or Jerusalem to be a joy (Isa 65:18), we are not in the realm of origins, but of

[1] Hilary F. Marlow, "Creation Theology", in Mark J. Boda & J. Gordon McConville (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (Nottingham: IVP, 2012), 106.

God's creative activity in the present and future. One of the most significant biblical texts in this regard is Psalm 104, which takes the six-fold creation structure from Genesis 1 but applies it to God's present, ongoing involvement with the world. So the God who rebuked the waters so that they fled over the mountains to reveal the dry ground (vv. 7-9) is the God who still sends streams into the valleys and thus provides water to drink for wild animals (vv. 10-13). He did not merely command the earth to produce vegetation and then leave it to get on with the job in perpetuity; he causes grass to grow for man and beast (v. 14). He provides shelter and habitat, food, seasons and the rhythm of day and night. He gives life itself, v. 30: "You send your breath and they are created, and you renew the surface of the ground."

The use of the creation verb here (Heb. *bārā'*) indicates that the beginning of animal life is an act of creation, just as much as in the original creation of Genesis 1, even though the process, involving procreation, might be different. In fact, there is process even in Genesis 1: the land itself produces all kinds of plants beneficial to humanity and animals, at God's command; the statements "let the water teem", "let birds fly" and "let the land produce animals" parallel the statements that God created or made the sea creatures, birds and animals. So we should not make a sharp distinction in our minds between God's "creative" activity and the "natural" processes of procreation and fertility. And we should not assume that when the object of creation is "nature", God's activity is confined to the past. There are considerable practical and pastoral implications to this. Consider these verses:

My help is from Yhwh, maker of heaven and earth (Ps 121:2).
Our help is in the name of Yhwh, maker of heaven and earth (Ps 124:8).
May Yhwh bless you from Zion – maker of heaven and earth (Ps 134:3).

Is the believer to find reassurance and confidence in the fact that God did something extraordinarily powerful and wonderful at the beginning of the world, or that he is still at work constantly in his creation? Is our hope in the one who *made*, or the one who *makes* heaven and earth? We might answer that we do believe in God's continued involvement with his world, but that we use terms like "providence" and "sustaining" instead of creation to refer to this. This differentiation in language, which implies that creation is a different activity from providence, may represent a departure from the biblical world-view. It certainly opens the door for the idea that God now has a very light hand on the tiller of a fundamentally stable world which, by and large, runs according to the "laws of physics". Ironically, the concern to argue for creation in scientific terms or on scientific grounds can have the effect of implying a distinction between God's *ex nihilo* creative activity then and a

world of natural process governed by the laws of physics now. God's involvement with his world might then be thought of as like a father who runs alongside his child to put out a restraining hand if the bike wobbles, but hopes not to have to do so and for the child to provide its own momentum and balance. This is not the biblical view. Balance and stability only exist in the world because God as Creator is constantly creating.

And God also frequently and deliberately interrupts the stability of the world. In particular, God's activity in and through nature is often connected to his purposes for humankind, both in judgment and salvation. God "cursed" the earth after Adam and Eve's disobedience in Eden; he de-created the world in the Flood because of the increase of human wickedness; he disrupted the stability of the natural world with ten "signs" (a better term than "plagues") in Egypt, and parted the Red Sea and the Jordan for the Israelites to escape Egypt and enter the promised land; he fought for Israel with thunder, hailstones and by lengthening the day. Yhwh also subjected the land of Israel to fertility and barrenness (Deuteronomic blessings and curses) according to his people's obedience or disobedience. As late as the post-exilic era, this view of God's involvement in nature remains undiminished. The prophet Haggai prescribes an architectural solution to an agricultural problem: "build the temple and God will provide proper harvests".

In response, we might argue that this is "old covenant stuff" – that God's purposes are now through the church and not through the nation or land of Israel – and there is certainly truth to that. All the same, people and animals are still dependent on the productivity of the earth for their food, and the stability of the world to lift their lives above mere subsistence. We may no longer be able to assert with Deuteronomic certainty that a failed harvest or epidemic are the direct result of human sinfulness or the disobedience of God's people, but that does not diminish the fact that we are created beings, living in God's world, and dependent upon his goodness through creation for our continued existence. The Apostle Paul argued evangelistically along these lines in Lystra (Acts 14:15-18). In Christian discipleship, having a present-continuous view of God as Creator brings God nearer to us (Jer 23:23-24) and gives significance to what we call "everyday life"; it makes our faith relevant to areas of life which we do not think of as "spiritual" and calls for greater engagement in the world in a distinctly biblical, Christian way.

Fullness of God in Creation

If we accept that God is at work in the world as Creator, it is natural to ask why? What is creation for? The Bible's answer to this question is emphatic and thought-provoking: Creation exists for the delight of God and for the display of his "fullness". We encounter something of God's delight in Genesis

1, in the repeated phrase that God saw what he had made and it was good – ultimately "very good". To a large extent, "good" here means pleasurable and beneficial to human beings, but not entirely. The great sea creatures of v. 21 are not part of a tameable, beneficial nature, nor is the sea, their domain. Nonetheless, Leviathan is said to "play" in the sea in Psalm 104:26, and this playful aspect of creation features also in Proverbs 8. "Wisdom", personified as a gleeful bystander at the beginning of the world, was a delight to God, "played" or "danced" before God in the world he (God) had made, and delighted in humankind (vv. 30-13). This suggests that we ought to favour the reading "child" (Heb. *'āmûn*) over "master-craftsman" (Heb. *'āmôn*) for the description of wisdom in v. 30. These verses portray exuberant delight in the activity of creation, shared by both God and his creation. God tells Job that the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy at the foundation of the earth, (Job 38:7) and Psalm 104:31 expresses the desire that Yhwh will rejoice in his works.

Delight in nature is closely related to God's self-disclosure in his creation. We are familiar with the idea of natural revelation from passages such as Romans 1:20 and Psalm 19. But this goes further than the simple fact that God's "fingerprints" or "makers mark" are to be seen throughout the natural world; nature bears witness to God because it is full of him. The whole world belongs to God (Psalms 24:1, 50:12, 89:11) and his glory fills the whole earth (Isa 6:3), which is another way of saying that he fills heaven and earth (Jer 23:24). At the same time, God is distinct from nature in contrast to the Ancient Near Eastern view of deity permeating and being permeated by nature. We should expect to encounter God in nature, without in any way identifying him with it or deifying nature. God is revealed in creation and creation must therefore acknowledge its Creator. Most obviously, Psalm 148 expresses the idea of the whole of creation, animate and inanimate, praising God. Environmental implications of this have been drawn by more than one writer:

> When humanity damages the earth and its inhabitants, the earth's ability to praise is diminished... the sin of environmental degradation is sin not only because it endangers or damages the lives of human beings but also because it diminishes creation's ability to praise its Creator.[2]

The call for the whole of nature to praise God in the psalm gives massive rhetorical force to the culminating call for all human beings to praise God (vv. 11-14). Psalm 148 is just one text in which nature has a relationship to

[2] Kathryn M. Schifferdecker, "Creation Theology", in Tremper Longman III & Peter Enns (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008), 68, citing T. E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A relational theology of creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 257-8 and E. F. Davis, *Getting Involved With God: Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley, 2001).

its creator independent of humanity. Something of an independent enjoyment of "createdness" on the part of animals is also suggested in God's speeches in Job 38-40: the onager wanders where he likes (39:7); the ostrich runs faster than a horse and rider (39:18); the horse is courageous in battle (39:22) and Behemoth and Leviathan are beyond human control (40:15 ff, 41:1-34).[3] Passages like these serve to challenge our anthropocentric view of the world. Nature is bigger than humanity and even in its uncursed state in Genesis 1, aspects of creation lay outside human power to control (cf. God's argument in Job 38:4ff). Similarly, God's covenant after the Flood is not just with humanity but with all the animals that went into the ark with him. Whether Jeremiah 33:20 and 25 speak of that covenant or with a prior "covenant with creation", does not alter the fact that God has a covenant with the world he has made. In redemption also, as we shall see, God's concern is not just with humanity but with the whole of creation. Taking this a little further, we encounter the idea of nature showing humanity the way when heaven and earth are called as witnesses against God's people (Dt 30:19; Isa 1:2; Mic 6:1-2), and in the indictment that the ox and donkey know their master but Israel does not (Isa 1:3). Similarly, the land mourns on account of human wickedness (Jer 12:4). The triangular relationship between God, nature and humanity is an important and neglected aspect of our understanding of who we are in the world that God has created.

Humanity in Creation

A far greater attack on biblical truth than Darwinianism's rejection of the Bible's account of origins is posed by its assertion that man is no more than an evolved ape. It is quite possible to live a perfectly functional life without knowing how the world came into being, but our understanding of what a human being is affects everything we do, with far-reaching consequences for bio-ethical issues and every aspect of human relationships. The desire to assert that we are not animals, together with a neo-platonic deprecation of the body endemic in Christian theology, has led to a historic embarrassment over our material creatureliness. Here, again, a robust view of creation is helpful.

The human is a created being (Psalm 139:13-16) and although distinct within creation, part of it. There is a tension inherent in this: humanity is made in God's image and yet formed from the material of the ground. Like the angels, human beings are rational, spiritual, relational, moral beings, able

[3] If Behemoth and Leviathan are understood as natural animals, perhaps hippopotamus and crocodile, rather than as personifications of death and Satan, the view argued persuasively by Robert Fyall in Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of creation and evil in the book of Job,* New Studies in Biblical Theology (Leicester & Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP), 2002.

to worship God consciously. At the same time, like animals, humans are formed from the material of the ground and, when given breath by God, become "living beings". The term "living being" (Heb. *nepeš ḥayyāh*,) used of man in Gen 2:7, is used elsewhere of animals (cf. 1:20, 24, 30, 9:12, 15, 16). When humans and animals die, they return to the dust (Gen 3:19; Ps 104:29). Qoheleth is entirely orthodox, in Ecclesiastes 3:18-21 when he points out the essential bodily similarities between people and animals. We do not need DNA analysis to prove this; it is obvious and apparent to any human observer that the anatomy and physiology of our bodies and theirs are remarkably similar. All the same, a distinction is maintained biblically: no suitable (or "corresponding") helper was found for Adam among the animals he named (Gen 2:20), whereas Eve was "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (v. 23). A distinction is made between the killing of a human being and the killing of an animal in Genesis 9:3-6, a distinction based on man as God's image-bearer. Finally, although men are said to survive after death (in Sheol, in the Old Testament), this is not said of any animal.

Importantly, the distinction between humans and animals is not made in terms of their anatomy so much as their function and place within the created order. A human being is not different because he has a mind or a "soul". In fact, the Hebrew and Greek words behind terms such as "mind", "heart" and "soul" are difficult to translate and often used with differing and inter-changeable meanings in Scripture. They do not describe human anatomy. In the same way that "mind" and "brain" refer to different things and yet are impossible entirely to distinguish (similarly, the terms "house" and "home"), so the biblical language about the component parts of the human being does not render those parts discrete. The Bible essentially represents the human being as a unity or single entity. When it differentiates component parts of the human being, these are interactive and interdependent. It is not a "soul" that makes me human, or that is the "real me". Our bodies are fundamental to our humanity and the right use of the body is a spiritual matter. We shall be judged according to deeds done "in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). The Bible bears witness to man's essential corporeality ("bodilyness") by emphasising the necessity of bodily resurrection. However blissful the existence of believers "in paradise" with Christ after death (Lk 23:43), they are not redeemed until united with resurrection bodies, because they are not fully human until then (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:42-49; 1 Jn 3:2; Ps 17:15; Rev 20:13).

Man is a distinct kind of being, sharing some characteristics of God, angels and animals (Psalm 8:4-8; cf. 144:3-4). In the incarnation, God the Son took on the body and nature of human beings in order to save them, thus tying his incarnation to man's essential, distinct and bodily creatureliness (Heb 2), even though the salvation of human beings through Christ's incarnation has consequences for the whole of creation.

Psalm 8 (applied christologically in Hebrews 2) speaks about man's dominion over creation. God's directive for humanity to exercise dominion (Heb. *rāḏāh*) over the world, particularly over the animal kingdom, has been the subject of intense scrutiny, especially in response to the charge that it has led to ruthless exploitation of the earth's resources, maltreatment of domesticated animals and wanton disregard for other species with which we share the planet. Although exercising dominion can equate with domination, it need not necessarily do so. Fear of humankind on the part of animals, as expressed in Genesis 9:2-3 seems to be a feature of life after the Fall and Flood, but not of the original order in Genesis 1.[4] It is possible to understand humanity's role there as benign, imposing order and exercising dominion on behalf of God (cf. Ps 8:6-8). The eschatological picture of harmony within creation in passages such as Isa 11:6-9 and 65:17-25 also suggests a world in which humans, animals and plants can flourish together in safety.

A further question, however, is how far the human race can exercise dominion in the world. As already noted, the latter chapters of Job represent aspects of nature – of the animal kingdom in particular – which defy human control. Most of all, the sea represents the ultimate untameable, natural phenomenon, a chaos on which God has imposed limits, but which remains uncontrollable, a chaos, moreover, which God used to inundate the world in judgment in Noah's day. Human beings may make ships to sail on the sea, but are powerless to command it (Prov 30:19; Ps 107:23-32; Jonah 1). This is why Jesus' disciples were so unsettled by his ability to command wind and waves (Mk 4:41, etc.) and why also, in the new world order, there will be "no more sea" (Rev 21:1). As an essential part of the present world, however, the sea serves as a reminder of the limits of humanity's capacity to exercise dominion. Earth's great oceans still contain many mysteries which human beings have barely begun to discover in the last decade. Weather and climate are also outside our control, even if our carbon emissions are proven to have an adverse effect on them. God is frequently depicted in the Bible, however, as controlling wind, rain and storms, both for the benefit and chastisement of humankind (Isa 30:23; Jer 45:24, 10:13; Zec 10:1; Mal 3:10-11; Isa 3:1; Jer 3:3; Hag 1:9-11). All this serves to emphasise that even in the ideal world before the Fall, humanity's dominion over creation could only ever have been limited. God structured the world in such a way that it should be so. Before the Fall humanity was dependent upon the earth, the cycle of the seasons and plant growth for food. Cultivation may have become toilsome and the ground uncooperative after the Fall, but the human being has always had limitations within the created order and been dependent upon it. It is

[4] See Robin Routledge, "Cursing and Chaos: The Impact of Human Sin on Creation and the Environment in the Old Testament", in Jonathan Moo & Robin Routledge (eds.), *As Long As The Earth Endures: The Bible, creation and the environment* (Nottingham: IVP, 2014), 70-91, esp. 74-79.

part of our mandate to understand and mitigate harmful and limiting aspects of the world, by industry and ingenuity, but contrary to the dictum popular in the Renaissance, "a man *cannot* do all things if he wills".

A word about human creativity is appropriate at this point: Sometimes a link is made between God's creativity and ours: that human creativity results from our being made in the image of the Creator God. Caution is needed, not least over the extent to which the "image of God" describes human faculties and abilities. It may be that being made in the "image of God" in Genesis 1:26 refers to nothing more than humanity's status as God's viceroys. Caution is needed also over the meaning of the word "creative," which is dependent on the prevailing aesthetics of the age. With the advent of modernism within the arts, emphasis has shifted from facility to inventiveness, although both remain aspects of what we mean by creativity. Nowadays, we may admire a craftsperson's skill or facility with materials and processes, but the "creative types" are those who come up with original *ideas*. To a large degree, this is because we have made machines that render the craftsperson's skills redundant. It means, however, that we are losing our connection to the materials of the material world around us and how to work with them, and thus part of our connectedness to nature. Whatever our definition of human creativity, however, God's creativity means far more than both facility or inventiveness. It implies autonomy, sovereignty, limitless power and absolute and effortless control. There is also purpose, linked to other purposes like revelation and redemption. Human creativity is not in this league! All the same, human creativity is there in the Bible, as part of "wisdom" – ability or know-how – and the presence of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 does provide a link between Divine and human creativity, especially with the ideas of delight and playfulness noted above. Bezaleel's "artistic" facility ("artistic" is an anachronistic term, the Hebrew word is "wisdom" again), derived from God's Spirit (Ex 35:30-36:1), was put to use in the manufacture of the Tabernacle, itself a kind of miniature cosmos whose construction and dedication may have echoed the creation of the world as an arena for the presence and worship of God. Before we get too carried away, however, human "creativity" is not limited to the godly; the first musicians and metal-workers are found in the line of Cain (Gen 4:20-22). Inventiveness and facility are part of human nature and, as such, subject to the Fall. Creativity must not operate independent of God's standards of righteousness, or justify or excuse their being suspended or flouted.

Humanity's createdness is not limited to the body or faculties of the individual. It extends to God's creation of and rule over all peoples and nations (see Gen 10; Dt 32:8; Psa 86:9; Acts 17:26). Our doctrine of creation, therefore, must also encompass human societies and cultures. In the contemporary western maelstrom of ideas about individuality, globalisation, ethnicity and nationality, perhaps the biblical doctrine of creation has

something calm and clear to offer. Nations and cultures are not arbitrary or irrelevant, but part of a structure created by God so that people might seek him (Acts 17:27) in the same way that a stable and productive world is intended to do (Acts 14:15-17). This provides a theological rationale for respect and understanding in cross-cultural mission and churchmanship. Ethnicity and nationality may be no barrier to the preaching and receiving of the gospel of Christ, and may ultimately be done away with (Rev 5:9; 7:9; 14:6; 21:24), but they are an intended part of the present world created by God.

God's dealings with, and concern for, all peoples is a subject too vast to be discussed here, but a further remark can be made concerning its relation to the doctrine of creation. If the Sinai covenant provides the theological basis for the Law and the Prophets, Old Testament wisdom literature finds its theological basis in creation. Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes look at a human being's place within the created order. Just as chaos in nature is restrained by God's imposition of order or structure, so human behaviour, relationships and society work within an order or structure derived from God. This structure holds for all human beings and societies "under the sun", not just the theocracy of Israel. Parallels are drawn in wisdom literature between phenomena observable in nature and corresponding aspects of human behaviour and society. The industriousness of an ant, the haughtiness of a cockerel or the rain-bearing characteristic of a north wind all yield lessons for human conduct. This goes beyond merely finding helpful illustrations from the natural world; it stems from a belief that similar principles will apply in the natural, animal and human spheres because all are part of a single created order. The world is created such that industriousness benefits the one who exercises it, a desire to be superior makes man and beast strut, and so on. These things are the consequence of the inter-connectedness of creation. The flip-side of the universal applicability of wisdom is that there is also wisdom in the world of humanity from which God's people can learn. Solomon's wisdom was greater than, but of the same kind as that of the wise men of surrounding nations (1 Ki 4:30-34). By contrast, it is unthinkable that the Torah given through Moses or the oracles of the prophets would have been compared to the laws or prophecies of other nations. Wisdom takes its framework and basic presuppositions ("the fear of Yhwh") from Torah, but can (and does) incorporate the wise observations of those outside the community of faith. In the same way, as Christians, we acknowledge that there is wisdom in the unbelieving world, but only as we can accommodate it within the biblical framework of our faith.

Creation, Redemption and Eschatology

A number of passing references have already been made to the relationship between creation and redemption, as well as the prominent part nature

plays in the Bible's eschatological vision. It is interesting to note that in the index to Schreiner's *New Testament Theology*, the only references to "creation" are to the eschatological new creation.[5] This is not because the New Testament is uninterested in creation, but because it takes as read what the Old Testament teaches about creation, and because it is looking forward to the culmination of all things in Christ's triumphant return. To put it simply, the New Testament position is "we know from the (Old Testament) scriptures what creation is; in Christ we see what it will become". Eschatology does not begin with the New Testament, however. We saw earlier that heaven and earth are called as witnesses in God's lawsuit against humanity (Dt 30:19, etc). Going further, we see that when God comes in judgment, there are upheavals in nature (Isa 13:9-10, 34:4; Joel 2:10; Nah 1:5; Hab 3:3-13), just as there were in Egypt as a prelude to God's judgment on Pharaoh and the redemption of his people Israel from their slavery. In a more universal way, nature constantly "groans" under bondage to decay while it awaits the redemption of God's people (Romans 8:19-23). Nature too, therefore, needs to participate in redemption, not just function as a harbinger of judgment. We see this nowhere more clearly than in Isaiah. Everything from the sky to the lower parts of the earth, the mountains and forests rejoice with singing over Israel's redemption (Isa 44:23; cf. 42:11-12, 45:8, 49:13). When Israel is redeemed, previously barren, unproductive spaces will burgeon with life (Isa 35:1-2, 41:18-20). In the eschatological, messianic kingdom, nature will thrive harmoniously alongside God's people (Isa 11:6-9, 65:17-25).

For Isaiah 40-55, creation is the beginning, middle, and end of God's work with the world. God originated the cosmos, has continued creative work all through the course of the world's history, and will one day bring a new heaven and new earth into being" [6]

This idea is not restricted to Isaiah. Nature may be subject to abnormal upheavals in Joel's vision of the approach of the Day of the Lord, but afterwards the land will explode into productivity (Joel 3:18). Amos, similarly, foresees a time of unprecedented, abundant fruitfulness of the land (Am 9:13-15), as does Hosea, who also describes a "covenant" God makes with wild animals, no longer to allow them to harm his people (Hos 2:18-22, cf. Ezek 34:25). Although the horizons in some of these prophetic oracles may be relatively near – restoration of Israel after Exile may be in view – the rest of biblical theology enables us to see their multiple fulfilment in subsequent times and, indeed, their fullest and ultimate fulfilment in the new

[5] Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Nottingham: IVP; Apollos, 2008).

[6] T. E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A relational theology of creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 193, cited in Marlow, 109.

heavens and the new earth of the last chapters of Revelation. Without this overarching vision, it is difficult to make sense of Paul's presentation of the cosmic Christ in Colossians 1, through whom and for whom all things were created (v. 16), in whom all things "cohere" (v. 17), and by whom all things will be reconciled to God (v. 20). We may well have to widen our understanding of salvation to encompass a fully-orbed biblical doctrine of creation. As Kathryn Schifferdecker notes, "In earlier biblical interpretation an anthropocentric bias, exemplified in a focus on human 'salvation history', can be discerned."[7] We need to reckon with a redeemed nature and an emphatically material new heavens and earth.

What then of life in the new creation? As more fully human than we have been in this life, with resurrection bodies, how will we pass our days? Isaiah 65:17-25 presents an attractive picture of human life without the groaning of Ecclesiastes and Romans 8, but with the innocent pleasures of a material world and it is immeasurably more appealing than the idea of being a disembodied spirit sitting on a cloud, playing the harp. Of course, Isaiah 65 is couched in terms that people in an iron-age Mediterranean world could comprehend, but it is reassuringly earthy and preserves humanity's essential material creatureliness. Some things will change between this world and the next – thankfully, we ourselves will be changed – but being corporeal beings in a created world (albeit renewed and liberated) will not. Why does this matter? Because it affects how we view the world in which we live now. Christians have tended to regard this world as dispensable, bordering on irrelevant. "Do not love the world or anything in it" (1 Jn 2:15) has been mistakenly understood to mean that Christians should only be concerned with "spiritual" matters and that anything that gives pleasure to the senses is a snare to one's spiritual walk. This borders on gnosticism, and is a denial of the basic fact that God created both our senses and also a world which incessantly delights them. It may be a world under a curse at present, subject to a fallenness which Ecclesiastes describes with challenging realism. But in spite of this, Ecclesiastes depicts a world full of legitimate, God-given pleasures to be enjoyed. Song of Songs presents us with a sensory overload of delights, and whatever else it may be about, the book gives us a tantalising glimpse of what life in harmony with a redeemed creation might be like.

Conclusions

In this article, I have attempted to show that the Bible's view of creation is richer and fuller than ours tends to be. I would also suggest that it ought to give rise to a much more integrated theological approach to life than we tend

[7] Schifferdecker, 65.

to have. A theology of creation should have a greater impact on how we understand ourselves and how we live in this world.

Although continued debate about origins is vital, our doctrine of creation must go further. Even if we could prove beyond controversy that God created the universe, this would still leave open fundamental questions about life, such as the extent of God's involvement in nature, what the human being is, what humanity's relationship to nature is, and what we should look for in terms of the redemption of creation. We do not have a sufficiently "present continuous" view of God's involvement in nature, and our default setting is to view the world around us through the same lens as materialistic, atheistic society. For example, most of us do not have a theology of food, of affluence and poverty, of bodily beauty, of health, of conservation and environmentalism, of home (and homelessness) and garden, of work and leisure. To a large extent this is because we never hear preaching on these questions; they are left to "specialists" who write books for those who share their slightly quirky interests. And yet, all Christians eat, all Christians have bodies and many have issues surrounding body-image. Most have homes and gardens and, in western society, are well-off and have leisure and disposable income. All Christians use the earth's resources. Application to these areas of life "under the sun" is rarely, if ever, heard. Contrast this, for example, with Leviticus 19, in which holiness – "consecratedness to God" – extends to every area of life for the Old Testament Israelite. A fully-orbed doctrine of creation is indispensable if we are to live well as created beings in a world in which the Creator still displays his power, goodness and judgment on human rebellion, a world which he will ultimately reclaim for himself and redeem.

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THE AGE OF THE EARTH: A PLEA FOR GEO-CHRONOLOGICAL NON-DOGMATISM

John James[*]

This paper considers authorial intent in relation to Genesis 1, and suggests that it is not the primary objective of the author to fix the age of the earth. When Scripture is understood as God's accommodated word to us, to remain non-dogmatic on something the author is not choosing to speak on, in no way undermines the doctrine of inerrancy. The paper then considers the history of biblical interpretation in relation to the author's intention in Genesis 1. It is noted that the rise of modern geology did little to change the predominant non-dogmatism, and that the forceful insistence on six literal solar days is a relatively recent phenomenon in response to the atheistic outworking of Darwinian evolution. The overall aim of the paper is to show that a dogmatic adherence to any particular age is not necessary in order to defend a high view of Scripture and picks the wrong fight against scientific naturalism.

Introduction

If we don't agree that the Bible teaches six literal days, if we allow ourselves to be influenced by the millions of years, and we don't read the text as written… right there in Genesis 1, we've lost the battle. The battle is lost because the message to the people is, "We don't have to take the Bible seriously here." That compromise opens a door that leads to disaster.[1]

Ken Ham's point is a compelling one.[2] If we read Genesis 1 and fail to affirm a young earth we will not be taking the Bible seriously, and that will ultimately lead to us failing to affirm the truth of the gospel. Ham, and the *Answers In Genesis* team, have given their lives to this conviction: apologetics that confirm a young earth interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis are key to us reaching the world for Christ.

This drives a desire to prove the credibility of a literal reading of Genesis 1-11. As a result, the recent opening of the *Ark Encounter* theme park, built at a cost of 102 million dollars, and with a life-size replica ark as its centrepiece,

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[1] Ken Ham, " 'Myth-ing' the Point", *Answers In Genesis*, 1 July 2002, https://answersingenesis.org/apologetics/myth-ing-the-point/.

[2] Ken Ham is the President of *Answers In Genesis*, and a prominent proponent of young-earth creationism.

is for Ham, "a historic moment in Christendom".[3] It is historic because he believes the theme park will be "one of the greatest Christian outreaches of our era".[4] The organisation is now seeking a further 50 million dollars to add a Tower of Babel to the park. With a few million dollars, the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis can be proven conclusively, and global mission will be advanced.

On the other side, this is regarded as cause for considerable concern, amounting to an unnecessarily dogmatic approach to a particular reading of these chapters, supported by a pseudo-science that struggles under scrutiny. Davis Young and Ralph Stearley write,

> Currently, in hundreds to thousands of pulpits, Sunday schools, Christian schools and homes where children are home-schooled, Christian young people are being indoctrinated by well-intended pastors, Sunday school teachers, Christian school teachers and parents – few of whom have any competence in geology – to accept young-Earth creationism and Flood geology as legitimate science. Frequently, students are taught that the traditional six twenty-four-hour days interpretation of Genesis 1 is the only interpretation of the text that is consistent with belief in an inerrant Bible.[5]

We may relate to this. We may have friends or family who have struggled to process the claims of modern geology, have lost confidence in the Bible, or rejected the gospel in part because of this apparent mismatch between science and Christianity. Perhaps we feel the pressure to adhere to six literal days, fearing what is at stake, but also recognising we are ill-equipped to evaluate the science, and knowing we are adopting a position we do not fully understand.

The complexity of the issue, and the heat it generates can cause us to keep our hands clean and somehow rise above the debate. Gerald Rau's book, *Mapping the Origins Debate* encourages us to "see the world from a wider, and perhaps eventually different, perspective".[6] However, in the end he falls short of offering a viable alternative. Or we simply retreat and bury our head in the sand like the puppet Buck Denver who, when asked whether the earth is 6,000 or four and a half billion years old, responds, "Wow, hey, wait, I'm not getting involved with that one",[7] before quickly exiting the screen.

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[3] Quoted in Cort Gatliff, "My Encounter with Ken Ham's Giant Ark", *Christianity Today* (22 July 2016), retrieved from http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/july-web-only/ken-ham-ark-encounter-visit.html?

[4] Quoted in Ben Hoyle, "Creationists Build Replica Ark… Complete With Dinosaurs", *The Times*, (13 August 2016), 45.

[5] Davis A. Young and Ralph F. Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 476.

[6] Gerald Rau, *Mapping The Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2012), 192.

[7] Phil Vicher, *Buck Denver asks… What's In The Bible? Volume 1* (Jellyfish One, LLC, 2011), DVD.

And yet, it is important that we equip ourselves, and our congregations, well. If Ham is right, then we have lost the battle if we assert anything other than a confident defence of a literal six day creation, but if Young and Stearley are right, then such an assertion mishandles the biblical text itself, is scientifically ignorant, and fails to equip our young people for either playground or campus.

With great trepidation then, this paper introduces two particular lines of investigation that suggest we should hold a non-dogmatic approach to the age of the earth as we seek to handle Scripture rightly. The first line of investigation is the author's intention in the text of Genesis 1: Is it the writer's intention to dogmatically assert an age for the earth at all? The second line of investigation is the history of biblical interpretation: To what extent has a specific age for the earth been asserted dogmatically, on the basis of Scripture, throughout the history of the church? My aim is to show that a dogmatic adherence to any particular age is not necessary in order to defend a high view of Scripture and actually ends up picking the wrong fight against scientific naturalism.

It is worth noting, before we begin, that the claim of this paper is relatively narrow, in a debate that is vast and multifaceted. It would be impossible for me to address all implications exhaustively, and it is therefore tempting to say nothing at all. The approach I am taking will leave many questions unanswered. For example, exegetical difficulties around the historicity of the rest of Genesis 1-11, the extent of the flood, the existence of death before the fall, or even the identity of the Nephilim, are not resolved even if a non-dogmatism in relation to the age of the earth can be established. However, even though the claim being made in this paper is a modest one, I believe it is worth making, and has important implications for the way we engage with both the Biblical text and the culture around us.

I. Genesis 1 and Authorial Intent

In one article Ham states,

> Recently, one of our associates sat down with a highly respected world-class Hebrew scholar and asked him this question: "If you started with the Bible alone, without considering any outside influences whatsoever, could you ever come up with millions or billions of years of history for the earth and universe?" The answer from this scholar? "Absolutely not!"[8]

This, for Ham, is the killer argument with Genesis chapter 1. "Day" means "day", and so a literal six days must be adhered to. Blogger Tim Challies makes a very similar point. He writes,

[8] Ken Ham, "A Young Earth – It's Not The Issue!", *Answers In Genesis,* 23 January 1998, https://answersingenesis.org/why-does-creation-matter/a-young-earth-its-not-the-issue/.

> There have been endless debates about the meaning of the word we translate as "day" in Genesis 1 and so much of the debate stands or falls right here… In the end, I believe a natural reading of Scripture, and a natural reading of the author's intent in the passage, leads to the most natural and obvious conclusion: God created all that exists, from nothing, in six literal days. This is what the author said because this is what the author meant to convey, because this is what the author believed, because this is exactly how God did it.[9]

In reality, none of us starts with the Bible alone, without considering any outside influences whatsoever. If a Hebrew scholar was to do that, they would approach the text without any linguistic skills whatsoever, and would be unable to decipher a single "yod".

Hebrew is not a "divine" language. God has accommodated the information he wishes to communicate to us, into a language that could be understood at the time it was written. We, in turn, must now also accommodate ourselves to the text we have. This requires a degree of scholarship in order to provide an accurate translation and interpretation of the text, a scholarship that rests on a number of outside influences in order to function properly. The extent to which any individual reader can easily establish the "natural" reading of a text depends a lot on whether the reader has successfully accommodated themselves to the language and culture of the original author.

This in no way undermines the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith states that we can attain a sufficient understanding of all we need for salvation "in a due use of the ordinary means".[10] As Wayne Grudem argues, "Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but not without ordinary means", so that "information about the meanings of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words in the Bible does have to be obtained from the vast linguistic resources found in extra-biblical literature".[11] If this is true in translation, it is no less true in interpretation.

This may seem an obvious point, but it does somewhat undermine the rhetorical power of Ham's statement, Challies' appeal to a "natural" reading, and the kind of argument of those who love to assert a "no creed but the Bible" approach to reading Scripture. We may give the impression that we are somehow faithful purists guarding the text against extra-biblical pollutants, but it is an impossible position to maintain, and actually undermines one of the key benefits of us having a text which has been accommodated by God to a particular time and place.

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[9] Tim Challies, "Why I Am A Six-Day Creationist", *Informing The Reforming,* 11 October 2013, http://www.challies.com/articles/why-i-am-a-six-day-creationist.

[10] Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom,* vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1983), 604. (For use with other editions, this is a reference to the Westminster Confession of Faith 1647, 1.7).

[11] Wayne Grudem, "The Perspicuity of Scripture", *Themelios* (November 2009), retrieved from http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-perspicuity-of-scripture.

Mark Thompson argues, "the fragile creatureliness of human language… does not so much conceal the truth about God *as reveal it in a powerful way*".[12] What this means is that to approach the biblical text as a divine word, without also recognising it is a human word, written in a time, place and language, is actually to fail to approach it as God's accommodated word to us, and to fail to truly benefit from hearing rightly what God has to say to us. To refuse to "consider any outside influences whatsoever" sounds noble but may well actually result in a mishandling of God's word.

Sometimes the language of accommodation has been used to deny the doctrine of inerrancy, but rightly understood it simply asserts that,

> Scripture is written by humans in human language accommodated to us and to our capacity and needs, as well to the various time periods and cultures in which it was written, without in any way compromising its faithfulness to divine truth.[13]

Actually, accommodation is an essential consideration if inerrancy is going to be upheld rightly. A right consideration of the human author's intended assertion is fundamental if one is then going to uphold that the said assertion is inerrant. As Timothy Ward notes, "all inerrantists… agree that whatever one decides that Scripture intends to assert, that content must be regarded as free from error".[14]

The key question is not, "What would we come up with without any outside influences at all?" but rather, "What is Scripture intending to assert at this point? What is the author's intention in writing?" It is not enough to state, "day means day and, if you will, QED". We must translate the culture as well as the text. We must also consider why the author is choosing to speak in this way at this point, and establish as well as we possibly can what he is seeking to tell us. Often this is a straightforward task, but it really is not in Genesis 1.

My intention in this paper is not to seek to give some kind of definitive answer to that question. But I do want us to see that because in Genesis 1 the question is such a complex one, without any easy answers, it demands a non-dogmatism, that leaves us asserting the plain things as the main things, whilst remaining students of the rest.

Nearly everyone agrees that "day means day" in Genesis 1. As Alasdair Payne notes,

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[12] Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Apollos, 2006), 68. (My italics).

[13] Glenn S. Sunshine, "Accommodation Historically Considered", in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures,* ed. D. A. Carson (London, Apollos, 2016), 264.

[14] Timothy Ward, *Words of Life* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 134.

It cannot be avoided that, although the Hebrew word *yom* (day) can cover a whole period of time, as in Genesis 2:4, the word in chapter one has its usual meaning, emphasised by the formula "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night" (1:5).[15]

As a result, for many some kind of "concordist" approach to Genesis 1 is essential. This preserves the notion that God created the world in six successive days. Some suggest there may be a gap between the days, but the days are still intended to be read as real days that happened one after the other. For a young-earth creationist, they are literal solar days of twenty-four hours. Others will suggest that the successive nature of the days is the key idea communicated, and the length of each day may not be as obvious. Days may relate to ages, especially given the fact that the seventh day does not carry the "evening and morning" formula, and has no suggested ending in the text.

For others, just because "day means day" does not mean a "concordist" approach is necessary. Instead, there are many clues within the text of Scripture that suggest a "non-concordist" or "non-sequential" reading may be required. For example, many will note the way the days are carefully structured to indicate three days of forming and three days of filling.[16] The fact that light and darkness are created on day one, and yet the sun, moon and stars are not created until day four suggests that, whatever "day" means, it cannot be quite like our days, and perhaps the author is using this "framework" approach to tell us something about what it means for us as a humanity made in God's image to undertake the creational mandate. Within this non-concordist approach, others will suggest that the days are analogical, with six days of work and one of rest, instructing us to do likewise.[17] This appears to fit well with Exodus 20. Others will note the way the wording of Genesis 1 relates to the stories of the establishment of the temple in other ancient literature. This "cosmic temple" reading suggests Genesis 1 is much more concerned with the *function* of creation, than its *form.*[18] Others still will note the way that Genesis 1 seems to both echo and counter other Ancient Near Eastern creation stories.[19] For example, one amusing feature of Genesis 1 is the way the creation of the stars, so

[15] Alasdair Payne, *The First Chapters of Everything* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2014), 85. See also, e.g., Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1987), 19.

[16] For example, Denis O. Lamoureux, *Evolutionary Creation* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co Ltd., 2009). Also see Henri Blocher, *In The Beginning* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984).

[17] For example, Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-centred Approach* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2006).

[18] For example, John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Illionis: IVP Academic, 2009).

[19] For example, Payne, *The First Chapters of Everything*.

important in pagan religion, is mentioned as almost a throwaway comment in verse 16.[20]

The question of who is reading the text most "literally" is obsolete, because in each case a theory is being developed, by examining the text carefully in its context, and seeking to discern what the author "literally" intended to communicate. However, through it all, I agree with Young and Stearley that,

> Genesis 1 is saturated with features that render is highly unlikely that the author was concerned with interacting with the scientific questions of our day or that he was even concerned about the specific question of the age of the earth."[21]

So, what is the author concerned about? He is clearly concerned to portray a single creator God, creating in his infinite wisdom; that we might see God's personal, and yet sovereign, ownership of his creation, and the terms of our relationship with him as his creatures. The author is communicating our dependence on God, and yet our distinction from him; the goodness and orderliness of all that he has made, in its original design. We are to view ourselves as an engendered humanity, created in God's image to be fruitful and multiply, to rule over, subdue and care for our world, under God, but over the rest of creation. And we are to know our preciousness, or respectability and value, and our accountability to the one who made us.[22]

But is the author clearly intending to teach us that he did it in seven solar days? Without even considering the claims of modern geology, one has to say, on the basis of the text itself that this is not the author's primary objective. Non-dogmatism concerning the age of the earth is not a requirement demanded by science, but a requirement demanded by Genesis 1.

II. Genesis 1 and Church History

Having considered the question of authorial intent, we turn now to survey the way Genesis 1 has been handled throughout church history. I want us to consider in particular how the emergence of modern geology influenced the way Genesis 1 was interpreted.

In investigating the extent to which the church through history has taken something of an "agnostic" approach to the six days of creation I have been hugely helped by an article by Robert Letham, in which he summarises the approach of a number of the church fathers.

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[20] In this section I have been helped by the summaries in Rau, *Mapping the Origins Debate*, 206-208.

[21] Young and Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time,* 210.

[22] This summary is written with much help from Payne, *The First Chapters of Everything.*

Origen (c. 185-254) firmly rejected a literalistic view of the days of Genesis 1, in part citing the order of the days as a reason why it could not be the case.[23] Basil the Great (330-379), and Ambrose (339-397) appear to take the days as solar days.[24] Augustine (354-430) notes that "day and night" must be interpreted differently to our day and night because of the ordering of the days, and that we should be careful not to rush forward with an ill-considered opinion.[25] He suggests that God created all things simultaneously, and that it is laid out as six days for our benefit. Letham reflects, "in other words, *God accommodated himself* to the capacity of weaker intellects and presented creation as if it were a process".[26] Letham goes on to summarise the interpretations of Bede (673-735), Anselm (1033-1109), Robert Grossteste (c. 1168-1253), Aquinas (1225-1274), Martin Luther (1483-1546), Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), John Calvin (1509-1564), Pietro Martire Vermigli (1500-1562), Richard Greenham (d. 1591), William Perkins (1558-1602), James Ussher (1581-1656), and William Ames (1576-1633), alongside the various confessions of the Reformation.

His conclusion is that interpretations of Genesis 1 are many and varied, with no suggestion that a reading of the timescale as solar days is the *obvious* interpretation.[27] To return to Ham's world-class Hebrew scholar, if we walk back through history, when the outside influences are different to our own, what do we come up with? We find many contrasting interpretations – often offered tentatively. Kirsten Birkett, in a recent publication, makes a very similar point:

> Long before modern geology, the issue of the time spans and genealogies in Genesis, and indeed the question of how to read different kinds of biblical literature, were thoroughly discussed."[28]

In fact, it is precisely a plea for non-dogmatism that comes across at times. Calvin begins his commentary on Genesis with this statement:

> Since the infinite wisdom of God is displayed in the admirable structure of heaven and earth, it is absolutely impossible to unfold the history of the creation of the world in terms equal to its dignity. For while the measure of our capacity is too contracted to comprehend things of such magnitude, our tongue is equally incapable of giving a full and substantial account of them.[29]

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[23] Robert Letham, "In the Space of Six Days": The Days of Creation From Origen to the Westminster Assembly", *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999): 151.

[24] Ibid., 153.

[25] Ibid., 156.

[26] Ibid., 157 (My italics). It is helpful to see Letham employing the doctrine of accommodation in this way.

[27] Ibid., 174.

[28] Kirsten Birkett, "Science and Scripture", in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures,* ed. D. A. Carson (London: Apollos, 2016), 958.

[29] John Calvin, *Commentaries on The First Book of Moses Called Genesis,* trans. Rev. John King (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2009), 57.

This is not to say that they did not believe that the earth was young. Calvin himself assumed that the world had not yet seen its six thousandth year.[30] But what is striking is that, though it would have been commonplace to believe the earth was young, there is not a requirement to interpret Genesis 1 accordingly, or a universal insistence that one interpret the six days as solar days. The point is simply this: regardless of the prevailing geo-chronology of the day, there is a widespread conviction that the author of Genesis 1 is not intending to tell us the age of the earth.

But there is a second historical point to observe here: A growing conviction that the earth was older than first thought emerged, not with the advent of Darwinian evolution, but before that, with the advent of modern geology. The significance of this will be stated in a moment.

It was really William Smith (1769-1839) who put in place the key foundations of geological science as we know them today. His geological mapping of the British Isles (published in 1815), and his increased awareness of the possibility of predicting rock types and fossils, began to support an understanding that the Earth's surface material was ordered in stratigraphic layers populated by different collections of fossils. Smith himself was uninterested in harmonising the geological record with Genesis, but,

> many students of the Earth began to realise that the strata could not have been produced in a one-year Deluge but had to form over a long period of time by deposition in a succession of ancient seas, rivers and floods.[31]

Around the same time, James Hutton (1726-1797) was the first obvious example of someone applying the principles of uniformitarianism to the geological record. This is slightly anachronistic, as the term was not coined until 1857. However, uniformitarianism is the simple conviction that "the present is the key to the past". It makes the assumption that the laws of physics we observe in action today were at work in the past, creating the stratigraphic record we find. For example, where

> rock strata are composed of mineral particles of exactly the same characteristics and constitution as are those found on beaches, sea floors or river beds [then] it must be, he said, that rock strata were formed on ancient sea beds from layers of loose unconsolidated gravel and sand that were eventually fused into rock and elevated by the internal heat of the Earth.[32]

He published his *Theory of the Earth* in 1795 including a suggestion that, because of the natural processes that are required for the observed stratigraphy, nature has no obvious beginning.

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[30] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 160. See Young and Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time*, 45.

[31] Young and Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time,* 79.

[32] Ibid., 84.

Hutton was accused of holding to the eternity of the Earth, but essentially he was acknowledging that Earth processes seemed to reach far back in time and that he was unable to see in the rocks a point at which these processes had not been operative.[33]

Charles Lyell (1797-1875) published his *Principles of Geology* between 1830 and 1833, with a uniformitarian approach that necessarily required great stretches of time to account for the observations found in the stratigraphic record. Increasingly, across the emerging geological science there was a growing conviction against "diluvial catastrophism" that struggled to explain the many and varied rock formations, and for a "long, slow-paced history better explained in terms of observable processes like glaciation, erosion and deposition."[34]

These observations then provided a basis for biostratigraphy and faunal succession in which it is noted that each stratigraphic band has a distinctive set of related fossils, in successive bands throughout the geological record.[35] Key to our discussion is the point that, throughout the 1800s "hundreds of competent field geologists established the validity and practical utility of the law of faunal succession *prior* to the publication of Darwin's and Wallace's theory of organic evolution".[36] The resulting emergent geochronology was already dealing with estimates of the age of the earth of an entirely different order than would fit with a solar-day reading of Genesis 1.

It is true that examples of "Scriptural geologists" exist at this time, espousing a literal six-day creation that specifically engages with the geological record. But the reality is that at the same time, a growing number of evangelical Christian writers

began to develop a variety of strategies purporting to show how the biblical data are consistent with the findings of geology. Having been encouraged to look afresh at the biblical creation accounts, experts in the original languages became persuaded that there is no conflict between the data of nature and the teaching of Scripture.[37]

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), during a chemistry lecture in St Andrews in 1804, stated,

there is a prejudice against the speculations of the geologist which I am anxious to remove. It has been said that they nurture infidel propensities. By referring the origin of the globe to a higher antiquity than is assigned to it by the writings of Moses, it has been said that geology undermines our faith in the inspiration of the Bible, and in all the animating prospects of immortality which it unfolds. This is a false alarm. *The writings of Moses do not fix the antiquity of the globe. It they fix anything at all, it is only the antiquity of the species.*[38]

[33] Ibid., 89.
[34] Ibid., 99.
[35] Ibid., 101.
[36] Ibid., 108.
[37] Ibid., 120.
[38] Quoted in Ibid., 122. (Italics original).

Chalmers later goes on to offer suggestions of precisely how Genesis may accommodate an old-earth reading.

Because of the history of "non-dogmatism" that existed within the tradition of Genesis interpretation, for many it was a non-issue to reconcile the assertions of modern geology with the biblical data. By the time Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 there was already a growing consensus amongst the scientific community that the earth was considerably older than previously thought, and a growing consensus that this was entirely uncontroversial for the church. To quote Birkett's conclusion,

> Long before modern geology or Darwin, church scholars were quite aware of claims to a long history of the earth and to various degrees were prepared to accept it. This puts into context Colin Gunton's assertion that "belief in the doctrine of creation has never officially required belief in the literal truth of the book of Genesis".[39]

However, it is as Darwinian evolution begins to make it intellectually acceptable to be an atheist that a young-earth creationist reaction also emerges. It is only as Darwinian evolution is employed to deliberately undermine the plain truth of Scripture that the debate becomes polemical, and the requirement for a more dogmatic adherence to a literal six days is asserted.

A key milestone is when the founder of the Seventh Day Adventists, Ellen Gould White (1827-1915), in 1864, "claimed to have visions from God about the creation of the world in six literal days as well as of a global Deluge that buried all life and produced the fossils".[40] Another milestone came after the First World War: William Jennings Bryan, a politician, traced the source of the evil of the war to Darwinism, and launched a national crusade against evolution.[41]

> At the start of the movement, the rise of creationism was spurred by the *atheistic* contention that the Bible and evolution could not both be true. Those who accepted this, repelled by evolutionist arrogance, took up creationism.[42]

More recently it has received its strongest impetus with the publication of *The Genesis Flood* in 1961, by John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, and then with organisations like Answers in Genesis being formed in the 1970s.

One of the driving forces for this movement is a desire to uphold biblical truth against all of the implications of Darwinian evolution. Ham explains, "standing near an 'ape-man' exhibit, [he] overheard a father telling his young son, 'This was your ancestor.' Ken said that "My heart ached… As a result, my

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[39] Birkett, "Science and Scripture" (Carson), 961.

[40] Young and Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time,* 119.

[41] See Birkett, "Science and Scripture" (Carson), 965.

[42] Ibid., 966.

cry to the Lord was: 'Why can't we have a creation museum that teaches the truth?'"[43] However, as Young and Stearley note,

> *Evolutionary materialism and the antiquity of the Earth are two distinct issues.* If the vast antiquity of the Earth is amply demonstrated, one must still evaluate the data and theory of evolution on their own *scientific* merits."[44]

The argument is made that, as a reaction to the advent of Darwinian evolution, people began to no longer approach the days of Genesis 1 as solar days. Actually, the testimony of church history is that the approach is mixed from the beginning. But after the rise of evolution, as a reaction, we began to see the rise of creationism, and a dogmatic requirement of adherence to a literal six days. One has to ask: Which approach, then, is driven more by the argument of the day, and which is driven by Scripture?

Conclusion

This paper has sought to establish two simple points. The first is that because authorial intent in relation to the days of creation is unclear, the text itself requires a non-dogmatic approach to geochronology. The second is that historically, non-dogmatism has been the dominant position of biblical scholars, and that this changed not with the old earth claims of modern geology, but with the later atheistic force of Darwinian evolution. The dogmatic claims of young-earth creationism, so forcefully expressed by Ken Ham, are a relatively recent phenomenon, driven not by the unequivocal clarity of Scripture on this matter, but by a desire to argue against the contemporary claims of scientific naturalism.

However, this is something of a Maginot Line in apologetics. In the 1930s France built a strong line of concrete fortifications in preparation for defence against German invasion, only to discover that they had built it in the wrong place and all the Germans had to do was go through Belgium. A ministry that seeks to *prove* categorically that there is a biblical requirement to read the creation days as solar days is building a Maginot Line, a useless defence, in the wrong place, against the real battle that is going on.

This is not to say that there should therefore be a dogmatic assertion of an old earth on the basis of the Genesis 1, simply in order to reconcile it with current scientific theory. Modern science rightly advances by rejecting what has gone before as new data continually comes to light. Kirsten Birkett helpfully comments,

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[43] Ken Ham, "History", *Answers In Genesis*, https://answersingenesis.org/about/history/.
[44] Young and Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time,* 162.

> Christianity, if it really is based on infallible revelation from God, does not need to attach itself to [modern empirical science] and does so at its own peril… In time the scientific theory will change.[45]

A ministry that seeks to prove as irrefutable something the Bible is not asserting one way or the other is picking a fight in entirely the wrong place. If we do battle here, the real battle is ignored completely. When one considers what the author of Genesis 1 *is* unequivocally asserting, there is a huge battle to engage in against the prevailing reductionistic naturalism so prominent in our culture. As has often been said, "In the beginning God…" is by far the most controversial statement in the Bible. My hope is that a geo-chronological non-dogmatism will provide the necessary space for this wonderful, life-changing truth to be heard rightly.

[45] Birkett, "Science and Scripture" (Carson), 956.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WORD OF GOD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Stephen Clark[*]

Taking published material by Ralph Cunnington and Professor Robert Letham as a point of departure, this article considers the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God and focuses upon certain particular aspects of this relationship. A historical survey analyses the teaching of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones with respect to the relationship of Word and Spirit in the areas of preaching and regeneration, before considering the concept of "immediate regeneration" in the context of the Pajonist controversy and in the teaching of Herman Bavinck. This historical survey of the doctrine of an immediate work of the Holy Spirit concludes with brief references to the teachings of the following: Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, Abraham Kuyper, Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, and John Murray. Certain theological "axioms" concerning the ontological nature and status of the Holy Spirit and of Scripture undergird an analysis of the relationship of Word and Spirit, and this leads to the conclusion that while the Word and Spirit are distinct but related, in certain respects the Spirit is greater than, and separate from, the Word.

Introduction

Two published pieces have been the catalyst for this article, and they will provide a convenient peg upon which to hang a consideration of certain aspects of the relationship of the person and work of the Holy Spirit to God's Word, especially as that Word is preached and heard.[1]

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[1] Ralph Cunnington, *Preaching With Spiritual Power: Calvin's Understanding of Word and Spirit in Preaching* (Fearn: Mentor, 2015).

Robert Letham, "The Necessity of Preaching in the Modern World, part 3," n.p. [accessed 1 September 2015]. Online: http://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=394&issue_id=90. This published material was adapted from a lecture given by Professor Letham at the International Conference of Reformed Churches held at Cardiff in August 2013. Ministers present at this conference were drawn from all over the world, some of whom – such as those from southern Sudan – were facing severe persecution, while others were experiencing attacks upon the idea and practice of preaching. All were committed to the three forms of unity or to the Westminster Standards as their subordinate authority. The conference committee invited Professor Letham to speak on the subject of the necessity of preaching in the modern world, and he was mindful of the contexts from which some conference delegates had come. The material was not prepared,

Theological discussion and controversy have sometimes taken place in what Francis L. Patton once described as "a condition of low visibility"[2]. This being so, it is necessary to specify at the outset the precise issues which I shall seek to address. Does the Holy Spirit work in the hearts of the hearers of God's Word *always in the same way and to the same degree*? In the actual transition of a sinner from a state and condition of nature into a state and condition of grace, does the Holy Spirit *at any point* work *directly and immediately* on and within the soul or is his work accomplished always by, and through the Word of God? The same question may be expressed slightly differently as follows: does the Holy Spirit work only in, by, and through the Word, or, in the area of giving new life, does he also work *with* the Word and accompany it? If we answer this affirmatively, it inevitably prompts us to consider the following question: does this mean, therefore, that sometimes the Spirit works with the Word in a manner in which, on other occasions, he does not so work?

Background

The questions which I shall seek to answer arise from the two publications which I have referenced in the opening paragraph. Chronologically, the first to be published was an article by Professor Robert Letham of Union (formerly WEST), which sets out the position that although Word and Spirit must be distinguished, they must never be separated. In arguing that the Reformed confessions uniformly witnessed to the inseparability of Word and Spirit in all the means of grace, preaching included, Professor Letham takes

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therefore, with a view to being published as an article. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America – the denomination to which Professor Letham had belonged when living in the USA – decided to put it in their online resource for ordained officers. Those who read Professor Letham's "article" need to bear in mind the context in which the material was first delivered. Professor Letham made me aware of this contextual background after having read an earlier draft of this article. I am grateful to him for supplying this information to me in a personal communication.

I have chosen my words carefully: in saying that the two articles have provided the peg upon which to hang a discussion, it should be clear that what follows is *not* a review article of either or of both of them; rather, I explore aspects of the relationship of the Word and Spirit in regeneration and in preaching, as well as giving consideration to the concept of immediate regeneration. These are all issues dealt with or touched upon in the two published pieces which provide the "peg" for the present article. The length and range of my present piece was determined, in measure, by the range of material which was considered in the two published pieces. This having been said, it should be noted that I interact with only a relatively small part of Cunnington's book and with only part 3 of Letham's article.

[2] Quoted in J. I. Packer, "*Fundamentalism" And The Word Of God. Some Evangelical Principles.* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1958), 9.

issue with some of the emphases of the late Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, claiming that he separated Word and Spirit, placed too much emphasis upon historical anecdote when dealing with the work of the Spirit in preaching, and – albeit unwittingly and unintentionally – undermined the regular use of the means of grace. Letham also expressed a measure of unease with the critique of the concept of "mediate regeneration" made by Stuart Olyott,[3] and with the observation made by Professor Hywel Jones that "the Holy Spirit is 'greater' than the Word and must not be imprisoned in it".[4]

The second publication is a book by Ralph Cunnington, the editor of this journal, which examines Calvin's teaching on the relationship of Word and Spirit. Cunnington's conclusions are that in Calvin's teaching Word and Spirit are indeed distinguished but are not separate. The author is critical, to a greater or lesser degree, of published material by Philip Eveson,[5] by Robert Strivens,[6] by Hywel Jones,[7] and by Stuart Olyott[8] on the relationship of Word and Spirit. He is especially critical of the exegesis offered by Olyott of James 1:18 and of 1 Peter 1:23 in support of "immediate regeneration", and further claims that Olyott's criticism of mediate regeneration is, in fact, something of a red herring. Cunnington clearly identifies Lloyd-Jones with other contemporary writers who believe that the Spirit sometimes accompanies the preached Word and sometimes does not. "The conclusion he [this is, Lloyd-Jones] draws is that the Spirit sometimes accompanies the preached Word by filling the preacher and sometimes he does not".[9] While, therefore, Cunnington's book addresses a fairly narrow issue of historical theology, namely Calvin's understanding of Word and Spirit in preaching, it is clear that he makes some fairly broad criticisms of the understanding of the relationship of Word and Spirit adopted by some contemporary writers who, it would be fair to say, are saying something similar to, if not entirely identical with, the teaching of Lloyd-Jones. Interestingly, in his foreword to Cunnington's book, Professor Letham writes the following:

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[3] For the article by Olyott to which Letham refers, see Stuart Olyott, "Where Luther Got It Wrong – And Why We Need To Know About It", *The Banner of Truth*, no. 555 (December 2009), 25.

[4] For the article by Jones to which Letham refers, see Hywel R. Jones, "Preaching the Word in the Power of the Holy Spirit", *Foundations*, no. 60 (2011), 71 – 90.

[5] For the material by Eveson which Cunnington critiques, see Philip H. Eveson, "'Moore Theology': A Friendly Critique", *Foundations*, no. 56 (Autumn 2006), 18.

[6] For the material by Strivens which Cunnington critiques, see Robert Strivens, "Preaching – 'Ex Opere Operato'?", in *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, (n.d.: Papers read at the 2007 Westminster Conference. Obtainable from The Conference Secretary, John Harris, 8 Back Knowl Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, WF14 9SA.)

[7] For the material by Jones which Cunnington critiques, see Jones, "Preaching the Word".

[8] For the material by Olyott which Cunnington critiques, see Olyott, "Where Luther Got It Wrong".

[9] Cunnington, *Preaching With Spiritual Power*, 2.

It is well known that Calvin held that the Word and the Holy Spirit are inseparably related. This conviction has subsequently been a hallmark of the Reformed churches. The Westminster Assembly (1643-47), in its Confession of Faith, spelled this out in connection with revelation, calling, the ministry, sanctification, good works and so on.[10]

Purpose, and method of treatment

That something of a "controversy" exists with respect to this matter is clear from the title of chapter 1 of Cunnington's book: "The Current Controversy". Sinclair Ferguson, however, in a commendatory "blurb" on the book's back cover, refers to "an important issue that has been simmering just under the surface of British Evangelicalism for a number of years" and goes on to express the hope that the book "will not lead to a full-blown controversy, but to a closer examination of the Scriptures". "Controversy", issue… simmering just under the surface", "not lead to full-blown controversy": these words indicate, therefore, that a measure of disagreement exists.

The purpose of the current article is not to take sides in this debate but, rather, to seek to get behind it and to clarify some of the points at issue. In doing so, I hope that it will be seen that although there are areas of disagreement, these should not be exaggerated. Indeed, I shall seek to demonstrate that a measure of misunderstanding of positions has existed and that this may, at points, have led to certain positions having been misrepresented. While I hope, at a future stage, to publish material of an exegetical nature, in which the biblical teaching will be considered and controverted texts and passages be explored in some depth and detail, the present article is more modest in scope and purpose. The first part is historical in nature and consists of the following: a brief examination of some published material by Lloyd-Jones, which should demonstrate that his teaching on the relationship of Word and Spirit in preaching sits clearly within a "Reformed" understanding; and a consideration of the term and concept of "immediate regeneration" in the Pajonist controversy, and in the writing of Herman Bavinck, as well as in the writings of a range of other Reformed theologians of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The purpose of examining the historical treatment of the concept of immediate regeneration will be to demonstrate that, far from being a "red herring", it is extremely relevant to the whole question of the relationship of Word and Spirit, and was recognised as such by leading Reformed theologians. The second part of this article will seek to clarify the definition of certain terms in order to elucidate the precise points which are at issue. It might be thought that definition of terms should come at the beginning of Part 1 rather than in Part 2. The reason for deferring the defining of terms is that Part 1 is exclusively historical in nature, whereas the

[10] Letham, "The Necessity of Preaching".

defining of terms in Part 2 prepares the way for the exclusively theological discussion in Part 3. Finally, in Part 3, I shall seek to explore certain theological realities before, in the final section, setting out certain conclusions of this study.

I. Historical

1. Lloyd-Jones's views on Word and Spirit

Both Letham and Cunnington appear to say that Lloyd-Jones held a particular belief concerning the relationship of Word and Spirit, a belief which, apparently, is at variance with what Cunnington considers to have been Calvin's view and what Letham considers to have been both Calvin's position and that which is represented in the Reformed confessions. In a review article of Cunnington's book in an earlier issue of this journal, Tim Ward appeared to say that there was a "Lloyd-Jones view" of the matter.[11] Both Cunnington and Letham refer to material in the final chapter of Lloyd-Jones's *Preaching and Preachers*.[12] The material in this chapter needs to be carefully considered and placed within the context of the whole book and the wider context of Lloyd-Jones's teaching.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a preacher *par excellence*; like any good preacher he took account of the congregation to which he was speaking and applied the truth to the people before him, rather than to an imaginary congregation in a different context.[13] Moreover, remarks made by him in the final lecture of a series clearly need to be read in conjunction with what was said in earlier lectures in the same series. By failing to do so, Letham inevitably misrepresents Lloyd-Jones's views, and, to a lesser extent, so does Cunnington. *Preaching and Preachers* consists of a series of lectures which Lloyd-Jones delivered at Westminster Theological Seminary in the spring of 1969.[14] The final chapter is the typescript of the last lecture. It was entitled "Demonstration of the Spirit and of the Power".[15] The preacher indicated that he had left this subject until last because, "I believe that if we do, or attempt to do, all I have been saying first, then the unction will come upon it" – "it"

[11] Tim Ward, "Book Review: 'Preaching with Spiritual Power: Calvin's Understanding of Word and Spirit in Preaching'" n.p. [accessed 4 April, 2016]. Online: http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-69-article-4---book-review.

[12] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching And Preachers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971).

[13] The same, of course, applies to Professor Letham's piece: see note 1, supra, for details of the context in which Professor Letham originally made his remarks.

[14] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 5. The lectures, together with a question and answer session at the end, are also available as a CD in mp3 format, under the same title as the book. Published by The Martyn Lloyd-Jones Recordings Trust.

[15] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 304-325.

here referring to the message preached.[16] This, of course, raises the question as to what he had been saying in earlier lectures. A few examples will demonstrate – hopefully conclusively – that he did not separate the Word and Spirit.

In dealing with "the form of the sermon", he had this to say:

> So you must be expository;… my whole argument is that it should be clear to people that what we are saying is something that comes out of the Bible. We are presenting the Bible and its message. That is why I am one of those who like to have a pulpit Bible… So you start with exposition…[17] …you must always be expository. Always expository.[18] We must be honest with our texts; and we must take them always in their context. That is an absolute rule.[19]

Lloyd-Jones clearly believed that getting at the meaning of the text in the original languages was important in promoting accuracy,[20] and many of his sermons demonstrate that he had sought to understand the original, as well as seeking to work from the best manuscript evidence available.[21] The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture "as originally given" was no mere theory to him! One has only to consider the following to realise how specious is the charge that his approach to preaching bears affinities with the separation of Word and Spirit which characterised some of the sixteenth century Anabaptists and some of the "pneumatic" groups of the eighteenth century: here was a preacher who really led the way in recovering expository preaching in England in the twentieth century; a preacher who spent thirteen years expounding Romans and eight years expounding Ephesians; a preacher who wrote an introduction to the Tyndale Press's collection of essays by B. B. Warfield, two of which concerned the doctrine of

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[16] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 304. I think that the use of the term "unction", though widely used in some circles, is unfortunate. "Unction" and / or "anointing" is a term applied in the New Testament to *all* Christians in connection with their knowledge of the truth: see 1 Jn 2:20-21, 27. It is also used, with a somewhat different referent, in 2 Cor 1:21-22, but in this passage it is no more dealing with preaching than it is in 1 John. It is true that it is used in Luke 4:18 by our Lord, in quoting from the prophet Isaiah, with reference to his being commissioned for his public ministry, and it is evident that Lloyd-Jones's use of this term to refer to the preacher knowing a special endowment of power from the Holy Spirit derives from this passage: ibid., 306-307. In the book of Acts, however, the term that is used is "filled with the Holy Spirit": 2:4; 4:8, 31; 13:9. It would be helpful and would assist clarification if those who agree, in principle, with Lloyd-Jones's understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in this area would employ these New Testament terms rather than the terms "anointing" and "unction".

[17] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 75.

[18] Ibid., 196.

[19] Ibid., 201.

[20] Ibid., 116.

[21] There are many examples of his concern to get at the meaning of the original language in his Romans and Ephesians series, while both his Romans series and his sermons on the Sermon on the Mount demonstrate that he did not believe in the inviolability of the so-called Received Text.

Scripture;[22] and, at a time when a theological understanding of the Christian faith in England was far more anaemic than it is today, could say:

> It is not right, therefore, to speak of the Spirit *or* the Word, but rather of the Spirit *and* the Word, and especially the Spirit *through* the Word. This antithesis which tends to be perpetuated in some quarters even today, is one which we must refuse to entertain.[23]

Could anything be clearer? Indeed, the volume from which the last quotation is taken devotes a chapter to the authority of the Scriptures before dealing with the authority of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, prior to the words quoted the preacher is at pains to stress that since the Spirit inspired the Scriptures, we honour the Spirit by honouring the Word.[24]

Lloyd-Jones's commitment to a "Reformed" understanding of the relationship of the Word to the Spirit in preaching is very clear from his sermons on Romans 10:17. The clarity and importance of his words – as well as his quoting of Calvin and a Reformed confession of faith – are such that I shall let him speak for himself:

> Let us look at the comment by John Calvin, of all men. He says, "But if any man shall hereby contend to prove that God could not otherwise by the means of preaching, [sic] infuse or pour His knowledge into men, we deny that to be the meaning of the Apostle, who had respect only to the ordinary dispensation of God, and would not prescribe any law or limitation to His grace." What that means is this: all the Apostle is saying here is that normally God does save through the preaching of the Word, but he does not go on to say that is the only way. He does not say that God cannot, if He chooses, do it in some mysterious manner, which Calvin calls here, "by infusing or pouring His knowledge into men".
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> Then let me give you another quotation from the Second Helvetic Confession of Faith… Having said that the normal way is by preaching, they go on, "We at the same time admit that God can, even without an outward ministry, illuminate men whom and when He pleases, it lies in His power. But we are speaking of the means and manner which He ordinarily uses in teaching men, and of the commandment and example which is given us by God." And that is what I profoundly believe, and have indeed always believed and taught.[25]

This passage occurs in part of a message where Lloyd-Jones is considering the case of infants, "lunatics" and "the heathen". We shall see later that what he says here is in line with the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith and with that of the leading Dutch Reformed theologian, Herman Bavinck.

Later in his treatment of Romans 10, he says this:

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[22] B. B. Warfield, *Biblical Foundations* (London: Tyndale, 1958).

[23] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Authority* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1958), 63-64. Emphasis his.

[24] Ibid., 63.

[25] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 10. Saving Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1997), 262. The second quotation is taken from chapter 1 of The Second Helvetic Confession of Faith. There may be slightly different English wording, depending upon the translation.

> Now what we draw from that is that faith is always related to that message. It is that message applied by the Spirit to the mind and the heart that produces faith. There are two elements in the production of faith. There is the operation of the Spirit, and there is the "word of Christ", the message of salvation. You will never have faith without these two factors… So we have the Apostle James telling us what we are as the result of the operation of the Word. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas 1:8). Yes, but it is the Word applied by the Spirit. The seed is in the Word, and then the Spirit plants it and applies it. He opens our heart and the result is new birth.[26]

It would be difficult to find a clearer exposition of the truth that the Word and the Spirit, though distinct, work together. This is hardly the position of the radicals of the sixteenth century.

How is it, then, that as erudite a theologian as Professor Letham can so misrepresent Lloyd-Jones's position? The answer is surely that he is selective in the material that he cites and quotes. This, of course, is a danger when dealing with the work of any prolific writer. Indeed, it is a danger when dealing with the Scriptures themselves. What heresies have arisen as a result of such a practice! Moreover, context is all-important. The lectures which were published as *Preaching and Preachers* were given to theological students, and it is clear from numerous remarks in this volume that Lloyd-Jones was concerned about an academic and detached approach to the Scriptures and preaching, an approach which did not take seriously the need for conscious dependence upon God the Holy Spirit, a danger to which theological students might be especially prone. The fact that in practice some might study the Word as they would study any other text; and that in preparing to preach on a passage, they might approach it with the kind of confidence with which a well-prepared lecturer might hold forth on some academic subject; these facts could lead to a tendency in people's minds to separate Word and Spirit, and it was against this which Lloyd-Jones wished to guard people. It was precisely because some were in danger of seeking to separate the Spirit from the Word, that Lloyd-Jones put such emphasis in his final lecture upon the Holy Spirit. The words which I have quoted, and which are referenced in notes 22-25, demonstrate that Lloyd-Jones did not believe that the Word and the Spirit could be separated; his remarks in the final chapter of *Preaching and Preachers* reveal something of his concern that the men before him might be in danger of preaching as if they were separate. Indeed, in other contexts, where people separated the Spirit from the Word and put their emphasis on the Spirit, he again asserted that this could not be done, and that Word and Spirit belong together.[27]

Cunnington, drawing on the work of Skinner, rightly warns of the danger of "the priority of paradigms",[28] of "the acute danger of reading the heroes of

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[26] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 10*, 331.

[27] See Lloyd-Jones, *Authority*, 62-64

[28] Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power*, 3.

the faith through the lens of our own theological and cultural convictions. We anachronistically treat them as if they were addressing and contributing to debates which post-date them by many centuries and which they show little if any awareness of".[29] There is a sense in which Letham has made this kind of mistake: by no stretch of the imagination can Lloyd-Jones's warnings against an approach to the Word which belittled reliance upon the Holy Spirit be likened to the radical Anabaptists and other groups whose emphasis upon the Spirit was at the expense of, or in place of, an emphasis upon the Word. What Lloyd-Jones was concerned with was precisely the same thing to which Tony Lane drew attention in a lecture on Calvin's doctrine of the witness of the Holy Spirit. Lane is no mean teacher of historical theology, and the theology of the Reformation is one of his areas of expertise. Having warned of the dangers of those who expect the Spirit to work without reference to God's Word, he went on to say the following:[30]

> There are others who need to learn the opposite lesson: those who are deadly sound and soundly dead, those who pride themselves on the orthodoxy of their teaching but show no evidence of the power of the Spirit. Preaching without the Holy Spirit is a "dead letter and an empty sound".[31] "Ministers do not accomplish anything by speaking, unless the inward calling of God is added at the same time".[32] The word preached to the ungodly without the Spirit is like the sun shining upon the blind, who see nothing.[33] "Without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect".[34] Calvin's position is well summarised by a more recent epigram: "the Spirit without the word: dangerous; the word without the Spirit: deadly; the word with the Spirit: dynamite". Or again, more succinctly, "too much word – dry up; too much Spirit – blow up; word and Spirit – grow up".[35]

The point to emphasise here is that although Lane clearly regards the Word and the Spirit as belonging together and Calvin to be saying as much, it is just as apparent that Lane believes that there are people who seek to separate these and who wish to have only the Word or only the Spirit and that there are some who, in practice, appear to have the Word without the Spirit. Since, as with Calvin, Lloyd-Jones believed that Word and Spirit belong together, he was concerned in the final lecture which is published in *Preaching and Preachers* to warn against this. And, as the quotation from Lane

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[29] Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power*, 4, quoting Skinner.

[30] Lane gives a number of quotations from Calvin's writings but does not specify which translations or editions he is quoting from. I have simply reproduced Lane's references in the notes that follow.

[31] Calvin's *Commentary* on John 16:8. Lane also references a comparison with his commentary on John 14:26 and on 1 Cor 4:20.

[32] Calvin's *Commentary* on Acts 16:14.

[33] John Calvin, *Institutes,* 3.2.34.

[34] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.33. Lane also references a comparison with Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.9.3 and Calvin's *Commentary* on 1 Cor 2:10.

[35] Anthony N. S. Lane, "John Calvin: The Witness of the Holy Spirit", 6, in *Faith and Ferment* (The Westminster Conference, being papers read at the 1982 Conference, n.d.).

demonstrates, Lane was as aware as Lloyd-Jones of an emphasis upon the Word without the Spirit.

Similarly, Letham's criticism that Lloyd-Jones was making too much of incidents and anecdotes drawn from the history of revivals, especially from the experiences of David Morgan in the 1859 revival,[36] quite misses the point. To begin with, this was the last in a series of lectures on preaching, not the last in a series of expositions of Scripture, nor yet the last in a series of lectures on the Holy Spirit. Lloyd-Jones was rarely anecdotal in the pulpit and was fairly critical of preachers introducing anecdotes concerning themselves into sermons. In these lectures his approach was quite different and he was anecdotal throughout. He was, after all, sharing with trainee ministers a lifetime of over forty years of preaching. Those who have heard the recordings of the lectures will know that the humour in them was greatly appreciated, judging by the amount of laughter one can hear from the audience. This, again, was something which was quite rare in his preaching. The anecdotes which he introduced from revivals of the past were brought in to illustrate what he was arguing for: he had already spent ten pages giving an overview of Old Testament and New Testament teaching on the matter[37] before saying, "Thank God, the history of the Church proves the rightness of this contention."[38]

Undergirding his reference to incidents in church history was his belief that God is the living God and that he is able to act as powerfully in a saving manner today through the preaching of his Word as he was in biblical times. Lest it be thought that Lloyd-Jones was drawing on a particularly Welsh tradition with respect to his view on the relationship of Word and Spirit in preaching, it should be noted that, far from confining himself to Welsh preachers, he refers to Luther, Calvin, Latimer, John Bradford, Robert Bruce and John Livingstone, before going on to consider Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, and Wesley and Whitefield, before he ever gets to two great eighteenth century Welshmen, Daniel Rowland and Howel Harris[39]. He concludes this historical overview with a reference to David Morgan. Significantly, however, he refers to the effect of Morgan's preaching upon T. C. Edwards, who was converted under this powerful ministry. Edwards – whatever defects there were in his theology (and there were!) – went on to write a scholarly commentary on the Greek text of 1 Corinthians,[40] a point upon which Lloyd-Jones remarked, a

[36] Letham, "Preaching", n.p.

[37] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 304-314.

[38] Ibid., 315.

[39] It should also be noted that his historical examples did *not* begin with the eighteenth century, but drew on material from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well.

[40] See Thomas Charles Edwards, *A Commentary On The First Epistle To The Corinthians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897).

commentary which is quoted fairly extensively in two of the best modern commentaries on this particular epistle.[41] If one applies the maxim that by their fruits they shall be known, evidently Morgan's ministry, far from emphasising the Spirit at the expense of the Word, led to a very high view of the Word indeed in the heart of at least one of his hearers.[42]

One of Letham's most serious criticisms is that Lloyd-Jones "unwittingly and certainly unintentionally [undermined] the regular use of the means of grace".[43] If this were indeed the case, one can only wonder what was going on week by week at Westminster Chapel, where over a thousand people gathered each Sunday, and many hundreds on a Friday night to hear consecutive, expository preaching of God's Word. Surely this testified powerfully to Lloyd-Jones's belief in the importance of the regular use of the means of grace. And, of course, the Lord's Supper was also regularly celebrated. It really is something of a canard to allege that Lloyd-Jones belittled "the ordinary" means of grace. In the very volume which Letham criticises, Lloyd-Jones warns against expecting as the norm what may have been the case in a time of exceptional spiritual blessing: he stresses the importance of getting on with the hard work of sermon preparation to feed the people week by week.[44] Furthermore, in one of his sermons on Ephesians 6:10-13, he identifies as an attack of the devil the discouragement which a preacher might experience because he has not known the kind of blessing which rested upon a man such as Whitefield.[45] This is hardly belittling the regular use of the means of grace!

This being so, Cunnington's words, "The conclusion he draws is that the Spirit sometimes accompanies the preached Word by filling the preacher and sometimes does not"[46], do not take account of important nuances in Lloyd-Jones's teaching. Cunnington references page 324 of *Preaching and Preachers*. What Lloyd-Jones actually said was this:

> The power came, and the power was withdrawn. Such is the lordship of the Spirit! You cannot command this blessing, you cannot order it; it is entirely the gift of God. The examples I have given from the Scriptures indicate this. "Peter, filled with the Spirit". The Spirit filled him. He did the same to David Morgan; and then in His own inscrutable wisdom and sovereignty He took it

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[41] See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987); and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* NIGTC (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000).

[42] For the theological content of Morgan's ministry with respect to the Person of Christ and the greatness of the atonement, see Eifion Evans, *Revival Comes to Wales: the Story of the 1859 Revival in Wales* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1986).

[43] Letham, "Preaching", n.p.

[44] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 225-226.

[45] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Warfare: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10 to 13* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 309-310.

[46] Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power*, 2.

from him. Revivals are not meant to be permanent. But at the same time I maintain that all of us who are preachers should be seeking this power every time we preach.[47]

I make the following observations. First, Lloyd-Jones was *not* addressing the question as to whether Word and Spirit are to be separated; rather, he was dealing with the specific issue of "the power", and it is clear from the whole context of what he says that he is referring to the power of the Spirit in regenerating people, bringing people to faith in Christ, and doing so on a wide scale. It is one thing to say – as he said elsewhere and has already been referenced – that Word and Spirit are not to be separated and that the Spirit works through the Word; this does not mean, however, and cannot mean – nor, I am sure, would Letham or Cunnington claim that it means – that the Spirit therefore always works to the same extent and degree in regenerating people who hear the Word. That would be manifestly false.

If, therefore, one is speaking of the power of the Spirit in bringing people to new life, then clearly the divine sovereignty is involved in this and there are certain people at certain periods of time and in certain places who are undoubtedly, in their preaching, used as instruments of God in the calling of many into the kingdom of God. That Lloyd-Jones was not suggesting that anything apart from this does not count and is sub-standard should be obvious from the references I have given to his published material in an earlier paragraph, where he stresses the importance of getting on with the work of sermon preparation and of feeding the people, and where he identifies as an attack of the devil the dejection which a preacher might know because he is not seeing the numbers brought to faith through his preaching as were converted through the preaching of Whitefield. Indeed, the words, "revivals are not meant to be permanent" gives the lie to any suggestion that Lloyd-Jones regarded this as the norm and everything outside of it as sub-standard.

I shall not, in this article, comment on Lloyd-Jones's urging his hearers and readers to seek the Spirit: I shall, God willing, address this in a later piece which will be of an exegetical nature.

What emerges from the foregoing is the fact that Lloyd-Jones was remarkably nuanced in the way he expounded and applied the truth of God's Word. In other contexts – especially those where theology was put at a premium and where people might emphasise the Spirit at the expense of the Word – he would put the emphasis elsewhere. He was, after all, lecturing to a living audience in a specific situation, not producing a systematic theology: context, therefore, was all-important.[48] This is not to deny that systematic theology needs to be contextualised. It is simply to acknowledge that

[47] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 324.

[48] In fairness to Professor Letham, one should also take account of the context in which his remarks were originally made: see note 1, supra.

speaking to living people in one context and then to different people in another context will inevitably require a somewhat different approach from that of someone who is writing a theological treatise which is to be read in all the world.

I am not denying that certain emphases came through with Lloyd-Jones more prominently than may have been the case with the Reformers and Puritans. Indeed, Lloyd-Jones regarded the emphases of the eighteenth century awakening with great affection and maintained that a new element came in during that century, a "pneumatic" element.[49] In saying this, of course, he was not referring to people like the French prophets, but to preachers such as Edwards and Whitefield, to Rowland and Harris. Moreover, he was not suggesting that something *entirely* new came in: the fact that in the final chapter of his book on preaching he can refer to sixteenth and seventeenth century preachers in support of his emphasis upon the demonstration of the Spirit and power gives the lie to any such interpretation of his words. The point surely relates to the *degree* of emphasis which there was in the eighteenth century upon the need of the work of the Spirit to go hand in hand with the Word.

Cunnington is surely right to warn against the tendency to expect to find the same coherence in the writings of men which one finds in Scripture.[50] This having been said, it is surely right not to find contradictions where they do not exist; equally, a nuanced or complex approach is to be distinguished from one which is self-contradictory. He would be a singularly inept preacher who, in a published series of lectures, contradicts in the final lecture what he has said earlier, especially when the final lecture emphasises the importance of what has gone before. I trust that this is enough to lay to rest the idea that Lloyd-Jones separated Word from Spirit.[51]

2. Immediate and mediate regeneration

Both Cunnington and Letham express a measure of unease with the phrase "immediate regeneration". Letham says that Olyott's use of the term can be misleading, while Cunnington claims that Olyott's exegesis is "based upon

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[49] See his reference to going "into the eighteenth century" in Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 118. See also D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors. Addresses Delivered at the Puritan and Westminster Conferences 1959 – 1978.* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 350.

[50] Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power*, 4.

[51] As with Calvin, Lloyd Jones's published works – and recorded material – are quite prolific. That he changed his belief concerning some things is indisputable (e.g., the interpretation of Romans 7; the "timing" of the sealing of the Spirit). But on Word and Spirit his position was basically unchanged throughout his long ministry. What changed were the emphases, and this depended upon the context into which he was speaking.

Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*" and "is strained in places".[52] He goes on to say that "Olyott"s treatment of James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23 is ingenious but ultimately unconvincing".[53] It is not my purpose to defend all that Olyott wrote on this; indeed, I would disagree with some things said by all the contemporary writers whom Cunnington critiques in his opening chapter, while agreeing with quite a lot that both Letham and Cunnington say. The point which I wish to establish at this stage is that the language of immediate regeneration is something which one finds in seventeenth-century French Huguenot writings, in nineteenth-century Dutch works, and, in particular, in the writings of one of the men whose teaching on Word and Spirit was, Cunnington believes, very similar to that of Calvin, Herman Bavinck. Furthermore, even where writers do not use *the language* of immediate regeneration, it is clear that they have a *concept* of immediate regeneration as being biblical. Later in this study I shall seek to demonstrate why the distinction between immediate and mediate regeneration is crucial to the whole question of the relationship of the Word to the Spirit in *the hearing* of the Word of God, as well as to the *preaching* of the Word of God. I shall then broaden matters to demonstrate that what may be denoted as an immediate work of the Spirit within the heart of the believer is also vital to the hearing and preaching of the Word of God. But first I shall seek to make good the claim with respect to the Huguenots and Bavinck, as well as with respect to other writers. This, of course, does not settle the issue as to what the Scriptures teach; it will, however, help to show that the position which Cunnington – and, to a lesser extent, Letham - critiques has fairly good historical precedent.

3. Seventeenth century French writings

Pajonism and the disagreements concerning it were very much related to the whole question of immediate regeneration. The constraints of space and my concern to focus upon theological matters rather than historical issues are such that I shall not paint in the background to this matter, which really goes back to John Cameron and the Academy of Saumur, and especially to the question as to whether the Spirit acted immediately only on the intellect or, as the Leiden theologians maintained, on the intellect and the will.[54] The

[52] Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power*, 25.

[53] Ibid., 25.

[54] See Albert Gootjes, "Polemics, Rhetoric and Exegesis: Claude Pajon (1626-1685) on Romans 8:7", 296-320 in Martin I. Klauber, *The Theology of the French Reformed Churches: From Henri IV to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), for a fine overview treatment of Pajonism, and especially 299-302 for relevant material on Cameron with respect to this matter. (If one regards the human soul as being essentially simple – that is to say, as not composed of parts – and the distinction between its

Leiden theologians, of course, were those who sought to uphold the teaching of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), where "they had insisted… against the Remonstrants on the necessity of divine action to renew *both* intellect *and* will".[55]

Cameron died in 1625; it was to be another forty years before the first Pajonist controversy broke out. "Although Pajon wrote most of his works on the operation of grace during the latter half of the 1660s, his writings from the following decade suggest that he radicalised his denial of immediate grace to comprehend the *concursus* of providence as well".[56] The following quotation from Jean Claude's Provincial Synod of Ile–de-France in August 1677 demonstrates conclusively that, in chronicling the Pajonist controversy, Gootjes has not fallen prey to the danger of "the priority of paradigms":

> The ministers and all believers are exhorted to flee all kinds of new opinions contrary to the Word of God, to our Confession of Faith, and to the doctrine commonly received in our churches, and especially those opinions which deny the present and immediate concursus of providence [and] *the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from the efficacy of the Word for the conversion of man* – with the order to the consistories that they proceed with ecclesiastical censure against all who teach these opinions… so that they do their duty to prevent the students in theology from being tainted by these novelties.[57]

The language of an *immediate* work of God, as distinct from a *mediate* work of God, was, therefore, current in the 1620s when men of the theological and spiritual stature such as André Rivet and others from Leiden were expressing concern with respect to Cameron's teaching as being inconsistent with that which was laid down at the Synod of Dort. Over fifty years later Étienne de Brais, Pierre du Bosc, Jean Claude and Pierre Jurieu were calling

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cognitive, affective, and volitional functions as referring to *aspects* or *faculties* of the soul, then the question as to whether God works immediately only upon the intellect and only mediately, through the intellect upon the will, or whether he acts immediately upon both does not really arise: for if God acts immediately on the soul, which, being simple, is not composed of parts, it follows that he works directly upon each of the faculties of the soul. This is surely required if one holds the doctrine of total depravity, which means that, the soul being depraved, every faculty of the soul is likewise depraved. In fact, Gootjes believes that there is evidence to support the view that Cameron denied an immediate work of God on both intellect and will: 301, and note 20, p. 301.) What has just been said concerning the fact that God works immediately on the soul *per se* does not, however, entail the proposition that denies an order to the way in which the truth of the Word is to be brought to bear upon the different faculties of the soul.

[55] Gootjes, "Polemics, Rhetoric, and Exegesis", 301.

[56] Ibid., 304.

[57] Ibid., 305. Emphasis mine. The relevant part of the original reads: "…et particulièrement les opinions qui nient le concours présent et immédiat de la providence; l'operation immédiate du Saint Esprit distincte de l'efficace de la Parolle pour la conversion de l'homme…": Gootjes, "Polemics, Rhetoric, and Exegesis", 305, note 32.

on consistories to censure those who held to Pajon's teaching, which, amongst other things, denied an immediate operation of the Holy Spirit which was distinct from the efficacy of the Word for the conversion of man. Note that this is distinguished from the immediate concursus of providence and, furthermore, that such denials were regarded by these men as being both novel[58] and contrary to their Confession of Faith. Of course, it is necessary to understand what they meant by these words: this will become clear, I trust, when we consider the controversy which brought forth a volume by Bavinck, and which was largely devoted to the issue of immediate regeneration and its relationship to the use of the means of grace. Suffice it to say, at this point, that the term hardly gained its currency from Berkhof, nor, as we shall see, is it, as Cunnington claims,[59] something of a red herring to Olyott's argument.

4. Controversy in Holland: Herman Bavinck's Contribution

Given that Cunnington regards Bavinck's positon on the relationship of Word and Spirit as being "entirely consistent with Calvin's" it is surprising, to say the least, that he confines his study of, and quotations from, Bavinck to Volume 4 of the latter's *Reformed Dogmatics*,[60] and completely ignores his *Saved By Grace: The Holy Spirit's Work in Calling and Regeneration*.[61] In a note before the Contents page, Bavinck wrote the following:

> From 29 March 1901 through 2 May 1902, some forty articles were published in "De Bazuin" ["The Trumpet"], essays which sought to communicate greater clarity concerning the doctrine of immediate regeneration. These articles now appear separately under a somewhat modified title. May they, also in this form, ensure that difference of insight does no injury to the unity of the Confession and to the peace of the churches.

This book represents, therefore, a sustained analysis by Bavinck of the precise issues which are raised by the concept of immediate regeneration. In dealing with this question, Bavinck also addresses the relationship between Word and Spirit and regards this as a matter which is essentially related to the concept of immediate regeneration. Thus Part IV of this volume is entitled "The Relation Between The Immediate Operation Of The Holy Spirit And The Means Of Grace". The terminology of immediate regeneration is the

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[58] By "novel", they did not mean that others had not put forward such views in the past; rather, they were expressing their concern that such views could make headway and be novelties within their church.

[59] Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power*, 26.

[60] Ibid., 123-124.

[61] Herman Bavinck, (Ed.: J. Mark Beach; translated by Nelson Kloosterman), *Saved By Grace. The Holy Spirit's Work in Calling and Regeneration,* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008).

same as that of French pastors some 230 years earlier, as well as of Dutch theologians about 280 years earlier than when Bavinck was writing. It is clear from Bavinck's irenic language in the words quoted, as well as in the tone of the entire work, that he was dealing with a somewhat different aspect to this problem from that which exercised the worthies of the seventeenth century.

Bavinck's work is remarkably nuanced and balanced: to appreciate the rich theological texture of what he says, the particular volume from which I am quoting in this section needs to be read in its entirety. I am only too conscious of the danger of selective quotation and of, therefore, misrepresenting Bavinck. Although, as with Letham and Cunnington – and, indeed, as I have sought to demonstrate, as with Lloyd-Jones – Bavinck believed and taught that Word and Spirit are distinct but not separate, he articulates with particular clarity the importance of the means of grace in a context of belief in immediate regeneration. We shall see that Bavinck's position was essentially the same as that which we have already found in the writings of Lloyd-Jones. I shall set out below some of the most significant statements by Bavinck in this work.

The Holy Spirit does connect His work to the Word, *but does not bind His work within that Word, so that with His almighty power He penetrates the human heart, touches a person immediately in the innermost part of his being and thus renews him to conform in principle to the image of God, apart from a person's knowing and willing.* The operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is thus absolutely independent from the consent of the intellect or the will. *Between regeneration and the person who is born again there stands nothing, no word, no sacrament, no church or priest, no act of the intellect or the will.* The Holy Spirit works the grace of regeneration within the heart of the elect person directly, irresistibly, and in this sense *immediately*.[62]

It will be profitable to analyse this quotation before considering other quotations from Bavinck. First, he regards the Word and the Spirit as working together: this much is clear from the words, "The Holy Spirit does connect His work to the Word". Secondly, as with Hywel Jones, he wishes to distinguish this joining of Word and Spirit from the idea that the Spirit is, in some way, imprisoned in the Word: thus, he immediately adds, "but does not bind His work within that Word". What he means by this is made clear by the words which follow. Bavinck is adamant that in the work of regeneration nothing comes between the Holy Spirit and the person who is born again: "no word, no sacrament… no act of the intellect or of the will". This, of course, goes to the heart of the issue: Bavinck is stating that the Word plays no part in regeneration, nor does the intellect or will. For the Word to benefit us, intellect and will must be engaged: the Word requires faith if we are to

[62] Bavinck, *Saved By Grace* 131-132. Emphasis is mine, except for the very last word, which is Bavinck's.

benefit from it,[63] and faith must issue in obedience,[64] and both of these involve the intellect and the will. The divine initiative in this matter is such that we are passive: this is what Bavinck means when he concludes the paragraph thus: "The Holy Spirit works the grace of regeneration within the heart of the elect person directly, irresistibly, and in this sense *immediately*" (Bavinck's emphasis). He is spelling out with crystal clarity what he means by "immediate regeneration".

The question which therefore arises is this: how is this immediate action of God to be related to the means of grace? Bavinck answers this question in chapter 14 of the book, which is found in Part IV. I shall give a representative sample of quotations from this chapter and thereby let Bavinck speak for himself:

> Word and sacrament perform no other operation than a *moral* operation. They operate in the same way as a contract. God had bound Himself to impart His grace to everyone who receives and enjoys these divinely instituted means in faith according to His ordained purpose. In those means, He has, so to speak, indebted Himself to us. Whenever we use them in the proper way, in childlike obedience, then He gives us the right to plead with Him and to expect everything from Him on the basis of them; and then He binds Himself through His covenant, through His promises, to provide everything our spiritual and physical indigence requires.[65]

The above passage occurs in a section in which Bavinck is contending for what he claims to be the Reformed view, which he denotes as the "moral operation" view, of the means of grace, which he distinguishes from what he calls the "physical operation view". Although in the Middle Ages, before the Reformation, there were those who accepted the moral operation view, including, Bavinck claims, Bonaventura, after the Council of Trent the Roman Catholic Church rejected the moral operation understanding of the sacraments for the physical operation position. At this point, therefore, Bavinck is concerned to distinguish what he regards as the Reformed view from that of Roman Catholicism. He continues:

> Thus grace is indeed joined to the means, but it is not thereby infused and *is not confined to them*. Nor is this grace under the authority and in the control of the minister who proclaims the Word and administers the sacrament. *But it remains the property of God who bestows grace in Christ through the Holy Spirit according to His sovereign good pleasure.*
>
> Whenever the means of grace are administered, therefore, properly speaking, no union between the external, visible signs and the spiritual, invisible grace comes into existence, as if both of these in any manner were locally bound and united together. Rather, there comes about a union between grace and the soul of him who uses the means of grace in faith.[66]

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[63] Heb 4:2. All Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version, 1984.

[64] Jas 1:22.

[65] Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 139. Emphasis his.

[66] Ibid., 139. Emphasis mine.

The first word of the above quotation – "thus" – demonstrates that Bavinck is continuing and concluding from what he had said in the previous paragraph, which is quoted before the above quotation. He is explaining and clarifying what he means by a "moral operation" view of the sacraments. The all-important words from the earlier paragraph are: "God has bound Himself to impart His grace to everyone who receives and enjoys these divinely instituted means *in faith* according to His ordained purpose" (emphasis mine). The question which demands an answer is this: how is someone who is dead in trespasses and sins able to receive the Word in faith? Bavinck has already supplied the answer to this question in the very first quotation which I have given from this part of his book: "Between regeneration and the person who is born again there stands nothing, no word, no sacrament, no church or priest, no act of the intellect or of the will. The Holy Spirit works the grace of regeneration within the heart of the elect person directly, irresistibly, and in this sense *immediately*" (emphasis his). He now spells this out in the above quotation in the words which I have emphasised and which form the last sentence of the first paragraph of the quotation. In the second paragraph he makes it abundantly clear that no union exists between external, visible signs and the spiritual, invisible grace. How could they, in Bavinck's view, given that he has already said that grace is neither infused by, nor confined to, the outward means of grace "but it remains the property of God who bestows grace in Christ through the Holy Spirit according to His sovereign good pleasure".

Bavinck concludes this chapter as follows:

> This is how, already in the Middle Ages, the profound and pious theologian Bonaventura spoke. The sacraments, he declared, do not contain grace within themselves like a cup holds water or a pill contains medicine, but they signify grace and point to grace. And if it is claimed that grace is imparted by the sacraments, then this is to be understood thus, that grace is bestowed not to the visible signs but to the soul of the recipient.
>
> Among the Reformed in a later period, Gomarus expressed himself in the same sense when he argued that it was more correct to say that the thing signified is united to *us* rather than that the thing signified is united to the *signs*. The mystical union arises between Christ and our souls; and of that the means of grace function as sign and seal.[67]

Having dealt with the means of grace in general, Bavinck devotes the next chapter to a consideration of "The Word as Means of Grace in Particular". He stresses that although the means have no power to recreate and although God's grace is not infused in the means, it nevertheless "accompanies them".[68] Here is the idea for which Cunnington and Letham – and Lloyd-Jones! – rightly contend, namely, that although the Word and the Spirit are distinct, they are not to be separated. What Bavinck means by this is brought

[67] Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 139-140. Emphasis his.

[68] Ibid., 141.

out in the next sentence: "Even though God in His great goodness employs means and works through means, He Himself remains independent of those means; He descends into the heart of the sinner, and there works with His grace and Spirit in a direct, invincible, though also gentle and lovely manner":[69] that is to say, God works *immediately* upon the heart.

Part of the confusion in the debate concerning the relationship between the Word and the Spirit in preaching derives from the fact that the Scriptures employ the term "Word" in a variety of ways. If one takes the term "word", when referring to Scripture, but then pours into it the meaning which attaches to God's creative word or to the second Person of the Godhead, one will inevitably confuse the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Word as Scripture or as Scripture being preached.[70] I do not wish to say more on this at present because I intend, in the next main section of this paper, to define certain terms. Suffice it to say, at this point, that Bavinck helpfully distinguishes between the second Person of the Holy Trinity and God's creative word, on the one hand, from the Word which constitutes law and gospel, on the other hand. Bavinck concludes this chapter as follows:

> Because the Reformed understood this, they also insisted that the external call was neither sufficient nor effectual. For the external call was simply a call by the word and could thus perform merely a moral, persuasive operation. In this they agreed with the Remonstrants. But whereas the latter thought that such a moral persuasion was sufficient, the Reformed taught on the basis of God's Word that an effectual, invincible, direct operation of the Holy Spirit must accompany the word if the external call was to be heeded and obeyed.
>
> The Reformed also correctly inferred from this moral operation of the external call that nobody can hear the word *savingly* unless a person is previously regenerated – not in time, but in sequence – by water and Spirit. The *saving* hearing of the Word of God presupposes regeneration. For no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him. And everyone who has heard and learned the Word of the Father comes to Christ.[71]

The following chapter, chapter 15, is entitled "The Work of God's Word in Regeneration, Faith and Conversion". Bavinck distinguishes regeneration from faith and conversion.[72] The reason for this should be obvious: conversion denotes *our* turning from sin to God, and faith denotes *our* resting upon Christ. Both of these involve actions of our intellect and will in response to God's Word. By contrast, Bavinck argues, regeneration is *God's*

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[69] Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 141.

[70] This is virtually an example of what is sometimes called illegitimate totality transfer, where one takes the entire semantic range of a term and applies that totality of meaning to the term when the context requires that not all that range is applied in a given situation. Thus, since some passages of Scripture refer to God's word being creatively powerful, some theologians have argued that God's justifying of the sinner, being a declaratory word of God, is also a *creative* word of God, and thus is *morally transformative* as well as being legally or judicially declarative. This is an example of illegitimate totality transfer.

[71] Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 146. Emphasis his.

[72] Ibid., 147.

work, not ours, and takes place in such a way that neither our intellect nor our will are actively engaged *in the act of regeneration*: we are passive under God's hand. This, of course, inevitably raises the question as to the role played by God's Word in regeneration, faith, and conversion. Bavinck is at pains to stress that even although regeneration is an immediate act of God on and in the soul of the sinner, it "is not thereby to say that the Word is completely excluded from regeneration in every way whatsoever".[73] This is to say that the Word and Spirit cannot be separated, though they are distinct, which is precisely the position for which Cunnington and Letham rightly contend. Bavinck then goes on to emphasise that although the internal call and external call – what are sometimes denoted by the terms "effectual or efficacious call" and the "general call" – are to be distinguished, they are not two kinds of calling but are two sides or aspects of the one call.[74] Bavinck is remarkably nuanced in this chapter, even though, at points, he seems to make heavy weather of matters and could have compressed his treatment of the subject. Thus, having asserted the two aspects of the call, he nevertheless goes on to say the following:

> So, too, external and internal calling are not always united. On the one hand, many are called who are not chosen; and on the other hand, it is possible that some are internally called who were never able self-consciously to hear the preaching of the Word. This latter occurs in the case of children of believers who die in infancy, in reference to whom the Synod of Dort confessed that believing parents ought not to doubt their election and salvation [Canons of Dort, I, art. 17].[75]

It may not be inappropriate, at this point, to note that the Westminster Confession states something similar to the Canons of Dort, though in some respects the Westminster Confession is both narrower and broader. Paragraph III of Chapter X reads as follows: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons who are uncapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word."

It will be observed that the above quotations from Bavinck and the Westminster Confession of Faith are saying essentially the same thing we have already seen in Lloyd-Jones's writings and referenced in note 24.

Earlier in the chapter Bavinck has already hinted at the fact that a child, who does not die in infancy, may be regenerated when a child. He writes thus:

> …no one will disagree that with adults regeneration and faith can occur simultaneously, and that a person *savingly* hears and accepts the Word at the same moment he is regenerated under the

[73] Bavinck, *Saved by* Grace, 148.
[74] Ibid., 148-149.
[75] Ibid., 149.

preaching of the Word. On the other hand, no one will dispute that our infants can be regenerated by God's Spirit without being in a position, on account of their age, to manifest that new life in acts of faith and repentance.[76]

The following should be noted. First, the presence of the word "can" indicates that Bavinck is here distinguishing quite clearly, as he does throughout, between regeneration and faith: that they can occur at the same time does not mean that this must be so. (It is important to distinguish here that, as the editor of the volume notes,[77] between a capacity or disposition for faith and the actual exercise of faith. The former is implanted in regeneration but the latter is only exercised when the Word is heard and understood.) Secondly, he is not here specifically referring to those who die in infancy: thus someone may be regenerate as a very young child before they are able to hear or understand the Word. Clearly, when they are old enough to hear and understand the Word, there will be a response of repentance and faith.[78] This having been said, Bavinck goes on:

As a rule the Spirit of Christ works only where His Word and sacrament are administered in accord with His ordinance. And to the extent that the Spirit might work savingly outside of this sphere, such a working is infrequent, extraordinary, and unknown to us…

…regeneration, as a rule, is a fruit of the operation of the Holy Spirit, connected to the proclamation of the gospel.[79]

Throughout this chapter Bavinck distinguishes between the disposition of faith, which is implanted in regeneration, and the calling into expression of the act of that faith by Word and Spirit. That the Word cannot regenerate – that is to say, that it cannot implant the *principle of faith* – is self-evident to Bavinck, as may be seen from the following words:

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[76] Bavinck, *Saved by* Grace, 147. Emphasis mine.

[77] Ibid., 147-148, note 1.

[78] This, indeed, is the position which is taken by the great Archibald Alexander in his *Thoughts on Religious Experience*: see chapter 2 of this work: Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967). The significance of this resides in the following facts. Alexander clearly valued the eighteenth century and the periods of spiritual awakening experienced in that century: see, for example, Archibald Alexander, *The Log College* (London: Banner of Truth, 1968) and material scattered throughout his *Thoughts on Religious Experience*. Secondly, he was the first professor of Princeton Seminary and was to be a huge influence upon Charles Hodge. (Cunnington gently critiques Hodge's position with respect to the subject of the relationship between Word and Spirit as differing somewhat from that of Calvin and what might be termed "Reformed orthodoxy".) In the third place, Alexander was clearly committed to the Westminster standards. Further on Alexander, see: James W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D.* (New-York: Scribner, 1854) and Stephen Clark, "Archibald Alexander: the Shakespeare of the Christian Heart" in *The Voice Of God: Papers Read at the 2002 Westminster Conference* (Westminster Conference, 2003).

[79] Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 149-150. Emphasis his.

> …in a logical sense the Word presupposes regeneration if it is to be heard and accepted savingly …a person cannot believe savingly unless he be born again of water and Spirit beforehand, perhaps not in terms of time but certainly in terms of order…
>
> One who insists on denying this would be abandoning the Reformed position and be moving over to the Remonstrant position. Such a person would be erasing the boundary line drawn in Holy Scripture between one who is spiritually dead and one who is spiritually alive, and would be exchanging the essential difference between both for a gradual transition.
>
> From this it also follows, however, that *with the coming into existence of regeneration, the Word can exercise no moral operation.* For in order to exercise such an operation, the capacity for believing would need to be sown beforehand. By the nature of the case, the Word can work only when it is understood. But the Word can be understood only by the person who has been regenerated.[80]

One of the most vital things to note about what Bavinck writes is that, although the external and internal or efficacious call are not two separate things but two sides of the same coin, in the case of those who hear the gospel but are never saved, *there is only the external call*, and this means that *the Spirit is not working or is not active in those who are not saved in the same way that he is at work in those whom he regenerates*. We shall see, in the theological section of this paper, that this does not mean that the Spirit is separated from the Word in the case of the Word being heard by the non-elect; but, in the case of those who are regenerated *there is an activity of the Spirit which cannot* – to adopt Hywel Jones's and Bavinck's phraseology – *be imprisoned in the Word: for if it could, the effect would be the same for all hearers.* It is not the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation; it is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation *to everyone who believes*. As Paul expresses it so eloquently in Romans chapter 10, such believing presupposes hearing, and such hearing presupposes preaching. It is the Word, it is the gospel, which is preached; but it is only powerful to those who believe, and, as Bavinck makes so very clear, the disposition of faith, the capacity to believe is *not* created by the Word, but by the Spirit working immediately on the heart. Clearly, in those situations where many come to faith, the Spirit is at work in a large number of people in a way in which he is not at work in those who do not believe. I shall return to the importance and significance of these observations in the next section of this paper.

Christian doctrine is less like a string of individual pearls and more like a seamless garment or series of interlocking units. It is quite clear from Bavinck's treatment of the relationship between Word and Spirit in the area of regeneration, faith and repentance, that he realised that these matters were intimately related to biblical anthropology. If one does not express correctly the work of God in regeneration and the place of the Word in calling new life into expression, one will inevitably fall into one of two opposite extremes: either an unbiblical mysticism, where spiritual

[80] Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 151-152. Emphasis mine.

experience is divorced from God's saving truth, or an essentially Remonstrant position, which would accord to man the ability to respond to the Word without a prior work of God upon the soul. This latter error would effectively substitute an Arminian understanding of the state of man in sin for the biblical view which underlay the Reformed position. Bavinck then goes on to assert:

> So regeneration occurs *under* the Word, *by* the Word, *with* the Word, but it does not occur *through* the Word in the sense that the Holy Spirit could work with the human heart only through that Word. For the Holy Spirit has indeed bound Himself to creating fellowship with Christ and His benefits where the Word of Christ is proclaimed; but He has neither imprisoned nor enclosed Himself and His operation within the Word. No more than the sacrament is the Word a magical instrument that imparts grace by its supernaturally infused power; rather, it supplies the condition under which, the occasion when, and the path along which God exalts His grace to the sinner and makes the sinner to share in Christ and all His benefits.[81]

I shall return to Bavinck later in this study and seek to pull together the threads of his teaching concerning the relationship of Word and Spirit in preaching and in regeneration. One of my reasons for deferring a consideration of Bavinck's conclusions is that in the final part of his book he specifically addresses the exegesis of verses in James and 1 Peter to which Olyott appeals in his article and concerning which Cunnington offers fairly sharp criticism. It will be necessary in the theological section to consider those verses; in doing so, I wish to consider the views of a number of exegetes and theologians, Bavinck being one of them.

5. Other Reformed Writers

We are still considering the concept of "immediate regeneration". We have seen that the Leiden theologians of the early sixteenth century were concerned about the teaching of John Cameron with respect to this matter, and that the whole issue became much more acute in the latter part of that century, when numerous French pastors and theologians expressed their criticism of Pajon's teaching. We have also seen that Bavinck regarded the concept of immediate regeneration as being extremely important in understanding how God's saving grace touches a sinner's heart. It only remains, in this section, to consider briefly a number of key theologians in the Reformed tradition to demonstrate that the *concept* of immediate regeneration has been fairly widely accepted and, in some cases, the term "immediate" has also been part of the currency of theological language. The purpose of this brief survey is to demonstrate that Olyott's concern to emphasise the importance of immediate regeneration – whatever misgivings one might have with respect to some of his historical analysis and biblical

[81] Bavinck, *Saved by Grace,* 152.

exegesis – is anything but theologically novel, eccentric, or even misleading; rather, it is representative of a spectrum of Reformed theology and goes to the heart of what is involved in becoming a true Christian and, therefore, is not irrelevant to a consideration of the relationship of Word and Spirit in the preaching and the hearing of the Word of God.

(i) Jonathan Edwards

Although it might be sensible to consider this matter chronologically, I shall, rather, deal first with a writer from the eighteenth century because he actually uses the term "immediate". The writer is Jonathan Edwards, and the term occurs in his famous sermon, *A Divine and Supernatural Light immediately imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, shown to be both a Scriptural and Rational Doctrine*.[82] In this sermon it is clear that Edwards is distancing his teaching from that of those who separated Word and Spirit. Thus he writes: "This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God… [It is not] such as some enthusiasts pretend to… It reveals no new doctrine… not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God."[83]

He goes on to distinguish this act of God from something which merely gives a person what we might call "warm feelings" about Christ:[84] in other words, he is avoiding the pitfall of confusing this divine light with subjective feelings *per se*. Edwards explains that this divine light consists in the Holy Spirit so giving himself to a person and changing the person's disposition that they have a true sense of the divine excellence of the things revealed in the Word and a conviction of their truth and reality. The Word of God, therefore, is essential, but Edwards clearly lays out what the Word can and what it cannot do. He explains himself thus:

> When it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that it is given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own power or natural force. God makes use of means; but it is not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truely [sic] any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The word of God is no proper cause of this effect; but is made use of only to convey to the mind the subject-matter of this saving instruction: and this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence… The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but seeing the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word.[85]

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[82] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards. Volume 2* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 12-17.

[83] Edwards, *Works.* Vol. 2, 13.

[84] This is to be found in the fourth negative – that is, what this spiritual light is not – which is found on 13.

[85] Edwards, *Works.* Vol. 2, 15.

(ii) John Owen

Many would regard John Owen as the greatest Reformed theologian of the English-speaking world. Here is his definition of sanctification: "Sanctification is an *immediate* work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers…"[86]

Owen unpacks his definition in the following words: "It is the renovation of the Holy Ghost whereby we are saved. And a real, internal, powerful physical work it is… He doth not make us holy *only by persuading* us so to be."[87] By "physical" Owen does not mean that it is a bodily work or an unspiritual work; rather, he employs this term to clarify the point that the Spirit does not simply persuade us in a moral way. He means, therefore, that the Spirit works, as in sanctification – of which regeneration is the first act – by a direct or immediate work upon the heart. Owen distinguishes sanctification from regeneration by noting that whereas the latter is "instantaneous, consisting in one single creating act" the "work of sanctification is progressive and admits of degrees".[88] Owen makes it perfectly plain how this relates to the Word of God:

> The whole renovation of our nature, the whole principle of holiness before described, is nothing but the word changed into grace in our hearts; for we are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God. The Spirit worketh nothing *in* us but what the word first requireth *of* us. It is, therefore, the rule of the inward principle of spiritual life; and the growth thereof is nothing but its increase in conformity to that word.[89]

Owen has, however, been at pains to spell out what this does not mean: "[The Spirit] doth not only require us to be holy, propose unto us motives unto holiness, give us convictions of its necessity, and thereby excite us unto the pursuit and attainment of it, *though this he doth also by the word and ministration thereof.*"[90]

There is a clear distinction between the Word and Spirit, as Cunnington and Letham contend for, though they are not separate; yet Owen is clearly not saying that wherever the Word comes with commands, the Spirit is present to enable one to obey those commands, for the work of sanctification is something which is only prosecuted in the hearts of those who are regenerate. Moreover, the immediate work of God upon the soul in sanctification is different from the work performed by the Word.

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[86] John Owen, *The Works of John Owen. Volume III.* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), 386. Emphasis mine.

[87] Ibid., 387. Emphasis his.

[88] Ibid., 387. Emphasis his.

[89] Ibid., 470. Emphasis his.

[90] Ibid., 387. Emphasis mine.

(iii) Louis Berkhof

There are many other writers and theologians, such as Thomas Halyburton[91], Archibald Alexander[92], Abraham Kuyper[93], B. B. Warfield[94], and John Murray[95], all of whom stood within what may be broadly described as "the Reformed tradition", who clearly believed in an immediate act of regeneration. But I shall not weary the reader with quotations from all of these writers; rather, I shall conclude this part of the article with some words taken from Berkhof. The importance of referring to these other writers, however, as well as those from whom I have already quoted, is that this demonstrates that Berkhof was doing nothing other than reproducing and re-stating what was fairly standard in Reformed theology. Here is the quotation:

> …the Reformers maintained that the Word alone is not sufficient to work faith and conversion; that the Holy Spirit can, but does not ordinarily, work without the Word; and that therefore in the work of redemption the Word and the Spirit work together. Though there was little difference on this point at first between the Lutherans and the Reformed, the former from the beginning stressed the fact that the Holy Spirit works through the Word as His instrument (per verbum), while the latter preferred to say that the operation of the Holy Spirit accompanies the Word (cum verbo).[96]

The theological case being made by Bavinck, Edwards, Owen, Halyburton, Alexander, Kuyper, Warfield and Murray is essentially the same as that made by Charles Hodge.[97] Whatever differences may or may not have existed with respect to the sacraments between Hodge and some of his contemporaries, on the one hand, and sixteenth-century Reformers such as Calvin, on the other hand, the need of the Holy Spirit to work directly in the human heart to give it spiritual life was not an area of difference between them. A number of things are essential to be able to see something: there must be the object to be seen; there must be light to illuminate that object; and there must be visual capacity in the individual to see the object thus illuminated. Christ is the great object of faith and the Spirit by his Word illuminates this great

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[91] For Halyburton, see the extract from the narrative of his conversion quoted in Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, 99 – 105, and John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology: In Relation To Church History* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 119 -121.

[92] Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, 21-31, 59-78.

[93] Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1900), 304-321.

[94] Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical And Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 368.

[95] John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray. Volume 2: Select Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 195-198. See also John Murray, *The Epistle To The Romans.* NICNT (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974), 27, note 21.

[96] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, 1958), 611.

[97] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology. Volume III* (New York: Scribner, 1880) 466 – 485.

object of faith. But this is insufficient for the blind sinner to see the glory of Christ. There is need for an internal work of God directly upon the heart for the sinner to see the glory of Jesus Christ as he is set forth in the Word. Without this, nothing of a *saving* nature will be accomplished in the human heart. Not to believe this is to depart from the biblical and the Reformed understanding of the condition of fallen humanity.

Having – hopefully! – shed some light on the issue of immediate regeneration, we now need to define some terms which are relevant to the relationship of Word and Spirit.

II. Defining terms

1. The Holy Spirit

First, "the Holy Spirit". These words refer to the third Person of the blessed Holy Trinity, who is possessed of the divine being or essence, and is God in every sense of the word, just as the Father is God and the Son is God. He is, however, a distinct person from the Father and from the Son: modalism, therefore, is a heretical misunderstanding of the teaching of Scripture. As such, the Holy Spirit must be distinguished from his works *ad extra*: this is to say, that although he was involved, as were the other two Persons of the Godhead, in the creation of the universe, he must not be identified with the creation. While it is true that the created universe *expresses* and *declares* the glory of God[98] and, therefore, *reveals* something of him[99] and, therefore, of the Holy Spirit, it would be quite wrong to *identify* the Holy Spirit with his creation, even though that creation expresses something of his being: for this would collapse the distinction between Creator and creature and would pave the way for idolatry and pantheism.

Is God only distinct from his creation, or is he also separate from it? The question does not admit of a straightforward answer. In the sense that God upholds all things by his powerful word and works in all things according to the counsel of his will, and in that in him we live and move and have our being, God is distinct from his creation – there is a great difference between Creator and creature – but he is hardly separate from it. Thus, while he *transcends* his creation and is rightly referred to, therefore, as the transcendent God, he is also *immanent* in his creation. But in the sense that there was when he was but when the creation was not, God was not only distinct but also separate from his creation, for the creation did not ontologically exist.

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[98] Ps 19:1-4.

[99] Ps 19:1-4; Rom 1:19-20.

2. The Word of God

Secondly, "the Word of God". This is a much more difficult phrase to define. I do not mean to cast any doubt upon the fact that the 66 books of the Bible are the Word of God written. My point is somewhat different. Consider the following questions. Is the Word of God the Creator or is it a creature? This question demands that we define more terms. If by "Word of God" we are referring to the second Person of the Trinity, then clearly the phrase refers to the Creator because this Person is God.[100] If, however, by "Word of God" we mean ink marks upon India paper bound within leather covers, or we are referring to pixels on a screen, what then? Clearly, ink is created, not creator, as are paper, and pixels and screens. But what of the semantic content that is conveyed by these marks upon the paper or these pixels on a screen? Again, care is needed. Is the semantic content conveyed by the words, "you shall not steal", God? Clearly not. But "you shall not steal" is part of God's Word. As Letham himself acknowledges, "it is true that the written and preached Word are not hypostatized, and so must be understood as under the living Word".[101] I take it that "living Word" is understood here, by Letham, as referring to the second Person of the Trinity. But this position is very similar to that of Lloyd-Jones and Hywel Jones although it is expressed in different terminology. God's special revelation in Scripture is the *expression* and *revelation* of himself and of his saving plan. As Calvin and Warfield make clear, it differs from God's general revelation in creation, in that it reveals God's saving plan and work but does not come to all people.[102] Just as the Word and the Spirit were active together in the creation, so the three Persons of the Trinity were active in the breathing out of Scripture. And God still speaks through what he once spoke.[103] Just as God was active in creation and is active in providence, so he was and is active in speaking his Word: his Word is an expressive activity of his being, not a hypostatized entity.

The upshot of what has been said in the previous paragraph is this: as with creation, in one sense God the Holy Spirit is distinct from his Word but is not separate from it; but in another sense, he *is* separate from it. In which sense? In the sense that the Bible is quite different from the Islamic view of the Qur'an. The latter is viewed as something which exists eternally in heaven with God. Although the Bible can refer to itself as being eternal and

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[100] Although Jn1:1 refers to him as "the Word", it is only in Rev 19:13 that he is called "the Word of God".

[101] Letham, "The Necessity of Preaching".

[102] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion. Volume I* [Beveridge translation] (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), Book I, chapters I – VI. Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 71-102.

[103] E.g. Heb 3:7: in quoting from a psalm written many years earlier, the text states: "as the Holy Spirit *says*" (my emphasis), not "as the Holy Spirit said", though the latter is also true.

standing firm in the heavens,[104] and although the thoughts and mind of God are eternal, this does not mean that Scripture is, in some way, an ontological entity eternally existing in heaven. Fundamental to the biblical doctrine of Scripture is the fact that the personalities of the human authors were involved in the writing of Scripture and this was a process which took place in real time, at different periods in human history. The very fact that God's Word came in human languages and expressed certain timeless truths in time-bound cultural contexts (for instance, the example and command to wash one another's feet and to greet one another with a holy kiss) must mean that before the creation God was not only distinct but separate from these biblical commands and, therefore, from Scripture. An analogy may help to elucidate this point. Prior to the creation of the universe and to the assumption of human nature into personal union with himself, the Son of God was not only distinct from human nature but separate from it. After taking human nature into union with himself the eternal Son of God is joined, by an indissoluble union, to human nature, so that he is forever the God-Man: there is one person by virtue of the hypostatic union but the two natures remain distinct. Similarly, there was when the Holy Spirit was but when Scripture was not, and *in this sense*, the Holy Spirit was then separate, as well as distinct, from the Word, if we understand the Word to refer to the sixty-six books of the Bible or to any of those books being preached. Indeed, the progressive nature of biblical revelation means that God's revelatory activity kept in step or in tandem with his redemptive work, and that redemptive work occurred within real space and real time of the real space-time universe.

A further analogy may help here. Scripture is human, as well as divine, in that the personalities of the human authors were involved in the writing of Scripture.[105] This is an aspect of a *concursive* doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. But Luke's Gospel is not, ontologically, Luke. And although the Word of God reveals the glory, power, wisdom and grace of God, there is more to God than there is to Scripture, just as there was more to the works of Jesus Christ than are recorded in Scripture.[106] This, surely, is all that Hywel Jones was arguing for when he said that "the Holy Spirit is 'greater' than the Word and must not be imprisoned in it".[107] Those who had the privilege of sitting through Jones's lectures on different books of the Bible know how careful and reverent he was in his handling of Holy Scripture, knowing that this is the living Word of the living God. But that is precisely the point: it is the living Word of the living God; it is not the living God.

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[104] Ps 119:89.

[105] E.g. Luke 1:1-4.

[106] Jn 20:30-31.

[107] Quoted in Letham, "The Necessity of Preaching".

3. Speakers, speech acts and speech

It will be profitable to probe a little more deeply into the relationship between a speaker and his speech or speech acts and then work out this relationship more carefully with respect to the relationship between God and his written Word. Someone who is reading the speeches of Winston Churchill might say that they have Churchill's words and that Churchill is speaking to them: "Churchill is here, in his words" they might say. They do not mean, of course, that the person of Winston Churchill is ontologically present in the words or that he is forming words by his vocal chords, tongue and lips. How could they? His body is in the grave and his spirit has entered into its eternal state. The situation with God's Word, however, is quite different and that for a number of reasons. It is true that God is not perpetually breathing out his Word: he did this when he superintended men to write it.[108] In the same way, it is true that God is not breathing out his Word every time someone picks it up and reads it: the revelation has been given once and once for all.[109] To believe otherwise would be to believe something which, while different in some respects, bears affinities to Jonathan Edwards's occasionalism with respect to God's constant creation of the world. Does this mean, therefore, that in saying that we are hearing God's Word and that God is present in his Word we are saying essentially the same thing as what we mean when we say that Churchill is present in his words? No, and that for a number of reasons. First, God is the living God and is both omniscient and omnipresent: this means that his eye is upon us when we read or hear his Word, and his Word is able, therefore, to "read" us, or, as the writer to the Hebrews expresses it, "the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart".[110] It possesses these qualities precisely because it is the word of him before whom "nothing in all creation is hidden" and before whom "everything is uncovered and laid bare"[111] and in whose presence we all live and move and have our being.[112] God is always present in, through, and by his Word because the God who gave the Word is eternal, omniscient and omnipresent, and therefore, years after the words were first spoken, the writer to the Hebrews can quote Scripture with the introductory formula, "So, as the Holy Spirit says".[113] God still speaks through what he has spoken once for all time. Moreover, because God is immanent within his creation, he is immanent within the semantic

[108] 2 Pet 1:20-21.
[109] Jude 3.
[110] Heb 4:12.
[111] Heb 4:11.
[112] Acts 17:28.
[113] Heb 3:7.

content of Scripture and, in this sense, is in his word and is speaking through it. But although the Scriptures, and the foregoing analysis, posit the very closest relationship between God and his Word, this still does not mean, however, that they are to be identified with each other: the inscripturated Word is not a fourth person in the Godhead.

4. Comprehension of God's Word

We need to analyse the concept of the Word of God still further. The argument which runs through much of 1 Corinthians 14 is that language and speech must be intelligible if one is to benefit from it. This is so even in the case of Holy Spirit-prompted speaking in tongues: although the hearer may hear the *sounds*, he does not grasp the semantic content. Therefore, the words do not build him up spiritually, even though what is being said may be conveying the most sublime truth, for it is not conveying it *to him*. It will do an Englishman not an atom of good to hear the most heavenly message in Chinese, unless he understands Chinese! The presence of the Holy Spirit in his Word, therefore, is not an argument for keeping the Bible in the original languages; rather, precisely because it is such a precious possession, it is vital that the Scriptures be put into a language that people can understand. In other words, people need to be able to understand the semantic content conveyed by the verbal signs that are on the page and the verbal sounds that are made by the preacher. This in no way minimises the fact that the Holy Spirit is speaking in, through, and by his Word; it means, rather, that the reader or hearer cannot read or hear the semantic content of God's Word unless it is expressed in words that he can understand.

But there are other, deeper barriers – spiritual barriers – to "hearing" God's Word, and these barriers cannot be overcome in the way in which ignorance of a language may be overcome by one learning that language or by the material in the unknown language being translated or interpreted into a language which the reader or hearer does understand. The problem with the realities which are conveyed by God's Word, however, is that they require a spiritual understanding to receive them, and "the natural person" – that is, a person without the Holy Spirit – cannot understand or receive them (1 Cor 2:14). It is necessary to make clear what this means and what it does not mean.

First, it is clear that a man or woman in a state of sin *can* understand some things from God's Word: our first parents understood the meaning of God's interrogation of them after they had sinned. Furthermore, although there is nothing to indicate that Felix was regenerate and came to faith in Christ, it is clear that he was afraid when he heard Paul's explanation of righteousness, self-control and judgment to come (Acts 24:25). But the "understanding" to which 1 Cor 2:14 refers is linked with "receiving": it is an

understanding of the true nature of things and, therefore, the true excellence of them, an understanding that leads to delight and affiance in Christ and the things of the gospel. It is an understanding that leads to an embrace of the spiritual realities denoted by the Word which the Spirit first breathed out. In other words, it is more than a *notional* understanding. It is the kind of thing to which Jonathan Edwards referred in the sermon to which reference was made earlier in this article. For this to take place the Spirit needs to renew the heart. Without this renewing work of the Spirit, there can be no saving response to the Word of God.

III. Some theological considerations

Although the Spirit is always at work in, by and through the Word – and, in this sense, the Word and the Spirit, though distinct are not separate – it is not true that the Spirit is always savingly at work in the hearts of the hearers. If he were, then all the hearers would be saved. And, *in this sense*, the Spirit may be said to be separate from the Word, *in that the Word may be read or preached but the saving activity of the Spirit not take place within the soul*. Since the Word only savingly benefits those who have faith,[114] it follows that without faith the Word produces no saving benefit. Of course, the Word is needed to be believed; but the Word does not produce the ability or capacity to believe, any more than the seed which the sower sowed could change the condition of the soil into which it fell. This is such a basic and fundamental point of biblical religion that it is surprising that it needs to be spelled out in this way.[115]

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[114] Heb 4:2

[115] Both Cunnington and Letham, standing as they do within the Reformed tradition, would, of course, agree with this fundamental point of biblical religion. Cunnington says as much on pp. 43-44 and 85-91. The problem then arises, however, as to how other things which are said fit into this. For example, what the *concept* and language of *immediate* regeneration is concerned with is precisely the fact that the Spirit effects a change in the heart so that the sinner is able to respond to the Word. Pursuing the analogy of the seed and the soil, the Word no more changes the disposition of the heart than the seed changes the nature of the soil. This being so, immediate regeneration is hardly a red herring when considering the relationship of the Word and Spirit in the matter of the sinner hearing the Word preached. Thus, speaking of the efficacy of the Word, Cunnington quotes Calvin: "the Word which penetrates, by faith, to the heart of man…" The point here is that for it to penetrate "by faith" requires the immediate work of the Spirit upon the heart; otherwise there will be no faith by means of which the Word will penetrate. In other words, while Cunnington acknowledges the fundamental point that the Spirit must renew the heart, this is not always expressed with the same clarity throughout his book. This leads on to a second point, which is this: running alongside Cunnington's acknowledgement that the Spirit must work in the sinner's heart for him truly to receive the truth, there are statements which appear to confuse this with the Spirit's ministry being tied to the ministry of the Word in order for the Word to achieve its purpose, where achieving its purpose is identified with what God has decreed: see pp. 86-89. It is, of course, true that the Word will always accomplish what God has ordained: but where he has ordained that it will harden the hearers in

Secondly, contrary to the impression that Cunnington gives, a distinction between regeneration, narrowly understood as the implanting of a new principle of spiritual life in the soul, and more broadly comprehended as the calling into expression of that life by the Word and Spirit, is not fanciful nor is it something confined to Berkhof and Olyott. Some writers may wish to distinguish between spiritual "conception" and spiritual "birth", whereas others, while not accepting this distinction, nevertheless distinguish between regeneration, understood as the direct act of God in implanting new life, and a wider understanding of new birth as including the response of repentance and faith – conversion. The reason for this should be obvious: since the Word does not profit anyone unless they have faith, then the capacity to believe must exist prior, in order of nature, to the exercise of faith in the Word and in the Christ held out in the Word. This is abundantly clear from those who took issue with Pajon, from Bavinck, Edwards, Owen, Lloyd-Jones, Berkhof, Warfield and Murray. Indeed, Bavinck specifically addresses the interpretation of James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23, as does Murray, and both men distinguish between regeneration as narrowly conceived and as more broadly understood in their exegesis of these verses. In the very first issue of this journal Hywel Jones argued for a distinction between spiritual conception and birth, and sought to do so by way of a careful consideration of the Greek terms employed.[116] The article demonstrates that there is more to be said for the exegesis that Olyott offers of James 1:18 and of 1 Peter 1:23 than Cunnington, with his summary dismissal of it, would acknowledge.[117] The important point to observe, however, is this: those writers, such as Bavinck and Murray, who do not accept a distinction between spiritual conception and spiritual birth, nevertheless emphasise that there is a "narrow" meaning to regeneration and a broader meaning. The narrow meaning refers to the implantation of a new principle of spiritual life, and this is something which the Holy Spirit accomplishes directly and immediately in the human heart; the broader meaning involves the calling of that life into expression, and the Word is involved in this, and so is the individual's intellect and will. In this broader sense of the term, regeneration is similar to conversion. In this respect, as has been noted by numerous writers, some early Reformed writers, such as Calvin, used the term regeneration to refer

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unbelief, the Spirit is not and cannot be at work in the same way as he is when God has ordained that the Word will be unto eternal life. It is this asymmetry of the ministry of the Spirit with the Word that is not spelled out in Cunnington's work as clearly as one might have wished.

[116] Hywel R. Jones, "The Bearing Of Regeneration On Some Aspects Of Pastoral Care", *Foundations*. Issue 1 (St Albans: BEC., 1978), 23.

[117] Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power*, 25-26.

to this broader aspect and, at points, appeared to identify it with effectual calling.[118]

While it is true that God's Word will always accomplish what God intends it to accomplish, this is not the same as saying that God's Word always blesses the hearers: for it is manifestly the case that some people are hardened under the proclamation of the gospel. Unless we are to adopt a Pickwickian understanding of the word "bless", which has more in common with the Alice-in-Wonderland idea that a word means just what we want it to mean than it does with sober exegesis of God's Word, then we have to say that God the Holy Spirit does *not* always bless his truth to the souls of the hearers. To assert that he does so is to confuse Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim! The preaching of God's Word will always accomplish what God intends it to accomplish (Is 55:11). (It is true that in the context of Is 55 the intended accomplishment will be spiritual fruitfulness. This does not, however, negate the larger truth that all things that occur – including people's response to God's Word – do so in fulfillment of God's sovereign decree [e.g. Acts 4:27-28]. Thus, the effect of Isaiah's ministry was to harden his immediate hearers [Is 6:9-10].) In that the Word is the Holy Spirit speaking and, in this sense and because of the omnipresence and immanence of the transcendent God, the Spirit is working in and through his Word, one may say that it is the Spirit who is hardening men under the preaching of the Word. But, as with salvation and condemnation, there is an asymmetry in the Spirit's work in blessing, on the one hand, and in hardening, on the other: in the former case, his immediate work in the heart and soul actively changes the sinner; but there is no immediate act of the Spirit in the heart of the unregenerate, whereby he makes them or keeps them unregenerate.

IV. Conclusions

1. The Word of God is the Holy Spirit speaking. This being so, and in view of the fact that the Holy Spirit, as God, is omniscient, omnipresent, immanent and transcendent, the Word of God can never be separated from the Spirit of God. The Word of God, however, is not the Holy Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit clearly exists apart from Scripture: if this were to be denied, then we would have to say that Scripture existed as a phenomenon before the universe was created.

3. The Holy Spirit is active in providence in the universe and amongst people who have lived and died without access to God's special revelation. The Spirit has been at work, therefore, apart from the Word, the Word being understood here, as God's inscripturated special revelation.

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[118] See, e.g., Jones, "Regeneration", 25-26; Graham Harrison, "Becoming A Christian – In The Teaching Of John Calvin" in *Becoming A Christian* (The Westminster Conference. 1972).

4. Although the Spirit works by, through, and in the Word, he also works with the Word. The manner of his working (in imparting new life) and the degree of his working (the numbers to whom he imparts new life) are not constant, and sometimes he does not accompany his word in blessing and in bringing salvation.

5. His activity, through the Word, in hardening and judging is asymmetrical to his work in blessing his Word and in imparting new spiritual life and creating or begetting the disposition of faith.

Foundations 71 (November 2016): 88-92

A REPLY TO STEPHEN CLARK

Bob Letham[*]

I would like to thank Stephen Clark for his interesting contribution, with the vast amount of which I agree. Indeed, it would be sad if this important matter, which I described in my foreword to Ralph Cunnington's book as a friendly discussion, were to be turned into a controversy. It would be akin to two parties of climbers approaching the summit of Everest, glorious vistas all round, and turning aside to engage in a fierce brawl. Rather, this is a matter that should be *sine ullo mutuae caritatis et fraternitatis dispendio.*[1]

Stephen takes me to task for my criticisms of Martyn Lloyd-Jones; I expect nothing less of him. On some of them, I stand corrected; I am very happy to say so. Of course, I am far from alone in these criticisms. The lecture of Lloyd-Jones that I cited in my address gave Donald MacLeod cause to believe that something was wrong with his pneumatology.[2] MacLeod considered that his views on the baptism and sealing of the Holy Spirit were "a serious disparagement of the ordinary Christian", that it was evidence of a "the theology of *plus*", "impossible to harmonise… with the New Testament".[3]

However, this is incidental to the question of the relation between the Word and the Spirit. While there is much about which to comment, I want briefly to mention a couple of points in connection with what Stephen has written.

Stephen's focus in his article is on the saving work of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, my attention – and I believe that of Ralph Cunnington too – was on the effective work of the Spirit, whether in salvation or judgment, reflecting the two-edged nature of God's covenant. If this difference is missed, confusion can result.

A confusion of sorts could easily arise in the mind of the reader in the reference to Pajon and his idea of mediate regeneration. This is only relevant

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[1] See A. Heidanus on the supralapsarian – infralapsarian debate, cited by Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, 127.

[2] Andrew Atherstone, David Ceri Jones and William K. Kay, "Lloyd-Jones and the Charismatic Controversy", *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Life and Legacy of 'the Doctor'* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2011), 124.

[3] Ibid., 128.

to my paper to the extent that the phrase "mediate regeneration" as such has a precedent. The discussion in Ralph's book and in my presentation was occasioned by the suggestion of Stuart Olyott that the Spirit works independently of the Word, and is frequently absent, such that it is necessary for us to storm the gates of heaven to persuade him to act. Pajon's claim concerned the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the human person. Quite rightly, it was rejected as being outside the bounds of acceptable doctrine. There can be no ontological substratum between God and the human soul. Nor can there be any privileged part of the human constitution. Additionally, Pajon – with an apparently diminished understanding of depravity – effectively separated the Word and Spirit, so undermining the sovereignty of God's gracious action. Pajon's claims concerned the work of the Spirit in conversion, whereas Ralph was addressing, as I was, the inseparability of the Spirit and the Word in preaching. Moreover, to assert that the Spirit always accompanies the Word does not entail that he does nothing else, nor does it imply that humans have a residual ability to exercise faith apart from his transforming work.

Closer to the context of Ralph's book and my comments, as Sinclair Ferguson points out, "although regeneration is seen by John as a sovereign and monergistic activity, it does not take place in a vacuum, but is effected by the ordinances of God directed to the whole person".[4] He continues, "this is underlined in the New Testament by statements which suggest that regeneration itself takes place by means of the word of God". Moreover, "there is no hint of a threat to divine sovereignty in the fact that the word is the instrumental cause of regeneration, while the Spirit is the efficient cause".[5] Indeed, "regeneration and the faith to which it gives birth are seen as taking place not by revelationless divine sovereignty, but within the matrix of the preaching of the word… Their instrumentality in regeneration does not impinge on the sovereign activity of the Spirit. Word and Spirit belong together."[6] Or as Warfield remarks, "This new birth pushes itself into man's own consciousness through the call of the Word, responded to under the persuasive movements of the Spirit; his conscious possession of it is thus mediated by the Word."[7]

While the issues in the Pajonist controversy surrounded the relationship between the Spirit and the human mind or will, the questions raised by Ralph and myself, following Calvin, are quite different and address the relation between the Spirit and the Word. In this, the Word and Spirit are

[4] Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 124.

[5] Ibid., 125.

[6] Ibid., 126.

[7] Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "On the Biblical Notion of 'Renewal'", in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952), 370.

distinct but inseparable. There is no disjunctive dualism. The written Word, which testifies of Christ, has God for its primary author and is breathed out by the Spirit. The written and preached Word are not Christ, but its existence as Word is inseparable from him, and exists as the mind and will, as well as the originated work, of the Spirit, given through the concursive and receptive engagement of the human authors.

At the same time, the Spirit and the Word are distinct, not to be reduced to something else or to the other. As distinct, the Word and the Spirit cannot be separated in this particular relation by saying that the Spirit operates independently of the Word any more than one could attribute power to the Word independently of the Spirit. This cannot be true in Trinitarian terms. Even when the Spirit is active – with the Father and the Son in the indivisible trinity – in governing the cosmos, that government is conducted by "the powerful Word" of the Son (Heb 1:3) just as in creation "the worlds were formed by the word of God" (Heb 11:3) while "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Gn 1:2).

This inseparability is grounded in the indivisibility of the trinity and the inseparable works of the three, the most basic axioms of classic Trinitarian theology, dating from the fourth century crisis. It is in those terms that the appropriations, the works attributed to any one of the Trinitarian persons in distinction from the others, are to be seen, not as acts undertaken independently of the concerted operation of the three, but rather together in indivisible union.

Added to that is the perichoretic, mutually interpenetrative relationship between the living Word, the Son, and the derivative forms of the Word, in Scripture and proclamation. There are not three Words. The eternal Son, indivisibly one with the Father and the Holy Spirit (the great theme of Athanasius, the Cappadocians and Augustine), became incarnate for us and our salvation, sent by the Father, conceived by the Spirit. When he ascended to the Father, now and for ever in our nature, he sent the Spirit to the church. It was the same Spirit who breathed out the Scriptures through the minds and work of the human authors, who testifies of the Son in the Word he inspired, which Word itself speaks from first to last of the Christ, who is the eternal Son of the Father. When that inspired, inscripturated Word is read, and when it is proclaimed, it is the very word of God. When the gospel is preached Christ is heard (Rom 10:14), Christ preaches (Eph 2:17), the voice of the Son of God resounds (Jn 5:24-25).

These two foundational realities, taken together, point to the inseparable working of the Spirit in, through and with the preached Word. This is an objective matter, independent of the human response. In this it may indeed, and does, vary in its manifestation in this situation or that as God pleases, and since the human audience differs, whether in faith or unbelief.

Unfortunately, Stephen refers to only eight pages in Ralph's book out of 126, while the passage he mentions from my address to ministers at the International Conference of Reformed Churches is 120 words out of 9,300. The result is less than fully representative.

In answer to Stephen's first question he was to address – does the Holy Spirit work in the hearts of hearers of God's Word always and in the same way and to the same degree? – the following extract will supply the answer, which should be obvious. To his second question, on whether the Spirit works at any point directly or immediately on the soul *or* is his work accomplished always by and through the Word, the answer is *both*. It is a fallacy to oppose what should go together. There can be no ontological substratum between us and God, neither does the Spirit work apart from the Word.

I said the following, in the paper Stephen mentions, which I presented to a gathering of ministers of the gospel in the International Conference of Reformed Churches, a presentation not originally intended for publication but rather to encourage some in countries where persecution is rife, and others in the West where preaching is disparaged:[8]

As a result we can *expect* the blessing of God upon the preaching of his Word. This is not presumption. It is simply faith, confidence that what he has promised he performs, and will continue to perform. This blessing can cut both ways; in some instances it is a form of judgment. As Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, "Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance of death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?"

Hughes cites Calvin to the effect that the gospel is never preached in vain, but is effectual, leading either to life or to death.[9] Indeed, Calvin states that "wherever there is pure and unfeigned preaching of the gospel, there this strong savour that Paul mentions [in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16] will be found… not only when they quicken souls by the fragrance of salvation but also when they bring death to unbelievers".[10] Hodge comments, "The word of God is quick and powerful either to save or to destroy. It cannot be neutral. If it does not save, it destroys."[11] Elsewhere I have written that preaching has a two-fold cutting edge, bringing life and death wherever it goes.[12] It is best to say, with Strange, that "the Holy Spirit makes the Word efficacious to different people in different ways at different times, according to his sovereign will".[13]

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[8] It was published in a journal specifically intended for office-holders in the OPC.

[9] Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1961), 80.

[10] John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (David W. Torrance; ed. T. A. Smail; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 34.

[11] Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Banner of Truth, 1959), 46.

[12] Bob Letham, "The Authority of Preaching", *Baptist Reformation Review* 3 (1974): 21–29.

[13] Alan D. Strange, "Comments on the Centrality of Preaching in the Westminster Standards", *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999), 199.

So yes, the Spirit accompanies the Word invariably but asymetrically, as Stephen puts it. The darker side, seen in Hebrews 4:12-13, in a context reflecting the unbelief of the wilderness generation, and in Matthew 11:25-27, where Jesus thanks the Father for hiding "these things" from the wise, happens *per accidens,* adventitiously, incidental to his main purpose, "for God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:17). Resistance to the Word *will* be judged but the central purpose of the history of redemption is salvation. Each time we mount the pulpit, what happens counts for eternity, whether for salvation or judgment. The Spirit is never an absentee. To suggest so is to open the door to acute Trinitarian problems.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11, ESV).

"No word of God shall be powerless" (Luke 1:37, my translation).

> Disposer supreme, and judge of the earth;
> who choosest for thine the weak and the poor;
> to frail earthen vessels, and things of no worth,
> entrusting thy riches which ay shall endure.
>
> Their sound goeth forth, "Christ Jesus is Lord!"
> then Satan doth fear, his citadels fall:
> as when the dread trumpets went forth at thy word,
> and one long blast shattered the Canaanites' wall.
>
> *J.B. de Santeuil, 1630-97.*[14]

(Editorial note: A rejoinder from Stephen Clark to this reply from Bob Letham will be published in the next edition of Foundations.)

[14] *The English Hymnal* (ed. Ralph Vaughan Williams; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), hymn 178.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering their Structure and Theology
O Palmer Robertson, Presbyterian & Reformed, 2015, 336pp, £14.99

It is commonly recognised that the book of Psalms is divided into five books, and that each of the first four books closes with a short doxology, with the final book concluding with a group of psalms that constitutes an extended doxology (Psalms 146-150). Within the books there are well-defined groups of psalms (e.g. a preponderance of psalms attributed to David in Books I and II, groups of psalms attributed to the sons of Korah and to Asaph in Books II and III, and fifteen "songs of ascents" in Book V). Other patterns have been noted, such as, for example, the fact that the divine name *Elohim* is more commonly used of God in Book II in preference to the covenant name of *Yahweh* which features more prominently in Book I.

But beyond these and other similar observations, there has been a widespread perception that the book of Psalms consists of a largely randomly-arranged collection of sacred poetry and a reluctance to attach theological significance to the limited degree of structure that has been discerned. Recent scholarship, however, has challenged this common assessment. Since the publication of *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* by Gerald H Wilson in 1985, there has been a growing interest in the final, or canonical, form of the book. Wilson's attempt to identify an overall structure to the Psalter focused on the titles of the psalms, their genre and indications of authorship, and devoted particular attention to the psalms positioned at the "seams" of the five books.

Other scholars have built upon Wilson's pioneering work, but the publication of the present volume by Dr O Palmer Robertson, director and principal of African Bible University in Uganda, marks a substantial advance in our understanding of the book of Psalms. Convinced that "structures in the Psalter should be sought in the substance of the Psalter, and not merely through the analysis of titles, authors, and genres", Robertson sets out to demonstrate a flow in the book of Psalms that "may be traced from its beginning to its end". He refers to a "purposeful arrangement", to an "intentional structure [which] is apparent across the Psalter" and to "groupings or interconnections" which "bind the entire book of Psalms into a well-organised composition". He rejects the idea that the positioning of individual psalms and groups of psalms was haphazard and writes rather of "a capable editorial craftsman who determined the final form of the Psalter".

The Flow of the Psalms argues that "the prevailing consideration of the Psalter's arrangement is not primarily chronological but biblical-theological", though Robertson is careful to disavow the thought that the book of Psalms

constitutes some kind of systematic theology. He stresses that: "Acknowledging all these various structural elements of the Psalter does not mean that the book should be perceived as though it were a theological treatise setting forth its various topics in a predetermined logical order."

In terms of broad themes, Robertson traces progression from Confrontation (Book I) through Communication (Book II), Devastation (Book III) and Maturation (Book IV) to Consummation (Book V).

Book I – Confrontation (Psalms 1-41)

The opening book of the Psalter focuses on David's confrontation with the many enemies of his messianic kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Robertson notes that the "central themes of constant confrontation and ultimate victory reflect the unending struggle of the 'seed of the woman' with the 'seed of Satan' that characterises the whole of redemptive history". He further observes that: "The message of the book moves from David's struggle to establish his messianic kingship to the founding of a permanent dwelling place in Jerusalem and a perpetual kingship according to God's covenant with David."

Book II – Communication (Psalms 42-72)

Robertson asserts that: "The most striking thing about the content of [the] second collection of Davidic psalms within Book II is the number of psalms that refer to the 'peoples', the 'nations', the 'foreigners', or 'all mankind'." Progression is seen in a movement from David's personal struggle with his enemies to establish his kingship which features prominently in Book I to a declaration of the reign of the Messiah as *Elohim* on his throne (Psalm 45:5-6), ruling over the nations. Against this backdrop, there is direct communication with the nations as the psalmist reminds them that God will defeat them again as he has done in the past, while holding out the prospect of redemption for all his creation and calling on the nations to repent and join in the worship of the God of all the earth. Herein lies the explanation for the predominant use of *Elohim*, the general name for God, in Book II in preference to *Yahweh*, the covenant name revealed to Israel.

While Book II reflects the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant in the blessing of all the families of the earth and the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant through the establishment of the throne of the Lord's anointed, other psalms in the collection depict conflict, suggesting that there will be further struggles and humiliations before the final exaltation. Robertson writes: "A situation that may be described in terms of the *already* and the *not*

yet prevails. Yes, the Lord has established his Messiah in a position of rule over the nations. Yet the challenges to his position continue."

Book III – Devastation (Psalms 73-89)

Book III is markedly different from Books I and II in that it includes only one psalm attributed to David and that most of the psalms in this part of the Psalter are expressed in the first person plural (*we/our/us*) rather than the first person singular (*I/my/me*). Almost all of the psalms in this book are attributed to Asaph (two-thirds) or to the sons of Korah (a quarter). The predominant message concerns the defeat of God's people at the hands of invading international enemies. The book concludes dramatically with the throne and crown of the Lord's anointed cast into the dust (Psalm 89:38–39, 44), leaving God's people devastated.

Book IV – Maturation (Psalms 90-106):

In Book IV, Robertson discerns a more mature perspective – "a perspective that has been fostered by stretching the people's faith through their experience of the exile". There is a particular focus on the everlasting and sovereign rule of Yahweh over Israel and all the nations. One striking feature of this book is the way in which David's song of thanksgiving on the occasion of the arrival of the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem is reproduced in its entirety, dispersed across three psalms (Psalm 96:1-13, cf. 1 Chronicles 16:23-33; Psalm 105:1-15, cf. 1 Chronicles 16:8-22; Psalm 106:1, 47-48, cf. 1 Chronicles 16:34-36). Robertson reasons:

> By quoting from David's ancient psalm celebrating the bringing up of the ark-throne of Yahweh that it might be joined to David's royal throne in Jerusalem in both these concluding psalms of historical recollection [Psalms 105 and 106], the psalmist has effectively climaxed redemptive history with the union of God's throne with David's throne. God's great kingship merges with Messiah's kingship as guaranteed by the Lord's covenantal oath to David.

Book V – Consummation (Psalms 107-150)

The opening psalm of Book V with its reference to the Lord gathering his redeemed "out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south", "sets the stage for the consummate realisation of the gathering of Yahweh's people from all the nations to his permanent dwelling place in Jerusalem". Thus "the overall flow of the book of Psalms clearly moves in Book V toward the ultimate triumph over all the enemies of Messiah's kingdom" and the whole collection is brought to a climactic end with a "*Hallelu-YAH* finale".

From the outset, Robertson sets the Psalter in the context of the age-old enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). That conflict is very much to the fore in Book I where we see the Lord's anointed in *confrontation* with his enemies, but the contrast between the two kinds of people in relation to God's law continues throughout the Psalter. Robertson explains:

> As the Psalter progresses, this animosity between the two seeds is viewed from various perspectives. At one point, *communication* with the enemy includes an invitation to join in the worship of the Lord of the Covenant (Book II). At another point, the Lord's people experience *devastation* at the hands of international enemies (Book III). Still further, the people of the Lord undergo *maturation* as they focus on Yahweh's kingship despite the displacement enforced by their enemies (Book IV). Finally, God's people experience *consummation* as they shout "*Hallelu-YAH*" when ultimate victory is achieved over all their enemies (Book V).

In a relatively brief review article it is not possible to do justice to such a rich and illuminating study. The following observations are selected almost at random from many that could have been chosen to demonstrate the wide-ranging and stimulating nature of Robertson's contribution to the study of the Psalter:

- Attention is drawn to how acrostic psalms often provide a structural framework within the books of the Psalter, To take just one example, acrostic psalms 34 and 37 bracket four psalms of the "innocent sufferer" (Psalms 34-37). This group of four psalms is then immediately followed by another group of four psalms, this time regarding the "guilty sufferer" (Psalms 38-41).
- A connection is noted between the "songs of ascents" (Psalms 120-134) and the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-27. Twelve of the fifteen psalms in this group include at least one of the component parts of the benediction. Robertson remarks: "As the people approach the restored temple, the wording in twelve of the fifteen Songs of Ascents reminds the pilgrims of the priestly benediction that awaits them as they make their trek to Jerusalem."
- Reference is made to the "poetic pyramid", a possible structural element in the Psalter which has hitherto received little or no recognition. Robertson refers to several examples, one of which is found in the "songs of ascents". Taking Psalm 127 as the "pinnacle psalm", he notes that it is balanced on each side by seven psalms, two of which are "of David" while the other five are unattributed. He further notes that the divine name Yahweh appears exactly twenty-four times on either side of the "pinnacle psalm". Robertson dismisses the idea that this is an accident or a mere curiosity, maintaining rather that "a focus on the ultimate blessing associated with the Name lies beneath this preciseness in the

> pronouncement of the divine Name". He further suggests that, like the acrostic psalms, the poetic pyramids may have served as an aid to memorisation and to grasping more effectively the structure of the Psalter as a whole.

The Book of Psalms has brought comfort and strength to generations of the Lord's people and has served as a rich source of devotional material. And yet, at the same time, the intensity of emotion expressed is such that believers have often struggled to relate to it, both in its depths and heights. On this point, Robertson offers a few hints along the way to help us in our use of the Psalter. He writes:

> [I]t is almost certain that no single person since David, with one exception, has undergone the depths of agonies and the heights of exhilaration of that particular man. For he was a unique individual raised up specifically as the "man after God's own heart" to display in all its fullness the glorious life of the person who is one with Almighty God. In a similar way, Jesus the Christ as great David's greater Son experienced in his turn the realities described in the Psalms in a unique and heightened manner.

In order to appreciate the significance of the Davidic Psalms for ourselves, Robertson suggests that we must first hear in them the voice of the messianic king, the representative head of his people. David was not speaking as a private individual, but as the Lord's anointed, the recipient of the divine covenant and a type of the promised Messiah. The Psalter is thus to be understood in the context of our union with Christ our representative head and read covenantally. Hence, in Robertson's words:

> Transference of value in the Psalms is not simply a matter of one person (David or the psalmist) to another person (the contemporary reader), but primarily from covenantal head to the people he represents.

This is an area which merits further attention in order to assist us both to better apprehend the dimensions of Christ's fulfilment of the book of Psalms and to enrich our use of the Psalter in personal, family and public worship.

It is inevitable that in a book of this size and nature that not all readers will be persuaded by the author's analysis at every point and may feel that his arguments are forced or contrived on occasion. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Dr Robertson is correct when he writes that, "Rediscovering the Psalms in their fuller biblical-theological context as uncovered by the structure of the Psalter may provide rich blessings to the church of today." And in this volume he has performed a most valuable service to that end.

Norman Wells
Director of the Family Education Trust

Marital Imagery in the Bible
Colin Hamer, Apostolos Old Testament Studies, 2016, 258pp, £19.99

If you want to do your bit towards undermining Christian unity then simply try to get a discussion going among fellow pastors and other believers on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage. It is sometimes surprising to see what a range of, often trenchantly held, views exist, even among those who may appear to be on exactly the same page otherwise. We need all the help we can get in this area.

Colin Hamer has already produced popular books on being a husband and on divorce (he has also written short biographies of Thomas Cranmer and Anne Boleyn whose stories very much touch on this area). This present title, which seeks to explore Genesis 2:24 and its significance for the understanding of New Testament divorce and remarriage teaching, is Dr Hamer's 2015 Ph.D. thesis awarded by the University of Chester. It therefore contains much that would probably be omitted from a more popular volume – most of the 771 footnotes, for example, and the constant quoting of other scholars, the discussions of methodology and most of the extra-biblical material essential in any rigorous study of the subject.

Having said that, this is a beautifully produced book written in very clear English, with regular summary statements and set out in meticulously numbered sections that enable the reader to know exactly where he is going, enabling him both to keep up and to find the material later on with ease.

The first three chapters are introductory and deal with "cross-domain mapping", with previous material on the same subject and the methodology used in looking at the Scriptures quoted. The other chapters take a generally chronological direction. First, we have a background chapter on betrothal, marriage, divorce, adultery and remarriage in the Ancient Near East (the laws of Hammurabi, from Ur and the Nuzi archive, etc). Chapters 7 and 8 are two short excursions into the literature of the Second Temple period (Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, Qumran documents, Rabbinic writings, Philo and Josephus, Judean desert documents and Graeco-Roman documents). Chapters 5 and 6 look at the Old Testament material and Chapters 9 and 10 look at the New Testament material.

The basic argument of the book concerns Genesis 2:24: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Whereas Genesis 2:23 ("Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'") speaks of a miraculous couple in a literal one-flesh union formed, not voluntarily or on a covenantal basis, but by God, Genesis 2:24 restates what the marriage union is to be using a metaphor. In this case a naturally born couple, by means of a covenant, voluntarily choose to be formed into what they were not before, a (metaphorical) one-flesh

family union. The argument is that whereas many have taken Genesis 2:23 as the model of marriage or conflated the two verses, it should rather be Genesis 2:24 that is our model. That is the way earthly marriage should be understood and the way both that the Old Testament understands the covenant relationship between the LORD and Israel and the New Testament understands the covenant relationship between Christ and his church. In the technical jargon of the book, which he carefully and helpfully explains throughout, Genesis 2:24 "is the source domain which is cross-mapped to the target domain (God 'married' to his people) in the marital imagery of both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures."

The book contains several helpful diagrams or maps found in the text and in an appendix. The two most interesting are the ones that show consequent Old and New Testament analogies from the biblical understanding of marriage. First, we have five consequent Old Testament analogies, namely marital obligations for God, adultery forbidden, divorce certificate required, remarriage to God forbidden but a future betrothal followed by remarriage promised (see Ps 132:13-16; Ez 23:1-9; Jer 3:6-8 [twice over]; and Hos 2:19, 20; Is 54:4-8). The references to a new covenant in Jeremiah 31 are also brought in here. Secondly, we have nine consequent New Testament analogies, namely betrothal, wedding feast, invitations, Jesus prepares a place for the church, he pays the *mohar* (purchase price for a wife) for the church, Christ cares for the church, the church waits for Jesus, Jesus comes for the church, Jesus takes the church to his own home (see 2 Cor 11:2; Mat 22:1-14; Jn 4:5-29; 1 Cor 6:1, 20; Eph 5:22-29; 2 Tim 2:10-13; Mat 25:1-13; Rev 21:1-4).

The book argues that it is on this basis that we should understand the concepts of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Hamer argues that the New Testament affirms his thesis that the pattern for earthly marriage is to be found in Genesis 2:24 but scholars and the churches alike down the years have conflated Genesis 2:24 marriage with that of Adam and Eve as described in the previous verse so teaching that earthly marriage is to be modelled on the first couple. This leads to the restrictive views on divorce and remarriage that we all know about and perhaps hold. He blames the confusion on the influence of Neoplatonism and of Augustine. Hamer argues that the New Testament writers would not employ an imagery when speaking of Christ and his church that they then repudiated when it came to earthly marriages.

The bottom line, then, is a more liberal view of divorce and remarriage than many are comfortable with: "A divorce can be legitimately initiated by either spouse when the other fails to fulfil their own specific covenantal responsibilities". However, the case is very thoroughly and carefully argued and does raise the higher and ultimately more important question of the nature of the relationship between God and his people.

Even if one does not accept every argument or piece of exegesis employed or even the thesis itself (and some may well not), this is nevertheless an erudite, well thought-out and tenable approach that yields many insights along the way. This reviewer found references such as that to the Exodus in terms of divorce and remarriage and the briefer allusions to how we understand the minor prophets (a set of books that begins in Hosea with marriage and divorce and that ends in Malachi with a reference to divorce) and the opening chapters of John (where there is not only a wedding in Cana but also a meeting at a well) most stimulating and thought-provoking. His understanding of God divorcing his people, as in Isaiah and elsewhere, was also very well handled.

In his conclusion he has a series of observations that, if all correct, might transform the way we read Scripture. The pattern in the Old Testament is marriage (in Eden), divorce (expulsion from Eden), remarriage (to Satan), divorce (from the gods of Egypt), remarriage (at Sinai), divorce (the Assyrian exile thought not the Babylonian). In the New Testament he sees a marriage proposal in John 4, divorce from Satan at the cross, divorce from the "Israel cult" in 70 AD and a glorious remarriage at the eschaton.

This book has undoubtedly made great strides in analysing and presenting a biblical understanding of these matters. It will not convince every reader but it is no surprise to read Craig L Blomberg's appraisal of it as "The best and most thorough treatment of this topic now available…". Hamer acknowledges that no attempt is made to deal with any of the pastoral issues that arise from his view and certainly there is room for lengthy discussion on those. This is certainly a book that anyone with an interest in this matter can and ought to read and ponder. We are grateful to the publishers for having decided to publish and promote it.

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Conscience: What it is, How to Train it and Loving Those who Differ
Andrew David Naselli and J.D. Crowley, Crossway, 2016, 160pp, £12.99

The authors want to put conscience back on Christians' "daily radar". In every generation and in every church, conscience issues arise – from whether Christians should wear makeup or go to the cinema or have drums in church, to how we bring up children or use non-fair-trade coffee – whatever the issue, conscience will be at work.

The authors begin with our experience of conscience, how individual consciences differ ("your conscience is your conscience, not anyone else's") and can be damaged. Conscience reflects the moral aspect of God's image; he

is the supreme Lord of the conscience and the general principle is that we should obey conscience – although it is not always right and, as with Peter in relation to Cornelius, the Lord may correct our understanding.

There follows a helpful overview of the New Testament occurrences of "conscience" after which the authors define conscience as "your consciousness of what you believe to be right and wrong": It bears witness, it judges, it leads to action.

We are then guided as to what to do if your conscience condemns you. The gospel is most helpfully applied. We are reminded that our battle with conscience will get more intense as we grow as Christians.

Chapter four is on "calibrating" your conscience – adjusting it according to the Word of God. The conscience is a skylight, letting in light from God, not a light-bulb radiating its own light (an illustration borrowed from John Macarthur). We need either to "add to" conscience if we are ignorant in certain areas of God's law, or "subtract from" it if we tend to legalism. But is the statement "Sometimes we need to calibrate our conscience by adding commands to it" the best way of describing the growth in maturity that comes with a greater exposure to God's Word? We add to our understanding of God's law and of new (to us) aspects of it, but this statement gives the impression that sanctification is a matter of adding to "rules". I don't think they mean this, but the economy of their discussion leads to imprecision.

The last two chapters are devoted to living with people with whom we differ. The discussion of Roman 14:1-15:7 on the "weak" and the "strong" is very helpful and applied with many contemporary examples. Finally, there is an illuminating chapter on how, in a missionary or cross-cultural context, we can adjust to people whose consciences differ on matters that are not fundamental to the faith. One of the authors having served as a missionary in south-east Asia, this comes with the ring of experience, though you may not agree with all his judgments. We must not assume that all our rules are God's rules but should deal with differences both to accept one another (Rom 15:7) and also to bring others to the gospel (1 Cor 9:19-23) and bring glory to God.

Diagrams and charts help to illustrate the arguments and the book is practical throughout.

This is the third "popular" book on conscience I have read in recent years from evangelical authors and is certainly the simplest. It spends little time on historical, philosophical or even theological discussion (though it is not un-theological) and aims at being a simple, biblically-based and practical guide for Christians. In that aim I believe the authors succeed and I would be happy to recommend this to Christians and also use it myself in preaching.

Mostyn Roberts
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Newton on the Christian Life: To live is Christ
Tony Reinke, Crossway, 2015, 288pp, £13.99

This book is part of a helpful series published by Crossway entitled "Theologians on the Christian Life". Each volume in this series explores how a different past teacher of the church envisioned and taught what the Christian life is and how it is to be lived. With heavyweights such as Luther, Calvin, Owen, Edwards and Bavinck in the mix, it might be tempting to bypass Tony Reinke's contribution on John Newton. After all, we might know and appreciate Newton's hymns, his dramatic conversion and his role in the abolition of slavery, but his sermons weren't thought of as being particularly weighty at the time, and he only published one work of serious historical theology, which didn't shift many copies. So we might not consider Newton to be qualified to give us a theologian's perspective on the Christian life.

This is a mistake that Reinke, a writer and researcher for desiringgod.org, seeks to address. John Newton was a pastoral letter-writer *par excellence*, his published correspondence of spiritual counsel to friends and acquaintances being much appreciated and valued during his lifetime and to this day. To read one of Newton's letters is like digesting a contemporary blog-post that is informal, warm and loving, diagnostic of the workings of the human heart, and taken up with the glory of the Lord Jesus. Many of the readers of this journal might have already appreciated the depth and insight of Newton's letters; many more might benefit from considering them for the first time. I remember a pastoral theology lecturer of mine, now in Glory, urging us trainee pastors to soak up Newton's letters. He also bemoaned the fact that *Cardiphonia*, Newton's most famous collection of letters, wasn't more readily available at the time. This book would have encouraged him.

Reinke's work is the fruit of painstaking consideration of each of Newton's 500 available letters and of the themes that connect them. His thesis is that they are "bound together by a cohesive theology of the Christian life, and as a result I believe it is possible to synthesise his pastoral counsel and discover his core message on the aim on the Christian life" (30). Reinke goes on to give what he thinks this core message is:

> John Newton's vision for the Christian life centres on the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Awakened to Christ by the new birth, and united to Christ by faith, the Christian passes through various stages of maturity in this life as she/he beholds and delights in Christ's glory in Scripture. All along the pilgrimage of the Christian life – through the darkest personal trials, and despite indwelling sin and various character flaws – Christ's glory is beheld and treasured, resulting in tastes of eternal joy, in growing security, and in progressive victory over the self, the world, and the devil – a victory manifested in self-emptying and other loving obedience, and ultimately in a life aimed to please God alone (30).

The author then goes on to explore each of these themes in turn. Sometimes he focuses in on one particular letter or group of letters, like Newton's letters on growth or Christian blemishes. Other times, Reinke draws out broad themes across them all. Although not a biography, there is much insight into Newton's character and a thorough knowledge of Newton's historical and theological context (it could be read to great profit in tandem with Jonathan Aitken's terrific biography of Newton). Reinke's writing is extremely readable, drawing contemporary applications and bringing in comparisons to modern theologians and authors. Reinke is not afraid to note places where he feels Newton's emphasis has fallen short of Scripture, for example when he wonders whether he emphasised enough God's delight in his people in Christ (260-261). Reinke is not sniffy about Newton's exegesis and handling of Scripture; he is extremely charitable and endorses Newton's Christ-centred approach (Chapter 7, "The Goal of Bible Reading"). Although there is depth and rigour here, this no exercise in mere academic analysis; Reinke wants this book to have the same effect Newton's letters were designed to have – action and change in the lives of believers: "Think of this book as a field guide meant to get dirty, dog-eared and faded in the clenched hands of a Christian pilgrim"(32).

As you can probably guess, this reviewer thinks this book is well worth the consideration of busy Christians, especially pastors. As Christian leaders we need to grow in our skill of how we counsel and apply the rich Christ-centred theology of Scripture to the needs and struggles of individuals; we need to grow in personal ministry, not just pulpit ministry; we need to be able to explain the mechanics of Christian growth and assurance, and to diagnose the various appearances of "Mr Self" in our own hearts and our churches; we need to make sure we are commending the Lord Jesus in a way that is heartfelt and authentic, not just as a by-rote way of ending sermons. We need also to keep our own walk with the Lord spiritually fresh. Here you will find much help from a Christian of the past; avenues of application to explore, illustrations to adapt to your context, and much encouragement to keep going. For example, a read of chapter 9, "The Discipline of Trials", would encourage empathy and discernment in considering how to help those who suffer.

Tony Reinke shares the "Christian Hedonism" perspective of John Piper, and if you have read Piper's books it is possible you will hear echoes of Piper's teaching (see, for example, "The Daily Discipline of Joy in Jesus" or "Gospel Simplicity"). While Newton lacks the depth, rigour and attention to ecclesiology of the stalwarts mentioned at the start of this article, Reinke demonstrates that he is an able practical theologian on the Christian life.

I would recommend reading this book slowly and thoughtfully, maybe with a volume of Newton's letters in hand. It might repay a group of hungry-to-grow Christians reading it together. If you have never considered John

Newton's pastoral theology, here is an excellent place to start. If you are a long-time admirer of Newton you will find this a useful reference work and a good refresher. I am sure I will be revisiting this book in the future for help and counsel. We understand Newton best when we are seeking to grow in our knowledge of Christ. As he himself would say: "To know him is the shortest description of true grace; to know him better, is the surest mark of growth in grace; and to know him perfectly, is eternal life" (101).

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Your Will be Done:
Exploring Eternal Subordination, Divine Monarchy and Divine Humility
Michael J. Ovey, Latimer Trust, 2016, 164pp, £7.50

Ovey's monograph is based on a paper he submitted to evangelical bishops of the Church of England at the beginning of 2015. The format is similar to a doctoral thesis which may put some readers off what is otherwise a short and clearly explained book on an important, but little understood, topic. The cogent flow of thought builds a compelling argument, grounded in orthodox historical theology, for the eternal subordination of the Son of God. Each chapter focuses on a particular argument contributing to the central thesis that the person who is the eternal Son of God is a true son, and as such submits to the Father, and is consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Ovey discusses this thesis in four interrelated contexts: First, the Arian controversy surrounding the council of Nicaea (325 AD); secondly, the biblical material, specifically the Gospel of John; thirdly, the Christological doctrine of dyothelitism; fourthly, the theological consequences for the issues of power, individualism and virtue. Many of these include interaction with two pertinent works of Kevin Giles on the eternal subordination of the Son. The bibliography and footnotes of Ovey's monograph serve to guide the reader to further reading in the primary sources, particularly in the Church Fathers.

Ovey very helpfully discusses the issue of the eternal subordination of the Son with reference to several significant theological problems that are less frequently debated than they were in previous centuries. These issues include divine monarchy and its concomitant heresy, modalism, and the relationship between Christ's divine and human wills, and the will of the Triune Godhead. Unfortunately, the latter issue is not brought to a sufficiently clear conclusion in chapter 6, but the former is beneficial and concise. Chapter 7 succinctly surveys the state of Western civilisation, and

powerfully applies the central thesis in a way that clarifies many controversial issues in our churches and cultures.

The author draws our attention to the relevance of the doctrine of eternal subordination to the contemporary debate over the ordination of women, and the marriage relationship. Drawing on Augustine of Hippo, he asserts that loving authority and loving obedience within the full equality of the Trinity brings great joy and meaning when it is reflected in marriage and in church leadership. Furthermore, when eternal subordination is understood correctly in the Trinity, it demonstrates that humility, obedience, and love are rooted in the eternal Triune Godhead.

By way of critique, I would like to mention two shortcomings: First, Ovey's articulation of Arianism is slightly simplistic. However, a more nuanced presentation would be extremely difficult given the limited space of the monograph. Chapter 2 is the historical prolegomena to chapter 3 in which he treats Arianism almost entirely in the context of Nicaea. The second footnote of this chapter distinguishes between the Nicene Creed and its reformulation produced by the Council of Constantinople (381 AD). However, this critical distinction is not satisfactorily worked out in the main text, and the Nicene Creed produced by the council in 325 is often assumed to have been fully accepted as the statement of orthodoxy almost immediately. Furthermore, Ovey frequently conflates the theologies of the two councils in a way that ignores the multifaceted and amorphous nature of fourth-century Arianism.

Secondly, Ovey in general interacts with other works very charitably. However, in dialogue with Jürgen Moltmann, he draws from only two of his works according to the bibliography. This is not enough to present a full-orbed account of Moltmann's articulation of the intra-trinitarian relations, which results in a one-sided presentation of his position. The focus of this dialogue is Moltmann's exploration of Christ's use of "Abba" in the Gospel of Mark. Ovey argues that Moltmann uses this to exclude authority in the relationship between the Father and the Son. However, elsewhere in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* and in other works, Moltmann expressly articulates the obedience of the person of the Son to the Father in a way that includes authority.

Overall, this book is highly accessible, despite the intricacy of its subject matter. Its timely arrival will, God willing, enable readers to come to biblical conclusions about some controversial contemporary issues, and to reach a more solid and coherent theological position, built upon a rich understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. I would commend it to a wide-ranging audience, both as a reference book, and one that is well worth reading and re-reading.

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Pleased To Dwell: A Biblical Introduction to the Incarnation
Peter Mead, Christian Focus, 2014, 224pp, £7.99

The Incarnation: a doctrine for life, or just for Christmas?

Perhaps it is a case in the church – generally – that we tuck away some doctrines, only to be displayed like presents and unwrapped at certain times of the year. The Incarnation may be one such doctrine. The "Easter Story" is a theological heavyweight. However, festive distractions can perhaps crowd out the Incarnation. Softened and disconnected all too easily, the doctrine is often presented with a sentimental sugar-coating, effectively stripping it of an earthiness and reality. Often, what is presented are clean, safe, family-friendly pictures of a baby in a manger, a stylish teenage expectant mother, a little donkey or two, and a last minute dash to find a room, all to add a little bit of drama. Instead, what we need is the connected, unfolding drama of redemption that stretches all the way back to the Garden, the promise of a seed preserved through the ages and outworked in history in the most unlikely of ways, de-sanitised, neither myth nor quaint, but real. The Word became flesh at a point of time in history – connected to the past and the giving of a promise, and having great significance for everything since!

Since "Christianity is a faith with Christmas in its DNA" (16) and the reality of the Incarnation permeates every day, Mead has written what he describes as a "Biblical Introduction to Christmas". However, more than a mere unwrapping of the Nativity narratives, this book is an open invitation to ponder the wonder that God was pleased to dwell with us. Rather than working back from the Nativity narratives, the author begins in the Garden with Adam and Eve and takes a journey through the full sweep of the biblical narrative until when, in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son to be born of a virgin.

Thus, his goal and primary reason for writing is to stir hearts by the Bible record itself. Indeed, he hopes that readers may even set down this work, pick up the Bible instead, and thereby know the God of biblical revelation better. A noble goal!

The book is in twenty-four chapters, perhaps acknowledging that readers may wish to use it as a devotional tool through the "Advent" season. Perhaps unintentionally, the chapters are divided into four sections, like parts of a play, lending itself to the unfolding drama of the biblical narrative.

Part One traces the themes that will all eventually converge on Bethlehem. Mead labels this, "Old Testament Anticipation" – that is, working through the giving of the promise to our first parents after the Fall, that God will dwell amidst his people, and the promise of the coming Prophet, Priest and King. Mead skilfully sets the stage backdrop with all the necessary furniture, prologue, backstory, and context.

It is appropriate that at the outset Mead introduces the drama with the fall of our first parents and the first gospel promise of a seed who would crush the serpent. This "seed promise" and the assurance of the presence of the Promiser is capably unpacked throughout this section and the picture becomes clearer through the pages of Scripture. God's loving-kindness and covenant faithfulness come to the fore, page after page and chapter by chapter, as Mead progresses the reader through this section, picking up speed on the way.

The author certainly manages to raise anticipation. The section reads like the gripping drama it actually is and succeeds in invoking wonder and amazement at the outworking of redemptive history by showing how, time and time again, "we discover a God who constantly moves toward his creation to dwell in their midst" (34).

Having aroused anticipation with the opening scenes, Mead passes the blank pages in the middle of our Bibles and in Part Two focuses in on the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel. Four hundred or so years of silence are broken; no longer in anticipation and gripped on the edge of our seat, we are introduced to Immanuel, God with us; prophecy is fulfilled and the promised seed comes to fruition.

Mead begins the section with a look at the genealogy, which is both helpful and intriguing. He describes it as being akin to a map, with landmarks to help us know "where we are in the New Testament and where we've been in the Old Testament" (71). Helpful orientation! Rather than loosing heart with the genealogy, and stressing over pronunciation issues, we are encouraged to see the structure, highlighting "God's great salvation plan… [and] covenantal developments of the initial declaration of the gospel" (73). After orientation, readers are introduced to a pious carpenter, a young mother, curious travellers from the East, a jealous and murderous king Herod, and the One from Nazareth called Jesus.

In Part Three Mead lays out the eyewitness accounts as described in Luke's Gospel account. We meet them in twos: for example, the aged couple Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Anna and Simeon. This chapter will leave the reader rejoicing, perhaps in part because it deals with the joyful response to God in song: Zechariah's Song, Mary's Song, and the angelic chorus. The stirring theme is joyful response to the strong arm of the Lord, his gracious salvation in the sending of the Messiah and his covenant faithfulness.

The final part is a reflection in light of the Incarnation through the words of the New Testament writers. This section explains the theology of the Nativity accounts and is extremely helpful. What does all this mean? The answer comes from the apostolic response and interpretation.

Finally, the book closes with a short conclusion summing up this great story of redemption, bringing us back to Garden and revealing the One who was made manifest in the flesh for us.

Was Mead correct to give this book a title describing it as a Biblical Introduction to the Incarnation? The answer would be strongly in the affirmative. It is a fascinating little gem, delivered in an enjoyable, quickly-paced and readable style. The pace helps build anticipation in Part One, without feeling as though the reader is travelling at too fast a speed. As an introduction, it is helpful for whetting the appetite and encouraging the reader to pick up the Bible and discover or rediscover this great drama.

The book is also good at delivering, especially for the "layman", a good overview of the developing seed promise and the assurance of the presence of the Promiser.

Overall, the text is neither complicated nor simplistic, but rather clear, concise and careful. Examples of this range from repetition of themes and truths, simple explanations of original language words to help unpack the meaning of a text, and brief explanations of theological terms and controversies that arose in the formulation of Christological understandings in the early church. These can be complex areas, yet the author guides the reader gently through them.

Although Mead often mentions "Christmas", I believe he wants readers to realise that the Incarnation is more than a "Christmas doctrine". In his exposition of the Nativity narratives, he presents a picture that is much more realistic than the iconic imagery many of us have formed in our minds. Further, our familiarity with the story may mean we miss significant things. For example, Mead quotes J. I. Packer to sum up the amazement he has been evoking throughout the latter parts of the book:

> The divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child… The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets (76).

In conclusion, I would recommend this book – at any time of the year! Readers will become better acquainted with the "big picture" and will certainly have a better appreciation and understanding of the Incarnation. The sections working through the Nativity narratives will grip and captivate readers with the reality of the Incarnation and evoke wonder and praise. The Incarnation: a doctrine for life, not just for Christmas!

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