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EDITORIAL: MARKING THE DISRUPTION

One hundred and fifty years ago, in 1843, over 450 ministers left the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland. The events which preceded this secession are well known. For the previous ten years the Church of Scotland had experienced an increasingly bitter conflict between those who wanted to assert the spiritual independence of the Church, and those who were content with the relationship that then obtained between the Church and the civil authorities. This conflict was initiated by the Evangelical party in the Church, which, in 1834, had assumed a majority in the General Assembly for the first time in approximately a century. The initial cause of the conflict was the passing of the Veto Act. The Act polarised opinions within the Church, and set it on an inevitable collision course with the state.

The decision of the Court of Session in 1838 ('the Auchterarder decision') declaring the Veto Act *ultra vires*, marked the point at which the controversy shifted from non-intrusion, in essence, the freedom of congregations to approve their own ministers, to the Church's spiritual independence (the freedom of the Church courts from overruling by civil courts). For men like Thomas Chalmers, Hugh Miller and Robert Candlish, the issue was the 'Crown Rights of the Redeemer'; was Christ and his Word supreme in the life of the Church or not? The Crown's rejection of the Church's 'Claim, Declaration and Protest anent the Encroachments of the Court of Session' in January 1843 led to the Disruption the following May. Echoing Ebenezer Erskine's comments in 1733, Chalmers declared, 'Though we quit the Establishment we go out on the Establishment principle; we quit a vitiated Establishment but would rejoice in returning to a pure one.'

One hundred and fifty years on what we can learn from the Disruption? For some, perhaps many, the Disruption was a tragedy. It divided the Kirk, and initiated an era of spiritual competition when the Church should have been galvanising itself to face the challenges of a rapidly changing society. This view, however, begs the question: was the Kirk, as it then was, spiritually fitted to meet the challenges of a changing

society? Ecclesiastical unity that is not nourished by theological and spiritual unity is at best a charade, and at worst an object of scorn for all thinking men and women. It is arguable that the Disruption gave the church an impetus among the people at large, and a credibility it had long lacked. It also cannot be denied that the Disruption gave a welcome impetus to mission, within Scotland and abroad.

For others, the Disruption is considered a high point in the Church's struggle, not only for independence from the state, but for spiritual integrity and faithfulness to Scripture. In an age obsessed with ecumenism, it is hard to appreciate the convictions which caused such a body of men and women to abandon the Kirk rather than sacrifice principle. Hundreds of ministers gave up stipend, manse and security, but within a short time, new manses and churches were built, at great cost to thousands of folk who 'came out' with their ministers.

For many the fundamental issue raised by the Disruption is this: are Christians willing to put truth before consequences? Is the Word of God to be our guiding star in how we think and act as the church of Christ? Disruptions and ejections should be avoided wherever possible. Every effort should be made to 'maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace', but never at the expense of truth. No doubt there were mixed motives behind the decision of some to disrupt. Certainly pride was a factor, a fact that can partly explain the personality clashes that became a feature of the new Free Church. Where human beings are involved, such things are sadly inevitable. George Rosie has said that 'The jury is still out on whether the Disruption was a triumph or a disaster.' But it is doubtful if the Disruption should be considered either a triumph or a disaster. It is better simply to see it as an attempt to put scriptural principles before ecclesiastical pragmatism; an attempt that a Judge, and not a jury, will one day decide upon. The Disruption became inevitable because, as Hugh Miller stated in his famous letter to Lord Brougham: 'We have but one Bible and one Confession of Faith in our Scottish Establishment, but we have two religions in it; and these, though they bear exactly the same name and speak nearly the same language, are yet fundamentally and vitally different.' Many are wondering if Miller's words do not accurately describe the situation in the Kirk today.

Ian Hamilton

CORRESPONDENCE

A Personal Response to Rose Dowsett's Article, 'Womanhood and Feminism', from the Revd Ian Hamilton, Newmilns, Ayrshire.

Dear Rose,

Your article in the last *SBET* on 'Womanhood and Feminism' raises issues that cannot be ignored by anyone who has a concern for the fulfilment of God's purposes for church and family. Your honest and impassioned plea for Christian men – particularly Scottish Christian men – to give women the place Scripture and Christ give them has much to commend it. It can hardly be denied that throughout the history of the church women have often been marginalised, considered in practice, and sadly often in doctrine, as inferiors to men. I cannot comment on the ridiculous statement made, you tell us, by 'a Scottish evangelical leader', that 'it is extremely rare to meet a thinking woman'. But bad examples do not advance a good argument. We can all relate stories which reinforce the point we are trying to establish. The more fundamental issue surely is, as I know you would agree, what does God say in his Word? Our only guiding star is God's infallible Word.

You make two substantive points. First, you urge us to reconsider Genesis 1-3 (important not only for mapping out God's purpose for man and woman before the Fall, but also for understanding Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, where his argument for male headship is creational and not cultural). You make two points from these chapters: first, that being man's 'helper' does not in any sense mean that woman is inferior to man. I wholly agree. Throughout the Old Testament, God is described as the 'ezer (helper) of his people, and he is our Lord! In no sense is woman man's inferior. But the fundamental point is that while man and woman are equal in dignity before God (both equally bear his image), man was created first (see 1 Tim. 2:12-13) and the man was not created to help the woman, but the reverse. This is so significant for Paul that it stands at the forefront of his exposition of male headship in 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Female submissiveness no more undermines a woman's essential equality with a man than God stooping down to help his people implies that he is inferior to his people. Equality of

dignity does not necessitate equality of function. This is compellingly demonstrated in the economy of the Trinity. The Son submits to the Father not because he is in any sense inferior ('God Jr. '), but because love delights to serve and submit. Secondly, you tell us that the formula of naming, associated with authority, is given in Genesis 3:20 (where 'Adam names his wife Eve...'), after the Fall rather than before it. Did you miss Genesis 2:23, Rose? Adam named his wife *before* the Fall.

Your other major point focusses on the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Christ. You remind us that our Lord adopted a radically different approach to women than the prevailing one in first-century Judaism. Let me ask you one question regarding our Lord's understanding of women and their relationship to men: why did he not include any women among his apostles? Surely not because of cultural or religious sensibilities! In nothing was our Lord bound by mere tradition. If, as you rightly say, the Lord Jesus is to be our example, then, like him, we will assert both the spiritual equality of men and women and the functional difference between men and women, with men being given the responsibility to lead and exercise headship. The fact of male leadership is further confirmed by the action of our Lord's apostles in choosing another to replace Judas. In Acts 1:15-26 the first and only replacement apostle was selected. Women no doubt met the requirements to be an apostle as set out in Acts 1:21-2, except for one: 'it is necessary to choose one of the *men (andron)* who have been with us...' (emphasis mine).

In replying to your impassioned article, Rose, my aim has not been to defend either male chauvinism or the blinkered condescension that has so often characterized male attitudes towards women in the church. My concern has been to do as you urged: to listen to your questions, hear your pain, and search the Scriptures (Can I say that the 'pain' cuts both ways, Rose? As I look at the moral and spiritual confusion in family and church life caused by failures in loving headship and humble submissiveness, I and many others are deeply pained!) From my culturally conditioned perspective (we all carry such baggage, including yourself, Rose) the Scriptures could not be clearer. God has ordered that men should exercise leadership in the home, and in the church. I equally

have no doubts that women's ministry has been neglected within sections of the church, and this sin must be rectified.

The issues before us are immense. May God give us all humble and teachable spirits, and a willingness to love and respect one another as we labour together to bring every thought captive to Christ and his Word.

With my warmest greetings,
Your brother in Christ, Ian

A Response from Rose Dowsett, Glasgow Bible College

Dear Ian,

Thank you for your letter. I wish we could talk face to face, as I think (a) you would find that we have more in common than you might suspect, precisely because I, too, believe passionately in submission to God's infallible Word; and, (b) the hermeneutical issues are too complex to be handled in the brief response I am allowed here.

I wish to stress that there really is a need for genuine debate, and that that debate, among Evangelicals deeply committed to the Scriptures, needs to address hermeneutical issues. You dismiss the anecdotes of rude comments from men; I included them precisely because they are typical of frequent remarks endured by many women. You may deplore them, as I did. The question remains: why do Christian men feel free to make them? I am suggesting that entrenched ideas, conscious or subconscious, follow a historical pattern of treating women as inferior, not just different.

I agree absolutely with your underlining the crucial importance of Genesis 1-3. But these chapters exactly point up the hermeneutical problems we need to wrestle with. During the past 150 years, on the basis of their genuine understanding of these chapters, biblical Christians have deduced many things about the role of women: it is a defiance of God to use painkillers in childbirth; girls should not be educated; women should not have access to higher education, and should not enter professions; women must stay at home; women must not own or inherit property; women must not vote.... The list goes on and on. While I do not wish to attack the integrity of those who reached these conclusions, I truly

believe them to have misunderstood and misapplied Scripture, and I think few British Evangelicals (though in some cases some Evangelicals in some other countries) would now wish to affirm any of them. Surely we of all people are committed to the often intensely painful and hard task of disentangling tradition, however dear, from truth: that is why in each generation we need to re-examine our forebears' hermeneutic.

You refer to Genesis 1-3, cross-referring to 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and implying that I disagree with male headship and female submission. If you read my article carefully, you will find that nowhere do I say that. The terms are clearly there in Scripture, and I would be sinning to ignore them. The question remains, however, as to what they mean. Are the cluster of beliefs and assumptions commonly flowing from those ideas necessarily correct?

Whilst Ephesians 5:22 tells wives to submit to their husbands, the previous verse, addressed presumably to all believers of both genders, commands mutual submission as a hallmark of all Christian relationships. In that sense, my husband is to submit to me just as I am to him (1 Corinthians 7:3-4 is a specific example of this, strictly within the boundaries of marriage), and both of us to all our brothers and sisters in Christ as we have dealings with them. Submission is not simply a requirement for women, even though it is within my marriage that I may have the greatest opportunity for living it out (or sinfully disobeying God's command!). Some Christian men may be rather quick to stress the submission of women and rather blind when it comes to the equally important submission of men.

It is equally important to ponder the fact that nowhere are husbands told to give their wives orders. Whatever headship means, biblically it does not mean being domineering. Moreover, headship in a household may be devolved upon a woman: see 1 Timothy 5:14. If headship is to be equated with leadership (and evangelical scholarship is by no means of one mind on that), the biblical pattern of leadership is 'not lording it over others as the Gentiles do' but one of sacrificial love, the way of suffering servanthood. Sadly, rather few of our churches and Christian institutions have structures compatible with that kind of leadership and headship; many can only function where leadership is exactly the kind that the Lord Jesus condemned.

You appeal to the fact that man was created first, as indeed Paul also expresses it in 1 Timothy 2, although I am not sure that I would agree with your assumption that these verses are about male headship: they do not say so. I think honesty compels us to say that these verses are extremely difficult to understand. Why is the order of creation important? The animals were created before Adam, but clearly are not given priority of significance or status. Woman was created after man; but she was created to be 'helper', the one whom the man needed, the one who as 'helper' mirrors God. What does Paul mean when he says Adam was not the one deceived? Was Adam's sin less than Eve's? That seems inconsistent with other teaching. It is in Adam that we have all died. His sin was totally deliberate. He had received instructions about the tree direct from God; we are not told whether or not Eve had, or whether she had been told second-hand by Adam. And verse 15? Who dares claim that that clearly means that women's route to salvation is via domesticity and child-bearing?! Without understanding what verses 13-15 mean, it is hard to understand the connection with verses 11-12.

As for naming, no, I did not miss Genesis 2:23. But I think we have to ask exactly what is going on here. Is Adam naming Eve? The text does not say so. He is recognising her as woman, flesh of his flesh. Perhaps an analogy helps. When our daughter was born, as she emerged my husband Dick whooped with joy, 'Praise the Lord! It's a girl!' But a few moments later, as the midwife placed her in his arms, he said 'Hello Rachel!' The latter, not the former, marked her naming; and in Genesis the parallel to that is in 3:20.

When we look at the issues of leadership, authority and ministry in the church, then we have some unscrambling to do. As it happens, in my article I was concerned for women to be set free for ministry, but did not address the task of leadership. The two are often tied together, and sometimes further confused by being tied to ordination, but I do not believe that that is true to the New Testament. All God's people, not just 'the minister', are to be equipped for, and set free to engage in, ministry. The forms of ministry will vary according to gifts, sovereignly given by the Spirit. In particular, making the exercise of teaching gifts inextricably co-terminous with leadership and the exercise of authority is unhelpful; a gifted person may teach without aspiring to

leadership, and without claiming any authority other than that which is intrinsic to the Word itself faithfully expounded.

I believe that it is a mistake to assume, as some do, that gifts of teaching only appear in males; clearly within the Scriptures there are examples of gifted teaching women. On the other hand, neither all men nor all women have the gift of teaching – perhaps rather fewer of either gender than actually engage in teaching. Some churches have a structure whereby the teaching is generally vested in one person, usually male, implying that in any one congregation only one person will be given the ‘pastor-teacher’ gift. That is hard to substantiate biblically. In practice it also marginalises some men, and most women, with teaching gifts given by the Spirit. Of course, women may be permitted to teach in Sunday School, including boys. Is the assumption that males below a certain age can safely be taught by women, but at some point (arbitrary? twelve, as in Hebrew culture? eighteen, as in British law for adulthood? at baptism, or at reception into membership?) what has been commendable becomes ungodly?

I am not nit-picking. These are complex questions, because so many different verses and passages need to be taken side by side, each helping us to understand others, each supplementing and illuminating others.

One last note for you Ian! I live in a family headed by my husband. I am a member of a large international missionary society whose leadership is male. I teach in a Bible College whose Principal is male. I sit on various Christian committees and councils, all chaired by men. I am a member of a congregation whose elders are male (and who invite me – and other women – to preach from time to time). I have absolutely no desire whatsoever to ‘usurp authority’ or ‘bid for leadership’ in any of those spheres. But I also recognise that in each of these contexts I am an untypically privileged Christian woman, experiencing freedom for ministry denied to many other women. It is on their behalf, and at the invitation of the male secretary of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society and then of the male editor of *SBET*, with the encouragement of my husband and various other males in my life, that I wrote a paper, and now this further response.

With warm Christian greetings,
Yours sincerely, Rose

JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

TONY LANE, LONDON BIBLE COLLEGE

The beatification of the Scottish Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus (1265/6-1308) in March 1993 is not an event that should pass unnoted by the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*. Despite attempts in the past to claim him for Ireland, it is now universally agreed that John was born in Scotland, probably in the town of Duns. The Franciscans of Cologne celebrated the seven-hundredth anniversary of his birth by erecting a statue of him in the park at Duns. This sculpture has been described as 'striking', though how it strikes one may well depend upon one's view of modern art.

If England's most famous medieval theologian gave his name to a razor, Scotland's had the misfortune to donate his to a dunce's cap. This slander takes its origin from the sixteenth-century humanists and Reformers, who found his theology too obscure for their liking. His own contemporaries were more appreciative and called Duns the 'Subtle Doctor'.

1993 is the year of the single market. Duns' career is a good illustration of a time when Western Europe was in a real sense a single community. On his tomb at Cologne there is engraved a Latin poem:

*Scotias me genuit – Anglia me suscepit,
Gallia me docuit – Colonia me tenet.*

Scotland gave birth to me – England received me,
France taught me – Cologne retains me.

We have already seen that Duns was born in Scotland. The sense in which England received him is less certain. There is no clear evidence as to where he studied prior to his ordination in 1291, though the tradition that some of that time was spent at Oxford is plausible. But the chief credit for his education is given to Paris, the then centre of the western theological world. It is certain that Duns studied there from 1294 to 1297 and it may be that some of his earlier studies were also conducted in Paris. He went on to teach at Paris in the early fourteenth century, commenting on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. It seems that he had already lectured on the

Sentences at Cambridge and Oxford and he returned to Oxford to lecture during a year spent away from Paris in 1305-6, for political reasons. In 1307 politics again drove Duns from Paris and he went to Cologne where he taught. There he died and was buried, thus being 'retained' by that city.

That the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* should commemorate Duns the Scot seems appropriate. But what about the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*? If Duns was the 'Subtle Doctor', he was also the 'Marian Doctor'. Theologically he is famous especially for having put forward what became the decisive argument for the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception. The predominant view at the time was that Mary had been freed from sin after her conception, but before her birth. It was Duns who began to turn the tide in favour of the view that Mary was cleansed from sin from the very moment of conception. The major objection to this doctrine was that it seemed to leave Mary without the need of redemption, contrary to her own words (Luke 1:47). Duns argues that the issue concerns not Mary's need of redemption, but the timing of it. Mary, he suggests, was saved from actually contracting sin, rather than being cleansed from it after having contracted it. He argued that it is more perfect to preserve someone from original sin than to liberate them from it after they have contracted it – just as it would be better to prevent someone from falling into the river than to pull them out of the river after they have fallen in. Jesus Christ is the perfect redeemer, says Duns, so he must have redeemed someone in the most perfect way possible – and whom more fittingly than his own mother?

Duns claimed only to have demonstrated the probability of the immaculate conception. But he also argued that given a number of possibilities, all consistent with Scripture and tradition, that one is to be chosen which ascribes the greatest glory to Mary. This approach was not accepted by all, and so began centuries of dispute within the Roman Catholic Church. The Franciscans adopted the view of their illustrious doctor, John of Duns. Their rivals the Dominicans held to the view of their doctor, Thomas Aquinas, which was the older view of Anselm, Bernard and Bonaventure, that Mary was cleansed after her conception. So fierce became the dispute that in 1483 Pope Sixtus IV declared that the Church had not decided on

the matter and that neither view was heretical. It was not until 1854 that Pope Pius IX was able, in his bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, to pronounce that the doctrine of the immaculate conception 'has always existed in the church as a doctrine that has been received from our ancestors and that has been stamped with the character of revealed doctrine'.

Evangelicals are unlikely to be convinced by Duns' argument. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned here about the danger of *a priori* thinking in theology. This is not a danger that ceased with the end of the middle ages. Today we often hear *a priori* arguments about what a God of love may or may not do with those who reject him. Again, there are *a priori* arguments concerning the implications of the Bible being God's Word. In a particular culture and among those who share common presuppositions it is often these *a priori* arguments that carry the greatest weight. In the longer term, however, it is often these very same arguments that least convince future generations.

How should late-twentieth-century Evangelicals relate to a medieval theologian who was in large measure responsible for the emergence of a doctrine with which they have little sympathy? One approach has been to regard Duns as a forerunner of the Reformation and, in particular, of the teaching of John Calvin. It has been argued for some time that Calvin's theology has a strong Scotist element to it. More recently, T.F. Torrance has traced Calvin's intellectual pedigree back through his older Scottish contemporary John Major (sic!) to John Duns Scotus with, as a concession to the brethren south of the border, an intermediate role for William of Ockham. The specific claims made for Major (or Mair) have failed to win wide approval. But recent studies have served to emphasise the importance of Calvin's medieval background. Reformed theology was not created *ex nihilo*, but rather evolved out of late medieval theology by means of some creative genetic mutations. Scotus was undoubtedly a major contributor to the medieval theology which was the cradle of Reformed theology.

Scotus' writings will never become widely read. Even his contemporaries found them difficult to follow. Apart from the question of style, Duns died young, before he was able to write a *Summa Theologiae*. His extant works include two

commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, but unfortunately he died before he was able to complete the revision of the second and more important of these. The Subtle Doctor's writings score badly on accessibility, but it is a mark of his greatness (to say nothing of the potential that was terminated by a premature death) that he is still today considered a major theologian and that the Pope has pronounced him a 'Doctor of the Church'.

For Further Study

James B. Torrance and Roland C. Walls have recently authored a booklet *John Duns Scotus Doctor of the Church*, in the Nutshell series of the Handsel Press (Edinburgh, 1992).

Those who wish to go further could start by consulting standard dictionaries and encyclopedias. There are two useful books in English, though neither may be readily available in the UK. There is a translation of an older Italian book: E. Bettoni, *Duns Scotus: The Basic Principles of his Philosophy* (Washington, DC; Catholic University of America Press, 1961). There is also a symposium of papers commemorating the 700th anniversary of his birth: J.K. Ryan and B.M. Bonansea (eds.), *John Duns Scotus, 1265-1965* (Washington, DC; Catholic University of America Press, 1965).

There is a critical edition of Duns' writings, edited by C. Balic (Vatican City Press, 1950ff.). Not many of his works have been translated, but there is a selection edited by Allan Wolter: *Duns Scotus, Philosophical Writings* (Edinburgh, Nelson, 1962). The same editor, with Felix Alluntis, has edited *God and Creatures. The Quodlibetal Questions* (Princeton University Press, 1975).

THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE MINISTRY OF PAUL¹

GEOFFREY W. GROGAN, GLASGOW

I. Divine Authority and the Christian Faith

1. The importance of authority

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of authority as an issue for Christianity. It is not simply that every other theological question is related to it. Certainly, Christian truth is a unity, with every doctrine intimately connected with every other. The doctrine of authority is, however, unique. Without it no other theological truth has a basis that is at all adequate. Destroy authority and Bible teaching is reduced to interesting religious thought which may or may not have some value today as a stimulating approach to life.

For this reason, the issue of authority has come into focus at every important stage in the history of doctrine. What was the ultimate issue in the church's encounter with Gnosticism? What lay beneath the debate over justification between Catholics and Protestants at the Reformation? What is the issue between conservative Evangelicals and liberals? In each case it is authority.

2. Revelation, interpretation, inspiration and authority

It is important to distinguish between revelation and interpretation. We might be tempted to generalise and to say that in revelation the grammatical subject is God whereas in interpretation it is a human being. God reveals, man or woman interprets.

This is not, however, always true. The revelation itself often includes an element of interpretation. If the revelation comes through an historical event, that event needs to be interpreted before it can be fully revealing, and sometimes God interpreted it directly without human agency.

The Exodus and the cross were historical events, while the redemption of Israel and the atonement through Christ are

¹ The Finlayson Memorial Lecture delivered at the annual conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society on Friday 26 March 1993 at the Faith Mission Bible College, Edinburgh.

events divinely interpreted. God did not simply tell Moses that the Exodus would happen, but that it would constitute his deliverance of the people from Egyptian bondage. Jesus not only told his disciples he would be crucified, but that he would give his life a ransom for many. His interpretation was, of course, as clearly divine as God's Word to Moses, because he is God manifest in the flesh. In these two cases the revelation consisted of event plus interpretation. Often of course there was human interpretation. When this was given by the Spirit of God through human agency it could become part of the Word of God for the readers of the Bible.

So then interpretation, attributed to the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit, is often found within the bosom of revelation. This fact becomes especially important when we consider the way God's revelation of himself unfolded in historical eras. Systematic theology is sometimes in danger of giving the historical factor less than its proper consideration. Biblical theology is an important discipline because it gives due weight to the chronological nature of the historical form in which the revelation was given.

So, in the stage-by-stage unfolding of God's revelation, the inspired human channels of revelation often evaluated and interpreted what was given earlier. The prophets, for instance, often comment on God's disclosure of himself through the great events of Israel's early history, and at a later stage the apostles comment on the Old Testament. These comments are of such importance for the prophetic and apostolic witness respectively that they play a major part in the revelation given through these inspired persons. This revelation came to its climax and its completion in the great event of Jesus Christ. He is the Word of God made flesh. This great historical event, which was really a series of events all associated with one person, also needed and was given inspired interpretation.

But if the historical revelation is complete, interpretation is not. It continues in every generation, for each must have an understanding and application appropriate to its specific situation and needs. There is, however, a major difference between interpretation which is enclosed within the revelatory process and that which is not. It is true that interpretation always requires dependence on the Holy Spirit. But in the case of the biblical writers, there was a special work of the

Spirit, his inspiration, which guarantees the reliability of the interpretation. In this lecture we are interested in interpretation which is part of revelation, in so far as Paul, inspired by the Spirit, comments on earlier stages of revelation. It is of course because God's revelation takes written form in the inspired Scriptures that the Bible possesses authority.

3. Christ and the gospel

The gospel is a message, and that message is an interpretation of the event that is Christ and in particular an understanding of the events of central importance, his death and his resurrection from the dead. How are Christ and the gospel, event and interpretation, connected?

The interpretation was first given in essence by Christ himself. He was the first preacher of the gospel. He is said in the gospels to have preached the gospel, or the gospel of the kingdom, or the kingdom itself, the kingly rule of God. This means that the gospel possesses authority from God, and that this is the authority of the completed revelation. Here the seed planted many centuries earlier has come to full fruition.

4. The authority of the apostles and of the New Testament

What then is the role of the apostles? Christ committed the truth of his gospel to them, and appointed them to proclaim it with authority. After the saving events had themselves taken place, their meaning was expounded with great fullness by the inspired preachers and writers of the New Testament, all of whom were either apostles or so close to them that the gospel, the apostolic doctrine, was normative for them.

It is important to remember that the gospel is essentially truth. Some may suggest that it is 'better felt than told', but, if it is to do its work, it must be proclaimed and expounded in all its saving truth. The apostles not only proclaimed the gospel to the unconverted, but they taught Christians. Although the Acts of the Apostles records the fact of their preaching and also something of its content, there is very little in Acts about the teaching they gave to Christians, although what is given there is valuable. It is in fact in the Gospels and Epistles that we find their teaching given much more fully.

Now it has been recognised that all this material finds integration in one common gospel, expressed in different

ways, but basically the same. This view was put forward in its most influential form by C.H. Dodd in his book, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*.² Dodd's view has been challenged,³ but it can be well defended, although it would take us too far from our main purpose to do this now. We will take it for granted in what follows. If Dodd was right, the gospel is the substance not only of the preaching but also of the teaching. If there is a difference, it is the difference of the seed and the plant, of the baby and the adult. The most apt analogy is the relation between the text and expository sermon. The teaching of the New Testament is simply bringing out more fully the meaning and implications of the gospel. It is obviously time we looked more fully at the gospel itself.

II. The Nature and Authority of the Gospel

1. Its substance

A study of the sermons in the Acts of the Apostles and of references to the gospel in the Epistles yields a summary something like the following. God's promises in the Old Testament have now been fulfilled in Jesus the Christ, and especially in his death and resurrection for human salvation. The hearers are called to respond to his good news in repentance and faith, expressed in baptism. In this way God's kingly rule is established among human beings.

The reference to Old Testament fulfilment, although frequent, is not invariable. It is always present in preaching to Jews and also to Gentiles of the synagogue, but in preaching to pagans it is usually replaced by a reference to the God of creation.⁴ B. Gärtner, however, in his study of the Areopagus Address⁵, has shown that even when Paul is addressing a pagan audience his thought is consistently true to the Old Testament background of the gospel despite the fact that he

² C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, 1936).

³ See e.g. J.D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament. An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London, 1977).

⁴ See Acts 14:15-17, 17:24-31.

⁵ B. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, trans. by C.H. King (Lund, 1955).

never quotes it. It was always the background for him, the preacher, even if it was not for them, the hearers.

2. Its status

What is its status? Was it revelation or was it interpretation? Or was it both? It is best to think of it as both. It was *revelation*, because, like the Old Testament, it is called 'the word of God'⁶. This is a revelation term. It is not simply revelation; it is the very summit of revelation.

It is *interpretation* for two reasons: First, it provides a hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The good news was intimately related to the fulfilment of earlier revelation. Contemporary Judaism had not altogether understood the Old Testament; God gave his own hermeneutic of it in the fact of Christ. Secondly, it provided a hermeneutic of that great fact. This hermeneutic embraced selection and significance.

Jesus did many things. In fact, John tells us that if they were all recorded the world itself could not contain the books.⁷ The writers of the four Gospels therefore select materials, as all biographers must. They were, however, no ordinary biographers. They were preaching a message. They therefore place emphasis on the death and resurrection of Jesus, knowing their significance as the supreme saving acts of God. In so doing they are in tune with the emphasis on these events that we find in the rest of the New Testament. We must not forget that the hermeneutical material is itself part of the revelation and therefore carries divine authority.

3. Its connection with the apostles

The relationship between the gospel and the apostles of Christ is significant and important. Jesus committed his gospel to these men. If he is the substance of its message, these were the people who knew him best of all. They had been close to him, they had seen his acts, and they had heard him teach the people on countless occasions. He had also given special courses of instruction to these men themselves.

It is important to note that this teaching specially directed to them focussed on his coming death and resurrection. The

⁶ E.g. in Acts 4:31; 6:7; 13:46; 1 Cor. 14:36; 1 Thes. 2:13; Heb 13:7; Rev. 1:9.

⁷ John 21:25.

Synoptic writers make this clear to us. They do not give a full account of this teaching, but they do indicate its main themes, and the words they use make it abundantly clear that it was given as a definite course of instruction.⁸ This teaching was given particularly on his last great journey to Jerusalem, the place where these awesome events actually took place.

Most important of all, these men were witnesses of his resurrection. The resurrection is the most important evidence for the truth of the Christian faith and these men had seen the risen Christ. This fact is mentioned over and over again as we listen to the sermons in the Acts of the Apostles.⁹ Also they had been endowed with the Holy Spirit specifically as the Spirit of Truth. It is interesting to note how the prophecies and promises of Jesus about him relate particularly to our Lord's own teaching and also to exposition of the fact of Christ.¹⁰ These found literary form in the New Testament Gospels and Epistles respectively.

4. Its place in the apostolic ministry of Paul

It should be said that we are assuming the Pauline authorship of the thirteen Epistles in the New Testament that claim to be his, and also the authenticity of the Lucan account of his apostolic ministry. What was the essential qualification for apostleship? It must have been at the very least the call of Christ. But were there other qualifications? Acts 1:21 might suggest there were: not only being a witness of his resurrection, but also accompanying with him throughout his earthly ministry. We should however remember that on this occasion they were in fact concerned with filling a gap in a group composed entirely of men who had been with Jesus in that way. We may be wrong, therefore, if we suppose they were stating a qualification of quite invariable application.

Paul was no disciple during the ministry of Jesus, but he did claim to have seen the risen Christ and to have been appointed by him. It is not impossible that others, like Barnabas and James, the Lord's brother, were apostles in the technical sense,¹¹ and also Andronicus and Junias whoever

⁸ *E.g.* Mark 8:31; 9:12-13, 30-2; 10:32-4.

⁹ *E.g.* Acts 2:22-4; 3:32, 33; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39-42.

¹⁰ John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:12-15.

¹¹ Note the use of the word 'apostles' in Acts 14:14; 1 Cor. 15:7.

they were.¹² Our present concern, however, is not to vindicate the apostolic claims of Paul; rather, assuming them to be true, it is to enquire what link there is in his writings between apostleship and the gospel, and then to see how his concern for the gospel affected everything he did in the course of his ministry.

In actual fact, our interest is not so much in what authority Paul possessed, but rather what authority the gospel had over him. Now there is no doubt that Paul was enormously preoccupied with the gospel. James Barr has warned us against placing too much emphasis on word-counting in constructing a biblical theology.¹³ Yet without doubt such an exercise has its place, so long as we remember that words are important for the ideas they express, which may also sometimes be expressed in other words. Paul makes considerable use of the terminology of the good news. *Euangelion* ('gospel') occurs sixty times, while it is found only sixteen times in the rest of the New Testament. He is also the major user of *euangelizomai* ('preach the gospel'), with Luke, his companion, coming second. We have also to add to this the many passages where he places emphasis on the death and/or resurrection of Jesus, the central events proclaimed and expounded in the gospel.

5. Tradition and inspiration in the ministry of Paul.

In the Pauline letters we need to reckon with the work both of the second and third persons of the Trinity.

Paul uses the language of tradition,¹⁴ and it is clear that the ultimate source of tradition for him is Jesus.¹⁵ He received the gospel from him.¹⁶ He also quotes Jesus and alludes to his teaching.¹⁷ Even though he was not a disciple of Jesus during his earthly ministry, he stood in the apostolic mainstream as far as the dominical tradition is concerned.

12 Rom. 16:7.

13 J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961).

14 When he writes of teaching being delivered (or passed on) or received, e.g. in 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:1-3; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6.

15 Note 1 Cor. 7:10 and 11:23.

16 Gal. 1:1; 1:11-2:10.

17 E.g. Acts 20:25; 1 Tim. 5:18; cf. Luke 10:7.

He says less about the Holy Spirit in relation to his own inspiration. Writing to the Thessalonians, he refers to the Spirit in connection with his preaching of the gospel at Thessalonica, but he has in view the power of his preaching, not its content.¹⁸

1 Corinthians 7 makes an interesting study in the relationship between the tradition which comes from the Son of God and the inspiration that comes from the Holy Spirit. In verses 10, 12 and 25, Paul distinguishes between commands of the Lord and his own judgements. There can be little doubt that the former relate to the teaching of Jesus on the subject of divorce.¹⁹ The latter concern situations for which there was no such guidance given by Jesus himself. In these Paul makes judgements. The decisive word 'judgement' is a better translation of *gnome* here than the weaker and perhaps even tentative English word 'opinion'. After all, Paul wrote both Corinthian Epistles as an apostle of Christ (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1), and he was well aware that his apostleship carried with it authority from the Lord (2 Cor. 10:8-11; 13:10).

What then is the status of these judgements? In 1 Corinthians 7: 25, Paul says, 'Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgement as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.' This trustworthiness was, of course, the product of the work of the Spirit. Paul makes an interesting reference to him at the close of 1 Corinthians 7. Here he says, 'A woman is bound to her husband as long as she lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. In my judgement, she is happier if she stays as she is – and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.' There can be little doubt that the closing words of this passage are ironic. The Corinthians were very conscious of the activity of the Holy Spirit in their church life and probably made claims for his activity too easily. Paul's moderate expression therefore may well have been used by him in ironic contrast with their too easily made claims.²⁰

18 1 Thes. 1:5.

19 Compare 1 Cor. 7:10, 11 and Luke 16:18.

20 We might compare Paul with Jeremiah over against the false prophets of his day.

We might compare these words of Paul with what he says in 1 Corinthians 14:37, 38: 'If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.' Although Paul uses two different words for command, *epitage* in chapter 7 and *entole* in chapter 14, they are equivalent in meaning. Both of course imply authority. So Paul recognises the authority of the dominical tradition, and also asserts the authority of his own teaching under the inspiration of the Spirit. In fact, here in 1 Corinthians 14 he seems to be going as far as to indicate that recognition of the authority of his own teaching was a test of what claimed to be prophetic truth.

It looks then as if we need to say that the gospel itself and some basic implications of it (such as some aspects of marriage ethics) belong to the apostolic tradition deriving from Christ himself, but that there was a continuing work of the Spirit in guiding Paul and the other apostles in their application of the gospel to particular situations.

III. The Implications of Gospel Authority for Paul's Ministry

1. Theological implication

Paul was clearly very concerned that the authenticity and purity of the gospel should be maintained. We see this clearly in Galatians 1:6-9, where he includes himself and even angels in a general condemnation if they should pervert the gospel. We see it also in 2 Corinthians 11:4, where he links the gospel with Christ and the Spirit. Just as there can be only one true Christ and one true Spirit, so there can be only one true gospel. Perhaps all three rest on the Old Testament assertion that there is only one God.

Thomas Kuhn has promoted and expounded the concept of the paradigm shift. This is the notion that a new idea, or at least a newly influential idea, comes to have such a controlling effect on the mind of an individual or even of a whole society that the total perspective of the individual or community is altered. Kuhn put forward this concept in the context of a philosophy of science, but it is of course applicable in other

subject areas as well.²¹ No doubt this happened on the Damascus Road. Paul knew now that Jesus, whom he had been persecuting in his followers, was alive and that he was indeed the Christ. The opening of his physical eyes after the temporary blinding on the Damascus Road was undoubtedly a symbol of the inner enlightenment he received then. In Galatians 1:16, he describes it in terms which include an inner as well as an outer light: 'It pleased God to reveal his Son in (*eis*, literally, 'into') me.'

Obviously this great experience would profoundly influence his understanding of the Old Testament. It lost none of its authority for him, but his understanding of it would alter in significant ways as he approached it in the light of the gospel of Christ.²² He came to see the theological implications of the gospel with crystal clarity. We will spell out some of these.

i. God saves people by his grace through Christ and his work alone.

The gospel had so mastered Paul's mind that he was convinced Christ is the only Saviour and that his death and resurrection established the only way of salvation there was, there had ever been or ever would be.

So there could be no compromise with paganism. The pagan could not simply accept Christ by incorporating him into his paganism, so that, for instance, Christ would become one of a number of deities, or even the chief god in a pantheon. As Paul says to the Corinthians, there can be no question of partaking both of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.²³ The promise and demand of the gospel are equally radical. It insists on a faith that embraces the promise in Christ and a repentance that turns away from rebellion against God. This rebellion often shows itself in the worship of other gods and dependence on other saviours, including self-salvation.

21 T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edit. (Chicago, 1970).

22 So he was able in the synagogues to argue for the gospel on the basis of a shared outlook on the OT (Acts 17:1-3). For Paul's attitude to the OT, see E.E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1957).

23 1 Cor. 10:14-22.

If the gospel confronts the pagan with its radical promise and demand, it also confronts legalistic Judaism just as radically. The Jew must give up any attempt to save himself. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. What the law could not do, God did in Christ.²⁴ The Jew needs to see this and bow the knee to Jesus. Moreover, there can be no question of adding anything to the gospel. Paul reminds the Corinthians that the Jews expected miraculous signs as evidence of power and the Greeks looked for eloquence as evidence of wisdom, but that Christian preachers brought the simple message of salvation through the cross of Jesus. In that cross and its message however God's power and wisdom were revealed, and yet at the same time hidden, because they were completely contrary to the thinking of the unregenerate world.²⁵

Paul also saw that the Gentile does not need to become a Jew and submit to circumcision. Paul could be quite mild-mannered at times, but he wrote with deep passion to the Galatians. He could see that the Judaizing insistence on circumcision was in fact undermining the gospel. It introduced to the mind of the believer the idea that there were acts necessary to give certainty to his Christian standing. This idea was abhorrent to Paul, gripped as he was by the gospel.

This means, of course, that God's final purpose for Israel could only be fulfilled through the gospel. There can be no doubt from the whole tenor of Romans 9-11 that Paul saw Israel's complete salvation as coming only through Christ and the gospel. He therefore understood the Old Testament promises of a great future for Israel in gospel terms.²⁶

His strong belief in the sovereignty of God and therefore of the certainty of that future salvation for Israel could not in any way qualify his insistence on faith in Christ. He says that if they do not persist in unbelief they will be grafted into the olive tree again and then goes on to affirm that a time would come when 'all Israel will be saved'. Certain it may be, but its

24 Rom. 8:3; 10:4.

25 1 Cor. 1:22-2:16.

26 For the attitude of the NT writers to the Israel prophecies of the OT, see O.T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia, PA, 1945).

practical realization can only be brought about by grace through faith.²⁷

What about saved Israelites of the past? Were they also saved through the gospel? Certainly Paul states in Romans 4 that Abraham was saved by grace through faith and that words of David confirm this as God's way. He has less to say about Christ and his work in relation to the godly men and women of the past. He clearly believed in universal judgement but also in Old Testament salvation and yet he was able to say that God, in his forbearance, had left past sins unpunished²⁸ until the coming of Christ crucified. We can only reconcile these facts if we assume that he believed, as the writer to the Hebrews clearly did,²⁹ that salvation came to people in Old Testament times on the basis of the work of him who was to come.

We can easily understand why he has little to say about this. In his conflict with the Judaizers at Galatia, the issue was not so much whether or not salvation comes through Christ. Rather it was whether it is entirely of grace, so that faith is sufficient to enable us to benefit from that salvation. His main emphasis therefore is on the fact that salvation has always been given on the basis of faith, and not of works of the law.

ii. Christ's resurrection and deity are essential to the gospel.

At Corinth there were apparently people who denied the resurrection of the dead.³⁰ This may have been due to the influence of Greek views on the lower, or even evil, status of the body. Paul saw the seriousness of this denial. He therefore treats it very seriously, although he does not come out with all guns firing as he did when writing to the Galatians. On the face of it, this was a less grave error than that which was influencing the Galatians, for it did not in itself undermine the central facts of the gospel. What Paul realized however is that, when taken to its logical conclusion, it would destroy the gospel.

27 Rom. 11:23-32.

28 Rom. 3:25, 26.

29 Heb. 9:15.

30 1 Cor. 15:12.

Such errors need to be exposed. Logic is a kind of intellectual dynamic that moves the mind. If the logical consequence of a theological position is radical heresy, then the minds of some of those holding it are almost sure to move in that direction eventually. We probably need then to introduce a middle category between central and peripheral truth, perhaps calling it medial. If we think of primary truth as essential to the gospel and peripheral truth as incidental to it, medial truth will consist of doctrines which are not central in themselves but which, when denied, may lead to a denial of central truth. The resurrection of the dead is one of these.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, the issue is the deity of Christ. The nature of the Colossian heresy is still disputed,³¹ but whatever its nature and its antecedents were, it is clear it challenged the value the gospel placed on Christ. In this Epistle, Paul links Christ's person and work closely, indicating, for instance, that he is both the one in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and also that it was through his blood that reconciliation was effected.³²

Clearly then, when Paul says that Christ died for our sins, he had a particular conception of Christ in his mind. It was the Christ who is divine. It was Christ according to his own valuation of himself. As Athanasius, Anselm and Luther all saw so clearly in their differing ways, the deity of Christ is absolutely essential to the efficacy of his atoning work. It is only one who is divine who could deal effectively and decisively with the immense sin problem and bring us into the presence and the righteousness and the family of God.

iii. *The gospel brings illumination to human destiny.*

In it life and immortality have been brought to light.³³ It therefore has profound eschatological implications. The debate at Corinth about the resurrection shows that for some the nature of immortality as resurrection was difficult to grasp. So the gospel really cut across certain cherished philosophical tenets of the Greeks.

³¹ See R.P. Martin, *The Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty* (Exeter, 1972), pp. 4-20.

³² Col. 1:19-20.

³³ 2 Tim. 1:9-11.

The gospel also spoke of judgement, as Paul makes clear in Romans 2:16. We may be surprised to find such a close connection between 'good news' and 'judgement', but if the good news of Jesus is God's only way of salvation, there must be judgement for those who reject it.

iv. Christian progress is found exclusively within the parameters of the gospel.

This was evidently another issue within the Colossian church. It could well have become an issue for the Corinthians as well, with their interest in wisdom. Paul declared that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Christ and that the Colossian Christians, having received Christ Jesus as Lord, were complete in him. They should therefore now walk in him.³⁴ This means then that there was no second stage of Christian experience which was not in itself a deeper realization of the first. The One who justifies and the One who sanctifies are one and the same Christ. Christianity is not a kind of freemasonry with varying degrees. Christ is all.

Christian teaching then simply exposes for the Christian believer the implications of the gospel. This means that preaching and teaching are intimately related. So Paul says that it is by the gospel Christians are established.³⁵ The same gospel that had saved them would also make them strong. In fact, it seems from 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 that for Paul the gospel was the whole Christian faith. It is the gospel that bears fruit.³⁶

2. Ethical Implications

It is of course a commonplace idea that Christian ethics arise out of Christian theology. This may be seen, for instance, in the Epistle to the Romans. Chapters 12 to 16 are based on chapters 1 to 11, as the pivotal passage in chapter 12:1-2, reveals: 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices.' Paul has been expounding God's mercy for eleven chapters. Now they were to respond in consecration to God.

34 Col. 2:1-8.

35 Rom. 16:25.

36 Col. 1:6, 7.

i. *The death and resurrection of Christ are both the cause and pattern of the new life of the believer.*

This links with the theological point made above in connexion with the fact that all true Christian growth is within the parameters of the gospel. This in itself shows the intimate connection for Paul between theology and ethics.

Romans 6 was Rudolf Bultmann's favourite New Testament chapter. He saw very clearly that it indicated the pattern and shape Christian discipleship should take in the world. Bultmann's insight was not, however, based on the gospel of an atoning death and a literal evidential resurrection, for he dismissed both as mythological elements in Paul's presentation.³⁷ We must insist that it is not possible to detach Romans 6 from Romans 1-5 without doing violence to Paul's whole conception of the Christian message. It is because Christ died for us and rose again that any repetition of the pattern in our lives is possible. Apart from his substitutionary atonement there is no way out of the impasse created by sin, either in terms of forgiveness or in terms of a new moral vitality creating and leading to a new lifestyle.

Identification with Christ in his death and resurrection are only possible if these are both real and if they are aspects of one reality. If the death was physical, the resurrection must be physical too. In this great act our sins are purged. It is also true that the death of Jesus was far more than a physical act, for it was the culmination of a life of obedience, in which Jesus had in fact accepted his death as God's will long before it happened.

Martin Heidegger's form of existentialism involved a call for people to move into authentic existence from inauthentic by an acceptance of the principle of death. Bultmann gave this theological form and saw the attitude of Jesus to death as the supreme example of it. So the gospel for him became a call to reproduce this attitude in our lifestyle. It is most important, however, to realise that this is not what Paul calls the gospel. For him, the gospel is fundamentally about what God has done in the substitutionary bearing of our sins by the dying

³⁷ R. Bultmann, writing in H.W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth*, trans. by R.H. Fuller, vol. 1 (London, 1953), p. 35.

Saviour. This atoning work has great subjective effect, but it is essentially objective, finished, perfect.³⁸

It is only when this is seen that the call to identification with Christ has its proper basis. To say that our subjective identification with him is an implication of the gospel is one thing; to say that it is the gospel is quite another. Identification is with the attitude of Jesus, a willingness to do God's will whatever the cost.³⁹ The spiritual resurrection to newness of life is as much a divine act of vindication as was God's evidential act in the physical resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁰ Because this is our attitude we are then to yield our members to him in newness of life.⁴¹

ii. *Conversion establishes a pattern which should become constant.*

It is most helpful to compare Colossians 3:9, 10 and Ephesians 4:22-4 here. Paul uses much the same terminology in the two passages, but in Colossians he writes of putting off the old man and putting on the new as something that has occurred already, while in Ephesians he is commending it as a constant pattern.

In conversion, in the repentance and faith for which the gospel calls, we put off the old man and put on the new. We are however to do this constantly. In Colossians 2:6, 7, Paul says that as we have received Christ Jesus as Lord, so we are to walk in him. The various moral imperatives in the ethical sections of Ephesians and Colossians are best understood as emerging out of this pattern and pressing home its moral implications. Our manner of life then is to be worthy of the gospel.⁴² In Philippians 1:27, Paul seems to imply that this will reveal itself in the unity of the Philippian Christians and the testimony this will give to the world.

38 E.g. see the way he treats reconciliation as objectively secured prior to its subjective appropriation: Rom. 5:10,11; 2 Cor. 5:18-21.

39 Rom. 6:1-4; cf. Luke 9:22,23.

40 Cf. Rom. 6:11-14 with Acts 13:30, 31; Rom. 4:25.

41 The parallel in Romans 6 between Christ and those who are united to him certainly suggests this.

42 Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:12.

iii. *Our new lifestyle is the product of gratitude for the gospel.*

Note the emphasis on gratitude in Paul's letter to the Colossians. Of course, human beings ought to be thankful for the mere fact of life and all the good things a benevolent Creator has given us,⁴³ but when Paul writes of Christian gratitude it is clear he has in view thanksgiving for the gospel. This is plain from an examination of Colossians 1:12. The three references in Colossians 3:15-17 come in the context of Christian worship, which in the Lord's supper was centred in the cross.

In writing to the Corinthians about the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, Paul writes of an obedience to the gospel of Christ which shows itself in generosity and which will cause others to give thanks, and closes by saying, 'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.'⁴⁴ So here too it is the cross which is the great cause of gratitude for the Christian.

iv. *Failure to live this new lifestyle undermines gospel witness.*

Paul makes it very clear in 1 Timothy 1:3-11 that, although the Christian faith is not legalistic, neither is it antinomian. What the law condemns is also contrary to the gospel. The gospel does not deliver us from moral living but into it. This means that the moral quality of the Christian life should be consistent with the gospel we profess. The way Paul frames his thought at the close of this passage is particularly interesting. Having referred to various sins, he then goes on to write of 'whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me' (vv. 10,11). In this way he demonstrates as clearly as possible that his ethics were based on his doctrine, which in its turn was based on his gospel. Here then he spells out the fundamental nature of the gospel.

v. *The Holy Spirit, who witnesses to Christ in the gospel, is the inner dynamic of this new life in Christ.*

43 Rom. 1:21.

44 2 Cor. 9:12-15.

As we have seen already, Paul writes that he preached the gospel in the power of the Spirit at Thessalonica, so that the word of the gospel and the power of the Spirit were both essential to his gospel ministry. When the Thessalonians welcomed the message, it was 'with the joy given by the Holy Spirit'.⁴⁵

Paul's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is many-sided. Something of this many-sidedness may be glimpsed, for instance, in his Epistle to the Ephesians. Here there is no one passage dealing in any fullness with the Spirit and his work, but there are many allusions, which together build up into an impressive doctrine. In Ephesians 1:13-14, he writes of the preaching of the gospel of salvation and the fact that the believing response of his readers was confirmed by the gift of the Holy Spirit as the seal and deposit guaranteeing their inheritance in Christ. Out of this gift comes of course the inner dynamic for the Christian life. This is revealed in a great passage like Romans 8, in his reference to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, 23, and in many other passages.

3. Ecclesiastical implications

i. The churches are built on the gospel.

The Acts of the Apostles gives us many examples of churches established after the preaching of the gospel in a particular area. Those who responded to the preaching were not treated as isolated individuals, but were gathered into churches, for worship, teaching and pastoral care. In Romans 1:1-7, the introduction to the Roman Epistle, Paul writes of the gospel and relates it to his own apostolic ministry, making it abundantly clear that the purpose of the gospel was to call people from all nations and to bring them together in fellowship in Christ.

ii. Differences between believers that do not affect the gospel, or gospel testimony, should not divide them.

In Romans 15:7, the apostle says, 'Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.' Through the gospel they had been accepted, and so they ought in turn to accept one another. Romans 14 and 15 show us that these believers were differing on the kind of matters that

⁴⁵ 1 Thes. 1:6.

normally made a sharp distinction between Jews in the Diaspora and the gentiles among whom they lived, that is, matters of diet and the observance of special days.

Fellowship between believers in every age and location often expresses itself in sharing in a common meal, not only at the Lord's supper, but in the informal fellowship of the Christian home. The difference of practice between these two groups at Rome must have made such informal fellowship across the Jew/gentile divide very difficult. It is well worth noting, however, that Paul never suggests to these believers that they should simply settle for a division of their church into two. After all, the existence of a number of house churches in Rome would probably have made this an easy solution. Paul however would have regarded it as unacceptable. The gospel accepted by both groups should be much stronger in uniting them than the differences over social practices which were threatening to divide them.

iii. *The work of the church should minister to effective gospel witness.*

The churches established through the gospel ministry of Paul and his friends became in their turn evangelistic centres from which the gospel went out. It seems likely that several of the seven churches for whom the Book of the Revelation was initially written owed their existence to evangelistic work from the church at Ephesus, which was established by Paul. Certainly this would seem to have been true of another in the province of Asia, the church at Colossae.⁴⁶

Similarly, as Paul indicates in 1 Thessalonians 1:7-20, the church at Thessalonica became an evangelistic centre from which the gospel was going out over a wide area, not only in the two Greek provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, but even beyond these. This is remarkable in a church so recently established. Paul's great joy in this reflects his own strong commitment to the spread of the good news of Jesus. In this chapter, he writes of the example he and his companions sought to be, and then goes on to say that the Thessalonians in turn became a model for the other believers in Greece. The NIV's failure to translate *gar* ('for') in verse 8 has had the unfortunate result of obscuring the fact that this model was

⁴⁶ Col. 1:7.

quite specifically related to their zeal for the gospel. Paul is therefore indicating that every church ought to regard the spreading of the gospel as a high priority.

Paul describes his fellowship with the believers at Philippi and Thessalonica as fellowship in the gospel.⁴⁷ This suggests then that to him fellowship was not simply the enjoyment of the company of other Christians, but that it was on-the-job sharing in the task of spreading the good news of Jesus. He also implies that the task of the whole church is to preach the gospel. Ephesians is the epistle of the universal church, and in Ephesians 6:15, using language reminiscent of Isaiah 52:7,⁴⁸ he says that the Christians are to be shod with the shoes of the gospel of peace. So they need to be prepared for gospel witness at all times.

iv. The church's sacraments bear witness to and symbolise the gospel.

This is clear with baptism. In Romans 6, Paul says we are baptised into Christ and specifically into his death and resurrection. This means that the ceremony of Christian initiation bears eloquent testimony to the gospel itself, dramatizing its two central features. In Romans 6, at least, the mode indicated seems to be immersion, and this suggests the totality of the individual's response to Christ in repentance and faith, and so his total identification with him in his death and resurrection.

In I Corinthians 11, the Lord's supper is a remembrance and proclamation of Christ's death until he comes. In its symbolism, the death of Christ becomes the means of nurturing the new life just as baptism had shown it was the source of its initial imparting. In baptism the believer is placed in the sacramental element, while in the Lord's supper the reverse is true. This reminds us of the fact that Paul says not only that believers are in Christ but also that he indwells them.⁴⁹

4. Vocational and personal implications

47 Phil. 1:5; 1 Thes. 3:2.

48 Cf. Rom. 10:15.

49 E.g. in Col. 1:27; 2:10.

It is not easy to separate these, as though Paul had one life as a public and another as a private person, or as if one can divide his Christian service and his Christian life. For him, all life in Christ involved service for him, in fact it was in itself Christian service.

i. *The gospel is all-important.*

It is this which he delivered to the Corinthians as of primary importance.⁵⁰ Moreover, he had a personal sense of compulsion to preach it, as we see in chapter 9, verse 16, of the same Epistle, where he says, 'I am compelled to preach. Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.' In Romans 1, he says he is a debtor, both to the Jew and to the Greek, to proclaim the good news of Jesus to them. The translation of this into practice can be illustrated many times over from the Acts of the Apostles.

ii. *All practical decisions should be in line with the gospel.*

This was Paul's complaint about Peter's actions at Antioch. Although at first having table fellowship with gentile believers, he later withdrew from this. Paul knew that Peter's actions were not in line with the gospel which both of them, and the other apostles, all accepted was a gospel of grace.⁵¹

Paul stated clearly, in 1 Corinthians 9:3, 4, that those who serve the gospel are entitled to receive their living from the gospel. There were, however, times when he would not use this right. What then was the basis of his decision either to take money or to refuse it? It was the effect this would have on the progress of the gospel.

Paul has often been criticised on account of the sharp disagreement he had with Barnabas over John Mark.⁵² We cannot of course be altogether sure of the spirit of the encounter between the two men, but we do know its cause. It was because Mark had failed to complete the first missionary journey. Paul wanted workers whose commitment to the gospel and its spread was strong like his own. So his decision was consistent with his gospel-centred approach. This means

50 1 Cor. 15:3ff.

51 Gal. 2:14ff.

52 Acts 15:36-41.

then that the two clashes we know of with other Christians, those with Peter and with Barnabas, were both related to the gospel.

iii. *The gospel is served by respecting the legitimate scruples of others.*

He would do nothing to hinder the gospel, so, to the Jew he would be as a Jew and to the gentile as a gentile. In 1 Corinthians 9:23, he says, 'I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.'

Timothy's mother was a Jewess, but his father a Greek. Even today, if a man has a Jewish mother, he is regarded by the Jews as one of themselves, no matter who his father is. Paul knew therefore that Timothy's uncircumcised state would be a hindrance to the progress of the gospel among the Jews, and so he circumcised him before he brought him into his itinerant evangelistic team.⁵³

The situation with Titus was different, for he was a full Greek. When some tried to compel him to be circumcised, Paul resisted this. This, as he says, to the Galatians, was 'so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you',⁵⁴ because, of course, there was no need whatever for Greeks and other gentiles to become Jews before they experienced salvation.

These two incidents are particularly interesting because they show that Paul was capable of making apparently opposite decisions when the true basis of the decision in each case was the effect it would have on the progress of the gospel. If he was consistent, then, it was a gospel consistency.

iv. *True apostles should be characterised by a gospel lifestyle, including willingness to suffer.*

In 2 Corinthians, chapters 10 to 13, Paul is seeking to combat the claims of the false apostles at Corinth. All he says is of great interest, but the account of his trials, privations, persecutions and other sufferings given in 11:22-9 is particularly moving. Then, in verse 30, he says, 'If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.' Murray Harris, commenting on this section of 2 Corinthians, says, 'For a moment Paul pauses and reflects upon the

53 Acts 16:1-3.

54 Gal. 2:3-5.

paragraph he has just dictated to his stunned amanuensis. Both he and his opponents might boast, but *his* boasting was distinctive, since, paradoxically, he prided himself on evidences of his weakness that became evidence of God's surpassing power in supporting and delivering him (cf. 1:8-10; 3:5; 4:7, 10, 11; 12:5, 9, 10).⁵⁵

One striking feature of these great chapters is the way Paul links his own weakness with that of the crucified Christ, in other words how he links it to the gospel. He says, 'he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.'⁵⁶ here then is a truly gospel-controlled approach to the Christian life and to Christian ministry.

In fact, as Christ's crucifixion in weakness was the cause of the salvation of others, so Paul's gospel service to others was promoted as he shared something of the crucified weakness of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 4:10-12, he says, 'We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.' The same thought emerges in Colossians 1:24, where Paul writes that he fills up in his flesh 'what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.' Here he realised that his identification with the sufferings of Christ was as yet incomplete. These sufferings were 'for you', 'for the sake of his body, which is the church'. Here then is a profound doctrine of Christian service as patterned after Christ's suffering service.

We might note also, in this connection, the parallel between Philippians 2:5-11 and 3:4-11. In the first of these passages Paul outlines the course of Christ's humiliation, his surrender of equality with God and his assumption not only of manhood, but of the deepest shame and suffering as his service to God. He prefaces this profound passage with the words, 'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ

55 '2 Corinthians' in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, 1976), on 2 Cor. 11:30, 31.

56 2 Cor. 13:4.

Jesus.' In chapter 3, he writes of putting aside the things that had induced self-confidence in him. He counted everything but loss, and for what? To gain Christ and his righteousness, and a deep identification with him in his death and resurrection. This then was the lifestyle for which he earnestly longed, a true gospel lifestyle because patterned on the death and resurrection of Christ.

v. Personal frustration is fully acceptable if it serves the interests of the gospel.

This comes out very strongly in Philippians 1. Paul has been put into prison and yet, far from bemoaning this restriction of his freedom, he rejoices in the opportunities this has given him for spreading the gospel throughout the palace guard, who might not otherwise have heard it. More than this, and especially significant, is the fact that, as a result of his imprisonment, many brothers in the Lord have begun to witness more courageously. How striking it is that Paul not only rejoices in this, but does so even when he knows that the motivation of such people is not right!

The gospel is much more important than Paul himself. It matters not a whit whether he is out there preaching it far and wide or whether others are doing it, so long as it is being done. Moreover, even motivation, which he certainly would have regarded as important, was less important than the fact that the gospel was getting a wider hearing.

The gospel, the gospel, the gospel – let Paul perish, so long as the gospel progresses! I find much personal challenge in that.

**FAITH AND ASSURANCE IN THE
TEACHING AND EXPERIENCE OF
THOMAS HALYBURTON (1674-1712)**
HUGH CARTWRIGHT, FREE CHURCH OF
SCOTLAND COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

Born at Duplin near Perth in 1674, the son of a silenced Covenanting minister, Thomas Halyburton fled to Holland as a child along with his sister and widowed mother to escape the persecution of the Covenanters. Eventually he became parish minister of Ceres in Fife from 1700 to 1710, and Professor of Divinity in the New College (St Mary's), St Andrews, from 1710 to his death in 1712.

Halyburton was highly regarded in nineteenth-century Scotland. Hugh Martin described him and William Cunningham as 'the two greatest theologians that Scotland has ever produced'. Rabbi Duncan, who put Halyburton's autobiography in the same category as those of Augustine and Bunyan, classified him with Hermann Witsius as a minor John Owen. John Macleod suggests that

had he lived to see the age of Owen – 66 – or Witsius – 72 –, he might have left a more enduring monument by putting his mark, should he do nothing more, on the ministry that he trained and on the theological teaching of an age that stood in need of the corrective which his teaching was fitted to furnish.¹

His writings influenced the lives of George Whitefield and John Wesley and carry commendatory prefaces by Isaac Watts. Archibald Alexander of Princeton highly esteemed his analysis of Christian experience as that of a distinguished biblical theologian and mature observant Christian.

Attention is drawn to Halyburton in connection with the subject of faith and assurance for two reasons. First, in his *Memoirs* he has given a rational account of his own experience, subjected to the test of Scripture, and throughout his sermons and writings he has clearly expounded his views of the nature and relation of faith and assurance. Secondly, he belongs to the period just prior to the Marrow controversy.

¹ John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History since the Reformation*, 3rd edit. (Edinburgh, 1974), p. 124.

An evangelical pastor and scholar who saw himself firmly in the tradition of both Calvin and the Westminster Divines, he shows, and indeed embodies in himself, the essential identity of their teaching on faith and assurance. He does this in a way which avoids the charges of both legalism levelled against some evangelical opponents of the Marrow and of unbiblical views of faith, atonement and assurance levelled against the Marrowmen, partly because of their defence of terminology capable of interpretation in an unbiblical sense, as the eighteenth-century debate and subsequent controversies related to the subject demonstrate.

The intention of this paper is not to refer repeatedly to different views in the ongoing discussion of faith and assurance, but to state the position advocated by Halyburton and illustrated in his experience, in the hope that this will throw light theologically and pastorally on the theme. We shall let him speak to us on the subject.

I. Halyburton's Spiritual Experience, as Recorded by Himself

Halyburton was steeped in the Bible from childhood. In Rotterdam, in addition to the instructions of his mother and three sermons and two lectures in the Scots Church each Sunday, he heard two sermons and two lectures and attended a prayer meeting and a catechising session during the week. Throughout childhood and youth he was no stranger to convictions of sin, and found that attempts to amend and repeated covenants with God failed to give him more than temporary peace. He was convinced that he would never find peace till he obtained an assurance of the truths of religion beyond anything he had experienced, but while he could not bring himself flatly to deny God, his native ungodliness combined with his study of metaphysics and natural religion to keep him in a state of great uncertainty.

The ineffectiveness of the arguments by which he attempted to strengthen his belief in God made him look beyond his own knowledge and ability for the confirmation he sought. As a young chaplain in a nobleman's house he became involved in arguments against deism. The reading and reasoning and religious exercise by which he tried to fortify his belief in God's existence left him unsure and strengthened his conviction that such certainty as he sought could not be found

apart from divine revelation. His reformations left his soul empty of Christ, and through the ministry of the Word the law in its spiritual meaning drove him into such a state that while he was weary of his life he was afraid to die. Incidentally, the power of the Word to convince him of sin was a significant factor in delivering him from his questioning of the being of God.

'A Discovery of the Lord'

It was then that he got his 'outgate' or deliverance through 'a discovery of the Lord as manifested in the Word'.² The Lord revealed that there was mercy, redemption and forgiveness with him. He manifested Christ in his glory, and let him see that he was pleased with Christ and that he

notwithstanding His spotless purity, His deep hatred of sin, His inflexible justice and righteousness, and His untainted faithfulness, pledged in the threatening of the law, might not only pardon, but, without prejudice to His justice or other attributes, be just in justifying the ungodly! The reconciliation of these seemingly inconsistent attributes with one another, and with the salvation of sinners, quite surprised and astonished me.³

Along with this he was given insight into the fact that in the gospel call the word of salvation was sent even to him, and he tells that

when this strange discovery was made of a relief, wherein full provision was made for all the concerns of God's glory, and my salvation in subordination thereto, my soul was by a glorious and sweet power carried out to rest in it, as worthy of God and every way suitable and satisfying in my case.⁴

He had previously read and considered most of the passages which now came alive to him without their bringing him relief. They now affected him as they did because 'the Lord shined into my mind by them... to give me not merely some theoretical knowledge, but "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"'.⁵ This light gave

2 Thomas Halyburton, *Memoirs*, (Edinburgh, 1847), p.99.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101..

4 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

him a knowledge distinct from anything he had before, which delivered him from the darkness which had overpowered his mind and gave him composure and the proper use of all his faculties. Although he had come to 'a deep rational conviction'⁶ that the Scriptures were the Word of God, the fact that the Word was the means of conveying to him all that he knew in this affecting way about God and guilt and grace was the evidence to him of the divine origin and authority of this Word, which carried most weight and brought peace to his mind.

Various discernible effects followed this discovery, such as concern for the glory of God – finding the Lord's yoke, or precepts, easy – the exercise of evangelical repentance – desire for the Lord's presence in his ordinances – love to all who had anything of the Lord's image. Two effects of this manifestation of the Lord in his Word are of special interest in relation to our theme:

First, an approbation of God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which I take to be the true scriptural notion of justifying faith;...⁷ second, a humble, but sweet and comfortable, hope and persuasion of my own salvation, answerable to the clearness of this discovery; that is, rising in strength, or growing more weak and less discernible, as the discoveries of the way of salvation were more or less clear and strong.... This is what I take for gospel assurance, with the worthy Dr Owen.⁸

In his account of his experience he expands a little on both this faith and this assurance.

Faith and Assurance

Speaking of his faith, Halyburton says:

Now this discovery of the Lord's name brought me to trust in Him, and glory only in the Lord. I found my soul fully satisfied in these discoveries, as pointing out a way of relief altogether and in all respects suitable to the need of a poor, guilty, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, beaten from all other reliefs, and who has his mouth stopped before

6 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

God.... In this I rested as a way full of peace, comfort, security, and satisfaction, as providing abundantly for these ends I desired to have secured. And this approbation was not merely for a fit, but ever after in all temptations it discovered itself.⁹

Speaking of his assurance, he says that when he was satisfied as to the way of salvation, 'I was freed from that disquieting fear that in trusting to it I was trusting to that which would fail. I was satisfied that I could not fail otherwise than by missing this way. I doubted of myself, but nor of the way.'¹⁰ He goes on to say that by this discovery the Lord

did powerfully draw my soul to close with it; and in so far as I cleaved to and closed with this, in so far, considering the former discovery of the safety of this way, I could not doubt of the issue.... While I clave to and reposed with satisfaction on what I was convinced was safe I could not, in so far as I leaned to this, but be quiet and composed about the issue; which shows how nearly allied faith and assurance are, though they are not the same, and therefore no wonder that one should be taken for the other.¹¹

He found that as he walked in the way of duty 'this hope insensibly and secretly grew', but 'nothing so soon marred this hope as the least appearance of self and stirring of pride'.¹² He concludes:

This way which the Lord discloses is safe for a self-condemned sinner. I am safe in practical adherence to it. The further I go, and the closer I in practice cleave to this way, hope of this salvation increases the more.¹³

For a time, he was wholly taken up with the glory of the Lord and with spiritual things, with the result that he was both happy and humble. But he was soon in conflict with indwelling sin, questioning the truth of his experiences, and learning that as yet he was 'little acquainted with the way of faith's improvement of Christ for sanctification, and a trade with the throne of grace for supplies to help in time of

9 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 114-5.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 115-6.

need'.¹⁴ This experience taught him 'that the grace that is sufficient for us is not in our own hand but in the Lord's'.¹⁵ It also taught him not to judge of his state by his frames.¹⁶

Christian Experience

Thomas Halyburton's *Memoirs* reveal a man who watched carefully over his spiritual life and his conduct, frequently examined himself as to his walk with God, was sensitive to sin and to any departure in heart from the Lord and any loss of the sense of the Lord's favour, often in conflict with self and unbelief, and at times despondent on account of the view he got of his guilt and corruption, but could say on his deathbed, as he looked back on his experience of conversion:

The God of glory appeared to me; and the first sight I got of Him was such as it won my heart to Him so that it was never loosed; though I have had many wanderings, yet I can say, I was never myself till I won back to the centre again.¹⁷

As a Christian it was his concern to experience a peace and assurance dependent on the Word, centred upon Christ and his atoning work, and enjoyed in a course of obedience principally motivated by 'a constant improvement of the blood of Christ by faith and a sense of forgiveness kept on the soul'.¹⁸ Typical of his experience is an entry dated 12 January 1709:

This night I got such a view of my guilt that nothing could have kept me from despondency but a view of that grace that cannot be measured but is best conceived by that astonishing evidence of it (Romans viii.32), 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' In the view whereof I desire to live and die and spend eternity.¹⁹

In spite of all that he found discouraging in himself he was able to testify that from the time when he came to know Christ he had never doubted his need of Christ or the suitability and

14 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 295.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

sufficiency of Christ to save him and that all his expectations were grounded in Christ.

Under disquietments occasioned by sin, nothing save Christ could quiet me.... The Lord has been pleased to determine my heart to choose the way of salvation revealed in the gospel through faith's acceptance of, and resting on, Christ Jesus for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.²⁰

On his deathbed he testified:

I bless the Lord that when I stood trembling under the terrors of God's law He seasonably saved me from despair by some discovery of the blessed way of salvation for self-destroyed sinners through a slain Saviour; even such a discovery as made me resolve to part with all that I might have the field, Christ the treasure hid in it, and pearl of price. There is nothing I dread so much as a mistake in this matter. It is Christ only that will answer me and my case, and without Him I am undone; on Him – the efficacy of His sufferings, the power of His resurrection, and of His whole mediation, as revealed in the Gospel – do I build all my hope.²¹

What he said of himself on his deathbed was probably true of his Christian course as a whole: 'What I have is not a flashy and very sensible joy; yet, I bless His name, I am much composed and have solid clear Scripture manifestations of God and the things of God.'²²

II. The Position on Faith and Assurance Stated more Dogmatically in Halyburton's Writings and Sermons

His experience, theology and preaching reveal a beautiful consistency originating in the influence upon each of the Word of God. *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton* is the volume by which he is best known. But for his theological position we can also draw on the following: *Natural Religion Insufficient, and Revealed Necessary, to Man's Happiness in his Present State*, a discussion of Deism; *The Great Concern of Salvation* (Edinburgh, 1817),

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 215-6.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 251.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 272.

delivered as a course of sermons on man's natural state, recovery by faith in Christ, and the Christian's duty; *An Essay Concerning the Nature of Faith, or, The Ground upon which Faith Assents to the Scriptures*; *A Modest Enquiry whether Regeneration or Justification has the Precedency in Order of Nature*; *An Enquiry into the Nature of God's Act of Justification*; and various published sermons.²³

1. Descriptions of the faith which is instrumental in salvation

We have already noted Halyburton's description of justifying faith as 'an approbation of God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of His grace'.²⁴ In *A Modest Enquiry* he says that 'faith is the outgoing of the soul of a poor sinner convicted of his own ungodliness, that sees nothing in himself but sin and guilt, after Christ for righteousness'.²⁵ In *The Great Concern of Salvation*, referring to the counsel given to the Philippian jailer, he notes that

it is not said, Believe the Lord Jesus Christ, but believe on Him, or in Him. It is not simply to give credit to His word, and take as truth whatever He has said; but it is to rely on Him, to put our trust in Him, as one that is able to save such as come unto God through Him.²⁶

The 'principal thing' in faith is the acceptance of Christ upon... Gospel terms, [which includes] (i) a renunciation of all other things... no expectation of relief from any of these things corrupt nature is wont to incline us to rely on.... (ii)... a consent of will to the terms of the Gospel as good and desirable.... (iii)... an acquiescence and rest of soul in Christ Jesus for salvation.²⁷

²³ All, apart from *The Great Concern*, published in *The Works of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton...* (Glasgow, 1833).

²⁴ *Memoirs*, p. 105.

²⁵ *Works*, p. 556.

²⁶ *Great Concern*, p. 176.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-10.

He widens this description of faith in *An Enquiry into the Nature of God's Act of Justification*.²⁸ He asserts that in faith

1st. There is an assent unto the truths concerning Christ, His nature, person, and offices.... 2dly... There is the receiving act of faith, whereby we accept of, or receive, Christ, John 1.12.... This receiving... supposes an act of the mind or judgment approving of Christ as meet for the purpose for which He is proposed. It formally and directly imports the will's consenting to, closing with, or being pleased with, Him as such.

This receiving includes 'an acquiescence or rest of mind in this consent, so that the soul is come to a point that it has no other way to look and that if it has but Him it is safe. This', says Halyburton,

is that cleaving to the Lord which some call trust or adherence, and it respects the way, or is the fiducial confidence as to the safety of the way whereon trust, expectation or fiducial confidence, as to the event, follows.... 3dly. There is in faith, or there follows upon the foregoing acts another, viz. that which is commonly called the fiducial act, or trust; that is, the soul, in expectation and confidence of relief by Christ, throws itself upon Him.... The ground of it is the promise or the engagement of the faithfulness of God, for the salvation of believers, and that as specially applied by God, to this sinner, and the application discerned by him.

This special application is 'a confidence, persuasion, or belief that our sins are forgiven'.

Halyburton recognises that there were some, 'among whom were many of our first reformers', who at least seemed to make this 'fiducial act, strictly so called, to be the justifying act of faith', but he dissents from this opinion on the ground that it cannot be a person's duty to believe that his sins are forgiven except 'upon supposition that he is antecedently justified by faith'. He agrees with John Owen that the faith that justifies is not a persuasion of one's own salvation but 'the heart's approbation of the way of justification and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, proposed in the Gospel, as proceeding from the grace, wisdom and love of God, with

²⁸ *Works*, pp. 562f.

acquiescency therein as to its own condition'. What saves the sinner, according to Halyburton, is confidence in the Saviour which causes one to cast oneself upon him, and not confidence that one has done this and that one is consequently saved. These were not the same, but though he distinguished them Halyburton recognised their close connection: 'While I clave to and reposed with satisfaction on what I was convinced was safe I could not, in so far as I leaned to this, but be quiet and composed about the issue; which shows how nearly allied faith and assurance are, though they are not the same, and therefore no wonder the one should be taken for the other.'²⁹

2. The relation between faith and assurance

Halyburton emphasises first an assurance which he regards as essential to faith, and secondly an assurance which he regards as consequent upon faith though in some way implicit in faith.

i. In looking at his view of the *assurance essential to faith*, we notice first his strong insistence on assurance as to the authority of the Word upon which faith relies. The assent of faith is given to what it knows concerning God and self and salvation on the testimony of God's Word. In *An Essay concerning the Nature of Faith*, he describes faith in general as knowledge which 'depends upon the testimony of credible witnesses'.³⁰ Saving faith, or divine faith, is assent to what is known on the testimony of God.

Such an assent is intended as some way answers to the unquestionable firmness of the testimony of the God of truth... such an assent, or receiving of the word of God, as is attended with that reverence, submission of soul, resignation of will, and subjection of conscience, which is due to God... a firm conviction leaning upon the strongest bottom, able to stand against and withstand the strongest objections.³¹

The assent of faith is characterised by assurance as to the truth and reliability of the Word of God. The *ground* of this assurance is the Word itself – not that the Spirit has given

²⁹ *Memoirs*, p. 115.

³⁰ *Works*, p. 505.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

faith,³² not the authority of any human being or church,³³ not the rational arguments for the truth of the Christian religion, however useful they are,³⁴ not the miracles accompanying the giving of revelation,³⁵ not any private voice, whisper or suggestion from the Spirit of God, separate and distinct from the written Word,³⁶ not merely that the Bible says that 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God',³⁷ not because the contents of Scripture correspond with our own ideas on these things.³⁸

The formal reason or ground whereon I assent to, or receive, the whole Scriptures and every particular truth of God speaking in them, and speaking every truth they contain, evidencing itself to my faith, when duly exercised about them, and attending to them, by their own divine and distinguishing light and power.³⁹

A sinner's warrant for believing is 'Thus saith the Lord'.

The *theoprepeia* or God-becoming impress of Majesty, Sovereignty, Omniscience, Independence, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, Wisdom and Power, is not only a sufficient and real, but in very deed the greatest objective light and evidence imaginable.⁴⁰

It is on the basis of the authority of this word that Christ is proclaimed to sinners who need him and salvation is promised to those who receive Christ.

The assured assent of faith to the Word of God has sufficient ground in the authority of the Word, but it is only *secured* by divine power. All have a duty to believe the Word: 'The Scriptures demand our assent, and offer no evidence but this of God's authority.'⁴¹ But sin has rendered man unable to believe and 'light, however clear, cannot of itself supply the

32 *Ibid.*, p. 529.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 529.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 530.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 530.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 531.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 531.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 531.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 532.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 522.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 520.

defect of the discerning power'.⁴² Faith is God's gift, and the assured assent to the truth of God's Word which is essential to faith is constrained by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Faith does not stand in human wisdom but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:5). That assurance regarding the truth of God's Word is not habitually as strong as it should be is due not to any defect in the Word but to defect in our discerning faculty arising from the workings of sin.⁴³

Halyburton concludes: 'How justly divine faith may be said to be infallible, as standing on an infallible ground, the faithfulness and truth of God in the word... the ground is firm, and cannot fail, the scriptures cannot be broken.'⁴⁴

In his view of the assurance essential to faith we notice secondly his insistence on the assurance which characterises the believer's receiving and resting upon Christ, the believer's approbation of the way of salvation revealed in the Word. Wherever faith exists the Word accompanied by the Spirit's enlightening and enabling power has brought the sinner some assurance as to the suitability and sufficiency of Christ and the way of salvation in him for such a sinner as he confesses himself to be. This assurance will keep the believer, however much he doubts himself and his faith, from abandoning his hope in Christ.

The most discouraged soul, from the first moment of believing, at its worst condition, cannot think of giving up with its interest in this way, upon any terms. This can never be accounted for otherwise than by supposing that amidst all its shakings there is some trust, expectation or hope of salvation in this way. The ground of this hope, trust or expectation, certainly is the promise of God, cleared or set home by the Spirit of God at the soul's first closing with Christ.⁴⁵

He said of his own experience at times, 'I doubted of myself but not of the way'.⁴⁶ What he believed about the assurance essential to faith appears in his confession on another occasion:

42 *Ibid.*, p. 635.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 539.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 545.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 561.

46 *Memoirs.*, p. 114.

no alteration of my condition has ever been able to shake from under me a conviction of the following particulars, since the Lord first convinced: 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is such a Saviour as became the grace, mercy, love, wisdom, holiness, righteousness, justice and power of God to provide; and on the other hand, such a Saviour as became sinners' needs, their desires; and therefore deserves their acceptance, as fit, suitable, sufficient to 'save all that come to God through Him', and that even to the uttermost.... 2. That I do need Him in all His offices.... 3.... that it is my desire above all things to 'be found in Him' (Phil. 3, 9, 10); and never doth sin reduce me to that pass that I dare admit a thought of the insufficiency of this way of salvation to save me, or of having recourse to any other, or of abandoning this.... 4... In one word, I have no hopes of any mercy in time or eternity, but only through Him; it is through Him I expect all, from the least drop of water to the immense riches of glory.⁴⁷

If one is to entrust oneself to Christ one must have some measure of assurance as to his suitability and sufficiency for oneself, and that assurance will be such as to keep the soul following after him. This is the assurance of faith, of which we should seek to have the fullest degree in our approaches to God through Christ.

ii. In considering Halyburton's idea of the relation between faith and assurance we notice that there is *an assurance consequent upon faith though in some way implicit in faith*. We noted already his explanation of why people sometimes (mistakenly, he thought) regarded assurance of grace and salvation as an essential element of faith:

While I clave to, and reposed with satisfaction on, what I was convinced was safe, I could not, in so far as I leaned to this, but be quiet and composed about the issue; which shows how nearly allied faith and assurance are, though they are not the same, and therefore no wonder the one should be taken for the other.⁴⁸

The first point he is making is that the assurance essential to faith – the assured assent of his soul to the truth and his

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 211-2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

assured approbation of the way of salvation through Christ which made him as a sinner cast himself on Christ alone for salvation – had in it the seeds from which assurance of personal salvation grew. The assurance which was the consequent or reflex of faith arose initially from the direct act of faith. It is ‘consequent in order of nature’ to the justifying act of faith and to some degree accompanies it.⁴⁹ He expounds his position thus:

I do not mean that the believing soul has always at first closing with Christ such a steady and full persuasion that its sins are forgiven, that eventually it shall be saved, so that it does boldly pronounce and speak out so much to others, or even resolutely assert it within itself; nor do I mean that it has such a clear view of its own graces that it can reflect and conclude confidently from the sight of them, its election, justification and certain salvation.... But that which I mean is that the first saving manifestation of Christ to a convinced sinner, pursued by the law, conscience and Satan, not only determines the soul to close with Him... but thereon also immediately follows such an expectation, trust and humble confidence, as engages the soul ever after to follow the Lord in a way of duty, without despairing as to the saving issue; yea, not without secret hope, though this afterwards in times of temptation is variously clouded, that in due time it shall obtain a merciful issue. This persuasion and humble confidence is really particular to the sinner himself and his own salvation, though through the humbling impressions he has of himself at the time, his own guilt, and the awe he has of God upon his spirit, he fears to express it directly and particularly to himself.... When poor disquieted believers, through the power of temptation and confusion upon their minds, deny any such persuasion or confidence, yet by its effects it is evident to others that at any time they have it. Doth not their resolute adherence to duty, in spite of all discouragements, and their refusing to quit their claim, or try other ways suggested, plainly bewray some such secret persuasion?⁵⁰

Secondly, he recognised that there are factors which may prevent a believer drawing the comfortable conclusions

49 *Works*, p. 563.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 563-4.

regarding his own state warranted by his faith. He claims that all believers

have a gracious experience of begun deliverance from wrath... of begun salvation from the dominion of sin... some beginnings of a deliverance from the guilt and filth of sin in their approaches to God... some experience of the freedom of Christ's subjects... the beginnings of heaven in some refreshing tastes of the gracious communications and intimations of God's love to their souls.... That they are not more clearly discerned to the comfort of such as have them is, past all peradventure, in a great measure owing to their own negligence and want of observation.⁵¹

In spite of this he recognises the power of temptation and Satan and deals kindly as well as firmly with unassured believers.

Thirdly, assurance of personal salvation is attainable and is to be sought, as we know, he says, 'by the account we have of the experiences of believers in the word of God... from the testimony of believers in our day'.⁵² God's glory is involved in this, for we cannot thank God for the gift of faith if we do not know that we have it.⁵³

This is not only knowable, but it may be more easily discerned than most do apprehend. Were we but, with any measure of seriousness and concern, turning our eyes inward, we could not but know how our hearts stand affected toward Christ and the gospel-method of salvation.⁵⁴

Fourthly, Halyburton is biblical and confessional in his teaching on how assurance is to be sought. In his discussions of the subject he is concerned to deal pastorally with those who lack assurance because as unbelievers they have nothing to be assured of, those who have assurance but no biblical basis for it, and those who lack assurance though they have faith. It is necessary to be aware of the marks by which faith is known, since some are deceived and others are unassured. But people should examine their normal condition rather than their condition when they are down through temptation or

51 *Great Concern*, pp. 226f.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 228.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 229.

despondency, they should enquire as to the being rather than the degree of faith, and they should depend on the Spirit to come to satisfactory conclusions.

He repeatedly emphasises the biblical basis and warrant of faith. Just as the healthy have no need of a physician and Christ came to call *sinners* to repentance, only convicted sinners will believe in Christ. Ministers must labour to bring men to a sense of sin. But the warrant for believing is not their convictions but the command, invitations, entreaties and encouragements addressed to sinners and the promises given to believers.

The minister dealing with the convicted sinner is not to bid him look inward to see whether he be regenerated and truly repents; and if he find not these not to expect justification or go to Christ for it. Such an enquiry before justification is vain and preposterous, and it is impossible ever to believe on these terms: but he is with the apostle, Acts XVI, directly to press, 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ'. And on the other hand the sinner, like the poor jailer, without any such previous enquiry for qualifications in himself, should directly cling to Christ for righteousness, as one altogether lost in himself and destitute of any qualifications that can avail him.⁵⁵

He is able on the authority of the Word to promise salvation to sinners who believe. 'Whoever will take Him and use Him shall have Him.'⁵⁶

In keeping with this is was his concern to focus the attention of unassured Christians on Christ and the biblical way of salvation. He was aware that much lack of assurance was due to lack of clarity here. Amongst much good, biblical evidence for unassured believers he stresses three significant points:

Study the nature of the covenant of grace well... particularly study to know the ground of your acceptance with God and of your admission and access into a covenant relation: it is not your freedom from sin, it is not freedom from gross sins, not is it anything wrought in us or by us, but only the sovereignly free grace of God in Christ, which glories in removing the greatest offences, in bestowing the

⁵⁵ *Works*, p. 557.

⁵⁶ *Great Concern*, p. 207.

choicest mercies upon the chief of sinners. Therefore none can be ruined, whatever his sins be, who is willing to owe salvation to free grace in Christ.... There is here great encouragement to such as are great sinners, but none to any to be so.

Study the condescension of the covenant to the state of believers, who carry with them still a body of sin and death, while they are here in this house of their pilgrimage. It accepts of sincere obedience, it provides influences for enabling believers to perform it, it provides pardon for failings.

Study acquaintance with the springs of that covenant-peace which believers enjoy in their walk with God. It is not their own merit, but God's mercy; it is not their own blamelessness, but the efficacy of Christ's blood to take away spots; it is not the evenness of our walk and our freedom from trips, but it is the testimony of a good conscience bearing witness that it is our exercise to have and keep 'a conscience void of offence toward God and man', by continual dependence on God in Christ for mercy to remove sin and grace to help in time of need. Endeavour to understand these things well and you will then be soon eased of many of your fears.⁵⁷

True believers desire to subject their faith to biblical tests to ensure that they are not deceived. Halyburton takes much time to explain false and true marks of faith. He presents the evidences of believing in a way that relates them to faith and to Christ as the basis of assurance, and makes clear, as he says in a sermon on Matthew 17:15, 'that our reasonings will not quiet our souls: peace and joy are only to be had in believing: and divine manifestations are needful to draw out and strengthen faith'.⁵⁸ He cautioned those who had long been concerned about religion but were still unable to know what to make of their religion seriously to investigate whether they were really in Christ and whether they were seeking to maintain communion with Christ.⁵⁹ In his application of 2

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 289-90.

⁵⁸ Thomas Halyburton, *Five Sermons Preached Before and After the Celebration of the Lord's Supper* (Edinburgh, 1721), p. 71.

⁵⁹ *Five Sermons*, p. 98.

Corinthians 4:16-18 to those who feared they had no interest in the unseen things commended there he makes four points:

1. Faith... gives a taste of the goodness of these things... and the more tastes ye get, the more fully will you be secure of your interest in them.... 2. The more ye look at them, the more like ye will be to them, 2 Cor. 3.18... and surely conformity to them is one of the best evidences of our interest in them. 3. Faith much exercised grows into that highest stature, the full assurance of faith, and that is what ye would be at. 4. The exercise of faith will lead you to fear the Lord... Heb. xi.7, and so put you upon God's secrets, Ps. 25.14.⁶⁰

In *The Great Concern of Salvation* (pp. 241-59), he argues that it is not enough for a person to say that he believes, or to be free from doubts, or to be moral, or to have convictions, or to have some understanding of biblical truth, or to enjoy listening to the Word, or to multiply religious duties, or to have experiences some change for the better, or to have a faith which does not deal with the Mediator, whether a 'cradle faith', a rational faith, or a temporary faith. He then proceeds to discuss the ways in which the existence of saving faith is manifested, noting that by the ordinary influence of the Spirit these marks may be discerned in a way that will 'at least keep from disquieting and sinking discouragements'.⁶¹ The first mark of faith is indistinguishable from faith itself: the 'heart's choosing, embracing, and approving God's way of saving sinners renunciation of all other pretended ways'.⁶² Secondly, 'Wherever saving faith is it will discover itself by leading the believer to an approbation of the whole law of God, not only as holy, just and spiritual, but as good'.⁶³ Thirdly, 'wherever there is faith it raises Christ high, and places Him on the throne, both in the mind and in the affections'.⁶⁴

'This assurance... grows only upon adherence to the Lord's way, and is strengthened by a successful pursuit of

60 *Works*, p. 665.

61 *Great Concern*, p. 260.

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 261-8.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 268-72.

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 272f.

salvation in the Lord's way.'⁶⁵ According to Halyburton assurance of personal salvation has its roots in faith, is the reflex act of faith in Christ, is enjoyed only in the path of obedience, can be strengthened by reflecting on the evidences of grace because these streams lead one back to their fountain, and is dependent on the work of God the Holy Spirit.

III. Conclusion

This account of the experience and teaching of this 'great little man'⁶⁶ on the subject of faith and assurance has been presented with particular regard to its usefulness for the pastor. It may also illustrate the introductory suggestion that his writings exhibit the essential identity and legitimate logical and pastoral development of the teaching of Calvin and the Westminster Divines in this area. In subsequent discussion there was often polarisation and confusion as opposing parties isolated seemingly contradictory emphases which were originally consistent formulations of truth in response to different pastoral situations. Halyburton's formulation is free from the extremes of controversial statement which frequently obscure that consistency in treatments of the theme.

Charles Bell admits that 'the writings of Halyburton bear all the unmistakable marks of Calvin's theology' but asserts, on the basis of his recommendation of 'self-examination and syllogistic trials of faith', that he is 'not able to maintain this Evangelical teaching'.⁶⁷ This seems to ignore the Christ-related rather than human-related nature of faith in the teaching of Halyburton, his claim to biblical warrant for his position that the assurance which is logically at least incipient in faith is capable of degrees, needful of encouragement and subject to testing, and his reduction of all self-addressed questions to the question of what one thinks of Christ. It ignores the fact that this foremost Scottish theologian of his day, fully aware of the tensions alleged, regarded himself as consistent with both Calvin and Westminster and considered the doctrine which he taught consistent with maintaining the particular intent and

⁶⁵ *Memoirs*, p. 115.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁷ M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 145.

efficacy of the redemption secured by Christ and proclaiming the gospel to sinners everywhere.

Perhaps someone will do for our Scottish tradition what has been done by Paul Helm⁶⁸ and Joel R. Beeke⁶⁹ for the English and Dutch Calvinists and provide an alternative interpretation of the developments of Scottish theology to that given by Dr Bell. Careful study of Halyburton is a useful starting point for building up evidence for the case that it is in the mainstream of Confessional Calvinism in Scotland (as represented by him), and not in the channel associated with McLeod Campbell, that one finds teaching on faith and assurance which is consistent with Westminster, Calvin and the Word of God.

⁶⁸ Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh, 1982).

⁶⁹ Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York, 1991).

REVIEWS

Green Christianity

Tim Cooper

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1990; 282pp., £5.99; ISBN 0 34052339 5

Should browsers wonder what Green Christianity represents and whether it should interest them, the author provides his own definition – but not until the end of the book! According to Cooper, it is an attitude of both head and heart and is ‘centred upon God as revealed in Jesus Christ and concerned with the structure and function of the whole creation’. This definition may sound rather academic but his book has in fact been written with the general reader in mind and in engaging style. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who wants a well-researched and thoughtful treatment of Christian responsibility to natural resources and our environment.

Cooper points out that whilst the roots of the historical Green movement lie in the early nineteenth century, and the problems of despoliation of the planet are evident everywhere, the churches as a whole and individual Christians by and large have failed to present a clear moral lead about environmental matters and the responsible use of animals. Meanwhile, New Age philosophers are conspicuous in these debates – and there’s the rub. The author is at pains to point out the dangers of monism and the occult and is staunchly uncompromising about historical faith. His arguments for biblically-based Christian concern deserve to be widely read. As we might expect of one who is prominent in politics, he also reveals a good deal of evangelical zeal and conviction for his party colour.

Whether or not one swallows his brand of conviction politics, there is no doubt about either his sincerity or his courage in writing this book. It is not a task to be undertaken lightly in the face of the paradoxes and compromises of a comfortable life in the Western World. Despite the enormous scope and complexity of green issues, Cooper has aimed to be both comprehensive and practical as he describes alternative life-styles that are gentler towards nature and more considerate of generations to come. Consumerism, energy policies, intensive farming practices, population growth and economics (his speciality) are all grist for his mill. But he does not, and cannot, do full justice to all these crucial topics in a book of this size. I found his historical research and economics much more convincing than the treatment of population issues and experimental biology. His attitudes to some issues, such as nuclear power and intensive farming practices, are predictably critical though falling short of being doctrinaire. Whether one agrees with him or

not one must acknowledge that he strives to use the best data available to back up his arguments.

Although intended for personal study, the book could be well used as a basis for a series of informal discussion groups or seminars because each chapter is self-contained. Those who wish only to browse will find that the book is well-indexed and contains a short bibliography. Some people may be disappointed to find that Cooper fails to tackle the delicate task of comparing Christian eschatological doctrine with the forebodings of the Green movement. The closest we get is the hopeful note on which he closes the book. He assumes, rightly or wrongly, that greater emphasis on the doctrines of creation ought to change human behaviour, and he provides a number of practical suggestions of how the churches and their members could act.

R.G. Gosden, University of Edinburgh

Christian Ethics in Secular Worlds

Robin Gill

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1991; 160pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 567 29198 7

'Christian ethics is both exciting and dangerous.' Insisting that Christian ethics must engage with secular worlds, and fearlessly following this through, Robin Gill has little difficulty in substantiating his opening claim. The natural law approach and modern biblical scholarship are both charged with over-reliance upon individual enquiry: it is worshipping communities that act as harbingers of moral values in society. The fact that sociology is now as fragmented as theology, and tolerant of value commitment, enables a whole chapter to treat the interaction between the two disciplines and so indicate new opportunities for doing Christian ethics in secular worlds.

Part 2 turns to the environment. The Anglican report *Faith in the Countryside* failed to sustain the moral and theological conviction in responding to the empirical data. At the level of global survival, Ian Ramsey adopted a 'consensus-through-natural-law' strategy, of bridge-building value; Stanley Hauerwas is theologically more explicit, confrontational yet affording valuable further insights. As to human reproductive ethics, Paul Ramsey's *Fabricated Man* is given ample credit but its response is of the strident variety and restricted by too static a concept of creation. Favouring a more dynamic model, with man as co-creator, Gill rather exhorts to prudence, vigilance and the cultivation of moral responsibility. He then focuses on society, offering a critique of the various views on the social role of religion including the notion of 'religion as a whole'. Optimistic that Judaeo-Christian values, albeit transposed in their secular setting, still inform the British moral and

social order, he approvingly quotes Backford: 'better to conceptualise religion as a cultural resource or form than as a social institution.' The initial promise of excitement is perhaps most fully realised in the chapter on the nuclear debate. The convergence-towards-consensus strategy of *Peacemaking in a Nuclear Age* is contrasted frankly with the more confrontational *Theology Against the Nuclear Horizon* and with the positive embrace of apocalyptic by stances of the latter type. Taking the form of a report, the chapter on AIDS lacks the dynamic of the actual debate but makes observations significant for public policy.

On occasion some may be impatient at inconclusiveness and be tempted to cite the want of a more robust confidence in 'the Bible as a whole'. To Gill, admittedly in something of an aside, the latter is 'a highly questionable phrase'. But there is enough of crucial interest in the main thrust of the book to interest and reward the serious reader. And any inconclusiveness may be due rather to the constant thesis that in those (non-nuclear?) areas where 'implicit theology, participatively inculcated' and 'explicit theology, confrontationally communicated' are equally valid approaches, the former should be given a chance. A more thoroughgoing consideration of this policy would have been welcome. Gill also occasionally criticises too simplistic a use of Scripture; where appropriate, all who take Scripture seriously should surely concur. As to his further plans to investigate the facts about worshipping communities in our society and to explore further the concept of moral communities, my appetite is whetted.

Frank V. Waddleton, Glasgow Bible College

The Book of Ruth: Its Structure, Theme and Purpose

Murray D. Gow

Apollos, Leicester, 1992; 240pp., £18.95; ISBN 085111 765 1

Gow provides a clearly written example of applying a 'rhetorical critical' approach to the text of Ruth as a means to understanding its message, its purpose and its context. This is an easily grasped model of a literary analysis which appreciates those aspects of the text which it emphasises (through repetition and inclusion) and which it compares and focuses (through chiasm). Gow concludes that the work is an apology for David's Moabite ancestry written during David's reign by a figure in his entourage, such as Nathan. He sees the interaction of human prayer and divine providence as a key theological theme in the work. Whether or not the reader will agree with everything which is written here, one cannot fail to acknowledge Gow's clarity of argument and to be impressed at the structural elegance of the book of Ruth.

Richard S. Hess, Glasgow Bible College

God's Truth: Essays to Celebrate the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of *Honest to God*

Eric James (ed.)

SCM, London, 1988; xii+227pp., £9.50; ISBN 0334 00585 X

This is a collection of seventeen essays on many topics associated with the concerns of the late John Robinson. Between them they strike two notes. First, despondency at the failure of radical theology since *Honest to God* and the persistence of reactionary conservatism in theology, church and often politics. Secondly, commitment to recast Christian thought and attitudes so that they should be suitably informed by modern experience.

The cumulative effect of these essays is to suggest the bankruptcy of modern liberal or radical theology. They are surprisingly thin and weary on the whole when one considers the contributors: T.G.A. Baker, Tim Beaumont, Trevor Beeson, John Bowden, F.W. Dillistone, Alan Ecclestone, David Edwards, J.L. Houlden, Alistair Kee, John Kent, John Lee, Dennis Nineham, John O'Neill, Ronald Preston, Alan Race, Ruth Robinson, Peter Selby. The planning is partly to blame. Only two essays made any impact on this reviewer. One was John Bowden's, with its blunt disappointment at the failure of radicalism, for its mood, as well as its content, reveals the gulf between orthodox and non-orthodox interpretations of Christianity. The other was Alan Ecclestone's with its convincing claim that *Honest to God* had failed in significant respects really to grip life.

However, conservative complacency is the last response one wants to make to this collection. There is a dangerous tide of anti-intellectualism in some evangelical circles which may eventually scuttle conservative theology as effectively as radicalism might do. Also, liberals and radicals pose questions to the conservative tradition which, I believe, have by no means been adequately addressed at the level of asking in every case. Orthodoxy today must be stated in *response to* specific challenges not just *on the occasion of* them. Perhaps that is the main lesson to be learned from this collection.

Stephen N. Williams, Whitefield Institute, Oxford

Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation

Mark A. Noll (ed.)

Apollon, Leicester, 1991; 232pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 85111 421 0

One's first reaction to this book might easily be to question the need for yet another presentation of the Reformation confessions. By their very nature these documents are obviously available elsewhere but two things contribute to the necessity of having available such a work as this: the author's preliminary reflections on the confessions, together with the varied range which he has chosen for inclusion, namely Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Anabaptist and Roman Catholic.

Perry Miller once wrote that there would always be those who would be eager to let sleeping dogmas lie, not so it seems this particular history Professor from Wheaton. Nothing could be more damaging, he says, to an understanding of the Christian faith than neglect of the past. He believes it to be a tragedy that in the confusions of our own day we refuse to listen to these voices from the past. The importance of the Reformation era then is only part of his justification for re-presenting these ten confessional statements. There is a personal desire here that the church of today must examine its roots.

His style is refreshing given that his subject matter does not easily lend itself to such an approach. His work is aimed at students but not exclusively so, for his desire is that this collection might prove useful for all those, as he puts it, 'who want to know what all the fuss was about in the sixteenth century'. Consequently the purpose of the book is not to add to the debates on the confessions themselves, but only to introduce the documents. However, the brief but scholarly introductions he provides to the documents must contribute to a heightened awareness of their theological significance and the historical conditions in which they were formulated.

I was a little disappointed not to have found the Scots Confession included in Noll's list of ten. Because he limited his selection of documents to those which appeared between 1517-1571, I would have thought the inclusion of the Scots Confession (1560) could only have added to the representativeness of his study, one of his own principles of selection.

For those who wish to pursue in greater depth the confessions and the worlds in which they emerged, Noll very helpfully includes lists of resources available for further study. For anyone seeking a reliable guide to the documents of the Reformation, this surely is that book.

Michael D. McMullen, University of Aberdeen

The Protestant Evangelical Awakening

W.R. Ward

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992; xviii+370pp.,
£40; ISBN 0 521 41491 1

This immensely learned and vigorously written book by the retired Professor of Modern History at Durham University links together the various revival movements of the eighteenth century in a single international network. The account ranges from Silesia and the beginnings of Pietism in Philipp Spener to the American colonies and England, Wales and Scotland. It draws upon a daunting mass of source material both published and manuscript, especially in the Herrnhut archives, and continually surprises the reader familiar with the main course of developments by exposing unexpected lines of influence and points of connexion.

Professor Ward particularly emphasizes the impact in America and the UK of continental revivals. Mainland Europe not only established precedents and set forces in motion but even determined chronology: 'Almost everywhere the revival began in resistance to real or perceived threats of assimilation by the state in its modern shape, and the timetable of the revival, even in the West, was set by the timetable of the Protestant crisis in Eastern and Central Europe where that threat was raw and crude.' So when the author comes to deal with Scotland, he sets the outbreak of revival amid 'Problems of Religious Establishment....', the first Secession and Jacobitism.

Key figures in this story are A.H. Francke, underpinning the revival movements of the first generation, Nikolaus Zinzendorf who shaped them in the second, and George Whitefield, 'the universal gospel salesman of the next generation'. But fresh light is thrown on a host of other actors, even as well documented as John Wesley – whose presence in Edinburgh during four successive General Assemblies suggests to Ward that he must have been seeking Church of Scotland recognition.

It is hard to imagine any reader, however well-informed, who will not learn a great deal from this book. Yet it is not for the beginner; the first chapter, 'The Protestant frame of mind in the eighteenth century', is particularly demanding in the density of information it purveys or assumes. The work must surely attain the status of a standard authority on this freshly revealed pan-Protestant movement – as participants as different as Jonathan Edwards and Robert Wodrow viewed it at the time.

D.F. Wright, New College, University of Edinburgh

Bultmann

David Fergusson

Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1992; xxi+154pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 225 66623 5

This book, written by the Professor of Systematic Theology at Aberdeen University, is part of a series of books on 'Outstanding Christian Thinkers' edited by Brian Davies OP, which seeks to provide authoritative studies of those regarded as having made outstanding contributions to the development of Christian thought and understanding through the centuries.

After a brief introduction to the story of Bultmann's life, Fergusson describes the various currents of theological thought which provided the context for Bultmann's work, especially those of the liberal school of the late nineteenth century and the dialectical theology of the post-First World War period. He then embarks on an account of Bultmann's own distinctive ideas. Here we have a chapter on Bultmann's understanding of faith, which Fergusson describes as the 'leading concept' in his theology; a chapter on Bultmann's hermeneutics, with special emphasis upon his appropriation of the existentialist philosophy of Martin Heidegger; a chapter on his contributions to New Testament criticism and theology through his form criticism of the Synoptic Gospels, his existentialist interpretation of Paul and his commentary on John's Gospel; and a chapter on his 'demythologising' programme, of which he became a well known advocate from 1941 onwards. Throughout these chapters exposition is interspersed with critical comment, but Fergusson keeps most of the latter for a final chapter, in which he traces post-Bultmannian perspectives in the areas of objectivity and theological language, christology and the historical Jesus, salvation and the Christ event, and theology and politics, and shows where the weaknesses in Bultmann's thought lie. There is an index at the end, and a bibliography, both of the works of Bultmann cited in the text and of secondary literature, at the beginning.

The book as a whole can be highly recommended as an excellent introduction to the main lines of Bultmann's thought. The author everywhere shows a firm and sympathetic grasp of his subject and a commendable clarity in expounding it, though I suspect that those without theological training will find the book tough meat in places. On a more substantive level, evangelical readers may well judge that the author's sympathy for his subject has led him on occasion to make too positive an assessment of Bultmann's orthodoxy, as when, for example, he says the Bultmann's theology 'everywhere' reflects 'faithfulness to the Christian tradition', but at the same time they will no doubt agree with, and find helpful, many of the criticisms which Fergusson rightly levels at Bultmann's work throughout the book.

As Fergusson himself tacitly admits on his final page, it is one thing to ask the right questions, another to provide satisfactory solutions. One suspects that the solutions which Bultmann offered on a whole range of subjects, both historical and theological, will continue to appear increasingly unsatisfactory and outmoded with the passage of time. He has certainly been a major figure on the twentieth century theological scene. Whether he will be as important in the next century is much less certain

Peter Ensor, Aberdeen University

Suffering

A. E. McGrath

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1992; 112pp., £2.99; ISBN 0 340 53821 X

In this short book on suffering, Alister McGrath, the respected Oxford theologian, sets theology a major challenge. He pleads for the reinstatement of theology's position as the servant of the Church, encouraging faith rather than (as is often the case) hindering it.

In chapter 1, McGrath utilises the contrast between the balcony (theology) and the road (faith experience; and the Christian's true place). The higher perspective of the balcony can assist travellers on the road whose way is marred and dimmed by uncertainty, pain and suffering. By showing that 'suffering is a pastoral and spiritual issue, not just a theological problem', McGrath highlights the essential (and proper) relationship between theology and faith experience.

The next three chapters focus on issues often raised from an unbelieving or doubting perspective. Blaming God and questioning his omnipotence and loving nature are all answered in terms of God's desire, through Christ's suffering, to accept limitations on his power (judgement), to share in human pain and, ultimately, to transform it. Love (in contrast to modern notions) is seen by McGrath to be costly and painful and at the centre of God's actions, most supremely upon the Cross.

McGrath argues strongly for a realistic grounding to suffering. Humanity's fallenness and real freedom to choose evil expose facile notions of human goodness and self-sufficiency. Echoing C.S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain*, McGrath clearly shows the human origin of much suffering. Its existence is not new but, McGrath suggests, the twentieth century's catalogue of wars, terror and scientific achievements used for evil ends has magnified its intensity.

The balcony-road interplay in respect of suffering is found, for McGrath, in the person of Jesus Christ. His work of redemption upon the Cross (Mark 15:34) is achieved only through real pain and suffering. Such incarnated love demonstrates God's suffering presence on the road.

McGrath's insistence upon theological foundations allows him to see suffering creatively. It can bring forth a Van Gogh in art or a Beethoven in music. It can also serve to draw the believer into closer communion with God, producing humility, grace and witness to others. Western materialism, however, cannot cope with suffering. Such cultural influences affect Christians also: McGrath points out how affluent Western Christians have over-exaggerated the problem of suffering in contrast to fellow-believers in the Third World.

For McGrath, suffering draws God's compassion and his Church does likewise in any alleviation of human affliction. God bears our pain because he has experienced it first (Heb. 4:15). Ultimately, the Christian response to suffering's threat to the future is one of hope, of looking forward to eternal union with Christ.

This is a book which unfolds the meaning of suffering in terms of God's grace. One of its sub-themes is the failure of so many Christians to see it in such dimensions. Recovering a greater sense of our dependence upon God is crucial here. Another is the need for the Church to share, through persecution, Christ's sufferings and afflictions.

Does this book meet the author's challenge? This reviewer believes so. It is refreshing to see theological tools used in traditional forms and yet being engaged cogently with modern issues. In a book of personal reflections, McGrath writes in simple, non-technical language. Quotations are used sparingly but William of Ockham, Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Barth are acknowledged. This is a book for all Christians involved in pastoral care to reflect upon. It could also be profitably used, chapter by chapter, in Bible study discussion groups.

Andrew McKie, Aberdeen

Greek Tools – Parsons Technology

Being fairly new to the study of New Testament Greek and computer literate, I was more than happy to review the Greek Tools software. I did not find all the facilities of the program useful, but that is because of my limited knowledge of Greek and not a criticism of the software. Overall Greek Tools is very easy to use and flexible, even allowing the user to add to the extensive data that comes with the package. I found the Lexicon, Grammar and Textual Criticism options of most use; the Manuscripts and Editor went over my head.

The whole system is tied in to the lessons in John H. Dobson's *Learn NT Greek* (Baker Books and United Bible Societies), and can be used either with the textbook or independently. A copy of the textbook is included in the software package. The Lexicon has cards with the word in Greek, its meaning, part of speech and number of occurrences in the New Testament, and allows you to make notes on each card. It is possible to 'flag' cards so you can record the words you know as you learn them. I was impressed that the writers of the software have given the facility to

add new cards. It also incorporates a print facility with which you can print the cards you have, but be warned if you do not have a dot matrix or laser printer: you will not get what you are looking for. Deskjet printer produced some lovely garbage!

The Grammar option gives you tables of nouns, verbs *etc.*, and helps the student in the pronunciation of Greek vocabulary. These tables can be edited but regrettably not printed. The Textual Criticism option gives information about the sources of biblical manuscripts, their text families and details of how to judge them. Again this can be added to, but not readily printed. The Manuscripts and Editor options' description from the manual is: 'The Manuscripts Catalogue option allows you to perform a detailed analysis of variant readings of the Greek New Testament. The Editor is a true word-processing tool, which lets you create new data files, edit existing Greek Tools, data files and even import files from other sources as ASCII text.'

My overall impression of this software is that it is an excellent tool for learning the Greek New Testament. Even if you are not very confident when it comes to using computers you will find the software easy to use. The manual is well laid out and easy to follow. As far as future developments go there are a number of enhancements that could be made. Top priority has to be an increased range of printers; this would make the package much more attractive. It would also be useful if the complete New Testament, in Greek, was available, allowing the user to highlight a word and get its meaning. I also felt that a version for windows would be helpful, allowing you to cut and paste from the program data directly into a document in a word processor. The system requires 512K RAM on an IBM compatible PC.

Gavin Williamson, Glasgow Bible College

Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles

Mary J. Evans

Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1992; 160pp., £10.95; ISBN 0 85364 337 7

Mary Evans lectures in Biblical Studies at London Bible College. This book is a re-issue of one published by IVP in 1983. She writes with reverence, careful scholarship, and from a conservative-evangelical commitment. Her book first appeared in 1983 when issues of 'androcentricity', 'inclusive language', and women's 'liberation' were beginning to make an impact on British biblical exegesis.

Chapter 1 reviews the Old Testament material under two heads – Doctrine and Practice. Evans argues that the creation narratives teach that man and women were created equally in God's image. Their harmonious and unitive relationship was broken by 'the fall', and thus androcentricity

crept in. She sees Israelite society as strongly patriarchal: in relation to her sexuality a woman was regarded as her husband's property. Nevertheless, women took an active part in religious life, and female leaders occur (e.g. Miriam; Deborah; Huldah). Evans frankly recognises that the Old Testament often depicts women as secondary to men; yet she affirms that 'the intentionality of biblical faith' must be distinguished from 'a general description of biblical religion': the intention of the Hebrew Bible is 'neither to create nor to perpetuate patriarchy, but rather to function as salvation for both men and women'. This short chapter is well-balanced in its discussion, and convincing in its broad thrust.

Chapter 2 focuses on 'Contemporary Cultural and Religious Influences'. It is too brief (only 10pp.) for its large subject: Rabbinic Judaism is treated very cursorily and the Graeco-Roman world merely touched on. While mentioning various attitudes to women, Evans tends to stress negative ones, and she concludes that there is a 'dramatic decline' in women's status compared with the Old Testament.

Three substantial chapters are devoted to the New Testament. Jesus' approach to women is seen as 'revolutionary'. He accepts them as *people*, never treating them as sex-objects. They are active in service and faithful witnesses. There is no special theological significance in their absence from the Twelve. While much of the discussion is attractive and compelling, the contrast between Jesus and Judaism (and the Graeco-Roman world) is over-emphasized, to the detriment of the latter. No attempt is made to distinguish the Gospels' doctrinal teaching from community practice, nor Jesus' own attitudes from those of the individual Evangelists.

The best part of the book is that on the Epistles. All the main texts are considered. Evans points out that Paul sees women and men as relating to God in exactly the same way. She accepts that he sees man as woman's 'head', but she interprets this 'headship' in terms of loving and giving. Paul's view of marriage is described as 'amazingly egalitarian'. There is a sensitive discussion of women's roles in worship. Evans draws attention to Paul's female co-workers, and, while recognising the lack of evidence for women serving as New Testament 'bishop' or 'elder', argues there is no reason to suppose that this is prescriptive for all time.

A final chapter calls on the churches to re-examine their whole attitude to women, including their ministry, in the light of the Bible's positive affirmations. There are footnotes and a bibliography.

In general, this is an encouraging and helpful book. It interprets the biblical texts positively, and shows there is no need for those who have a high doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture to have a low esteem of women, or to deny them a full role in the church's life. Nevertheless, some cautions are in order. This is an unaltered reprint of a 1983 book. In the last ten years feminist scholarship has advanced at a rapid pace, with many major studies (e.g. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; Tribble, *Texts of Terror*; Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*). There has

been fresh work on women in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds, and further exegetical study on the relevant biblical texts. None of this has been taken into account. Nor is the work in tune with recent redaction-criticism of the Gospels, or the current trend towards a more sympathetic understanding of Judaism. We need a more nuanced treatment of Jesus' attitudes to women, and, perhaps, a franker recognition that the Old Testament contains 'texts of terror' for them.

But as an introduction, this work still has considerable merits. It treats a wide range of texts in a way that is easy to grasp, with fair summaries of their content and of a good range of interpretations. If it can help Christians think more deeply about what the Bible says about women, it will have done a good work.

Ruth B. Edwards, University of Aberdeen

The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for the New Age

Peter Jones

Phillipsburg, NJ, P&R Publishing, 1992; 112pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 87552 285 8

This book aims to show that the New Age movement has links to the Gnostic heresy which troubled the Church in the first three centuries of her existence. It is argued that the Gnostic world-view can be seen with remarkable clarity in the New Age movement and that the moral and social effects of Gnosticism are paralleled in our own time in the rise of militant feminism, eastern religions, homosexual rights, nature worship and political correctness. Unlike some other Christian commentators on the New Age, Jones is convinced that the movement, despite its disparate nature and apparent contradictions, is in fact a coherent pagan ideology which is spread in a highly organised way. He says: 'In spite of its apparently tolerant, pluralistic and diffuse nature, the New Age has a coherent agenda, orchestrated from a diabolical center, moving and reproducing ineluctably, like algae in a lake.'

Jones is not the first to make the connection between the New Age and Gnosticism. It is very instructive and salutary to all Christians, but it needs more work than is given in this book. To be fair, the author informs us in a note that a major study on this theme is forthcoming as well as 'a book on the New Testament's answer to Gnostic and New Age thought'.

The conspiracy theory which dominates the book is one that many Christians, who have investigated and written on the New Age, would want to challenge. This, along with the polemical tone maintained throughout, may deter some readers and that would be a pity, since Jones' scholarship and clarity of thought are not in question. He is currently

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Dorothy L. Sayers: A Careless Rage for Life

David Coomes

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7459 1922 7

Dorothy L. Sayers was 'quite simply hugely entertaining and incomparable company', and what made her so was a 'careless rage for life'. David Coomes in his new biography allows her detective character's fictional biographer to write her epitaph: 'Dorothy', he intones but of Lord Peter Wimsey, "has always had everything except the things (s)he really wanted" and I suppose (s)he is luckier than most.'

This reviewer frankly doubted it, but the local library proved that Lord Peter and the painstaking detection novels that needed his pivotal role are still very popular – even if in a larger-print edition. But by letting her voluminous literary output, in a vast correspondence as well as novels, articles, plays and translations, speak of Dorothy Leigh Sayers, one can scarcely avoid becoming energised by her combative, knockabout style, devout seriousness and frail vulnerability.

If the watermark of a good biography is to reveal the subject's character by her own hand and through her own created characters, then Coomes' effort is superb. The meticulous logical brain in the foolish persona of Lord Peter; the iconoclastic hand at work in 'A Man Born to Be King' (for that drama *has* to be heard in its war-time setting to recover its radical impact); and now thankfully in the extraordinary output of hundreds of letters to detractors and supporters stored in the Marian E. Wade Collection in Wheaton College, Illinois – all reveal the complex 'infuriating' intelligence of this formidable and contradictory and likeable character.

All her life, it seems, she knew what she was about, always able to distinguish between being creator of, not subject to, her fantasies. In the unpublished 'Cat O'Mary', Dorothy, as Mary, contrasts herself with 'cats o' Martha', as one who ponders, learns quickly and prizes intellect above all else. That intellect was used frequently to excoriate a passive and doleful Church that simply failed to be excited by 'the greatest story ever told', and indeed one that by its portrayal of that story was evidently bored by it. Her poetry gently derided where her open and tongue often lambasted with skilfully controlled but straightforward ferocity.

I liked the Gargoyle best. He plays
So cheerfully on rainy days –
While parsons, no-one can deny,
Are awful dampers when they're dry.

Bland religiosity was despised: 'The blade is not made in the fight but in the forge.' Certainly in love (she bore a son to an unnamed lover), in education (at Oxford when women could not be deemed worthy to receive a degree, and refusing later in life an honorary DD) and in marriage (Fleming, her husband, could not match her wit or intelligence and became a burden to her) her wordsmith's tools were hardened and honed. To one leech-like suitor came the outburst: 'It INFURIATES me to feel that my words are numbered and my actions watched. I want somebody to fight with.'

So why has Lion Publishing put this particular biography in our hands? Any who are passionately concerned to relate Christian doctrine to the modern world would do well to re-read Dorothy L. Sayers. Coomes has been allowed not merely to paint this vigorous character in strong but congruent colour. He has given us her 'Statement of Aims' for her incompleting series 'bridgeheads' which included 'The Mind of the Maker'. The breadth of vision, theology and intellect is as audacious as it is arrogant. But for this re-awakened and newly enlightened reviewer, Dorothy L. Sayers speaks with brilliance to our crass and disintegrating culture, making demands as she does so upon the Church to wake up before it is too late. If you also imagined 'A Man Born To Be King' to be good evangelism, read this biography and grapple with the Sayers' radicalism and perceptive challenges right now.

Peter Bowes, Edinburgh